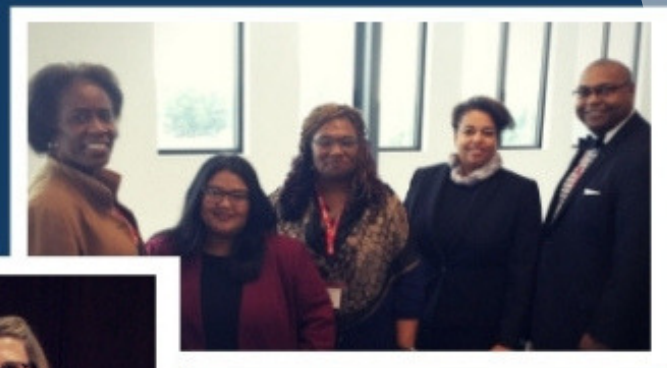


Nonprofit Thought Leadership: A YEAR IN REVIEW



2018



Myth Busting:

Your Path to Financial Sustainability



Gretchen Upholt

An experienced staff and program manager, Gretchen has expertise in training, capacity building, research, and program and volunteer management. Before joining the Fiscal Management Associates team, Gretchen served as the head of the Volunteer Department at the Thabyay Education Network in Thailand.

Gretchen holds a Masters of Public Administration in Public and Nonprofit Management from NYU's Wagner School of Public Service. She received her Bachelors and Masters degrees in Arts and Cultural Management from American University in Washington, DC.



If your organization believes any of the three myths below, you may be struggling financially but you don't know why.

Myth One: Endowments are the best route to financial sustainability.

Endowments are typically seen as a safe solution for nonprofits looking to bolster financial sustainability. Funds in an endowment are permanently restricted and invested to produce an ongoing income stream for an organization.

Critical Concept

As a general rule of thumb, an endowment only has a meaningful impact if the income from investments is large enough to provide at least 5 percent of an organization's annual operating budget. This requires a hefty-sized endowment, usually an amount that is at least equal to the budget size of the organization. It may be difficult—if not impossible—for the average community-based nonprofit to raise the funds necessary to generate the required income on an annual basis. There is a better way.

Alternative Strategy

For most small to midsize nonprofits, a more realistic and attainable way to boost financial sustainability may be prioritizing the growth of operating reserves. Operating reserves are liquid and unrestricted net assets currently available for nonprofit use. These funds can be put in the same accounts and earn the same interest as endowment funds but these types of resources provide more flexibility, which is critical for leaders of ever-changing organizations. Rather than raised in a full scale capital campaign, operating reserves are either built up slowly over time—by generating modest operating surpluses each year—or by the result of foundation grants targeted for the purpose of building a reserve.

Myth Two: Nonprofits can't make a profit

We meet many nonprofit leaders who subscribe to the general sentiment that nonprofits should never make a "profit" on the services they provide. Not only can nonprofits take in more money than they spend, they must do so to be sustainable over time.

Critical Concept

Without a surplus—excess in revenue above your actual cost of providing services—there is virtually no way to generate reserves that can carry you over rough patches in funding or help launch new programmatic initiatives. The first step toward building a financial reserve is to create an organizational culture that accepts and strives to generate operating surpluses.

Alternative Strategy

Nonprofits can be transparent in their plans to establish reserves by developing a long-term plan that outlines financial goals and clear policies regarding how reserves will be used to strengthen the agency and better achieve its mission.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Myth Three: Building reserves is not a priority for organizations with chronic cash challenges. For organizations facing chronic cash flow shortages, building an operating reserve can feel not only daunting, but unrealistic.

Critical Concept

It is the organizations faced with chronic cash challenges that stand to benefit the most from a culture of financial management oriented towards long-term stability.

It is possible for a cash-strapped organization to come to an understanding of what needs to be done to restore stability and commit to a rigorous financial fitness plan.

Alternative Strategy

Though it may be a slow and incremental process, it is possible for any organization to embark on the path of building financial reserves. What matters most is having the long-term vision, commitment, and tenacity to build and maintain operating reserves, even in the face of other obligations and distractions. Operating reserves — liquid savings readily available for opportunities and emergencies alike — can be a game changer for nonprofit organizations. ⚙️



Sarah Cohn

See page 15 for
Sarah's bio



BOARD GOVERNANCE

Managing Up, Managing Down

When friction is reduced between the Board of Directors and the Executive Director, nonprofits honor their mission and deepen the impact.

Nonprofits produce their most effective work when leaders on the board, within the staff, and within the community are connected and communicating well. Keeping these relationships fluid and open is important. This is easier said than done, however.

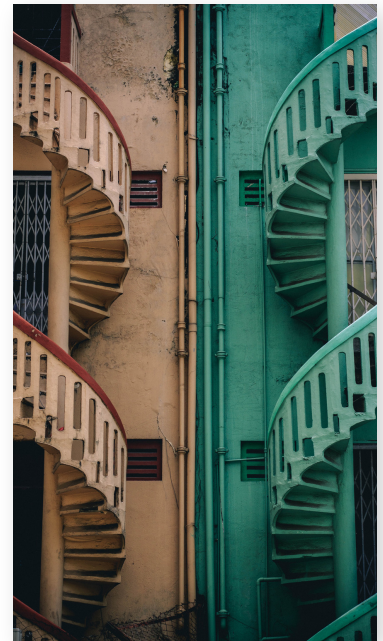
Like those dinner parties when there are too many cooks in the kitchen all trying to craft their own menus, Boards and EDs may run into communication, structural, or relational barriers as they work to achieve the best for their nonprofit.

If approached with intentionality, honesty, and interest in developing a collaborative relationship, EDs and Board Chairs can work together to align their structural processes and practices with their strategies and tactics to move the organization forward. Though we know that “form follows function,” we also know that when we step into a pre-existing leadership role, be it as a board or staff member, we must respond to the structures and systems within which that role exists. It is important to:

- Identify and discuss the historical, political, and social pressures that may play into how boards and organizations are structured
- Understand how boards and staff communicate and interact
- Understand how a Board Chair and an ED approach the board-nonprofit roles and responsibilities.

The relationship between Board Chair and Executive Director is critically important for setting the tone of how the board and staff will work together to advance the nonprofit. Beginning with open conversations, consider discussing why each person is working and advocating for the organization, what work styles they prefer, and establish clear expectations of each other regarding communication and areas of leadership and responsibility.

From deepening the relationship to revisiting board functions and structures, Board Chairs and ED's can find ways to effectively communicate and thrive.



BOARD GOVERNANCE



Is Your Board Asleep at the Wheel?

Board members of charitable organizations often take time to evaluate the programs of their charities. They want to make sure that high quality services are being provided in an effective way and that those services are still in demand in the community. They may also want to talk with other community leaders about their impressions of the organization, how easy it is to work with the leaders and other indicators that might provide insightful information for the board's decision-making processes.

But in great organizations, boards evaluate more than their group's programs. They evaluate themselves, too. How are individual members of the board living up to their responsibilities and providing valuable oversight of the organization? Sometimes that question can reveal a need to change.

Perhaps there is a need to engage new board members to energize the organization. Perhaps there is a need to develop some new board committees. Maybe additional diversity and expertise is needed on the board.

When the Ohio Attorney General's Charitable Law Section is investigating alleged problems within Ohio charities, far too often the investigation reveals a board of directors that is asleep at the wheel. Board members have critical legal obligations intended to protect the programs that so many people rely on.

Proper board governance isn't rocket science and doing things the proper way isn't that difficult. After all, making the world a better place is worth a bit of effort.



Beth Short

Beth Short, who handles outreach and education for the Ohio Attorney General's Charitable Law Section, has spent her career working for and with nonprofit organizations. She brings a background in journalism, legislative and public affairs and training, complemented by a master's in business that focused on nonprofit management issues.

Her work in the Charitable Law Section focuses on the development of strategies aimed at strengthening the nonprofit sector. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University and Ohio University.

The attorney general's office publishes several helpful documents for nonprofits to request and review on a variety of topics. You can access these at <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Publications-Files>



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



David Holmes

Dave Holmes is the Cleveland lead at Foundation Center Midwest. He recently returned to the Foundation Center from a position as senior consultant at Grants Plus, writing grants and doing research for a variety of large and small nonprofit clients. In his initial nine-year tenure with Foundation Center, Dave served in various roles including regional training specialist, interim director of Foundation Center's Cleveland office, and director of capacity and leadership development.

Earlier in his career, Dave served as a program officer for the Stocker Foundation in Lorain, Ohio, and as the director of grants and prospect research at Notre Dame College in South Euclid, Ohio. He is a former board member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Northeast Ohio Chapter and of Joyful Noise Music School. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh, an M.A. from Villanova University, and an M.L.I.S. from Kent State University.

Get Right with Project Budgets

One of the most common questions I get when I teach budgeting is: what *is* the right way to do a budget?

Well, if you've been waiting for the right answer to that question, let me be the first to tell you: no matter what anyone says, there is no one "right" way to do a budget. Every funder and financial manager has a favorite format. But there are some important things to always keep in mind that will make your project budget as right as it can be:

- Make *one* budget that is the "master" budget for each project. That budget should reflect all direct and indirect costs, as well as all income for the project, including all in-kind, and it should balance. You can revise this budget, but this is the budget that you will always refer to. So when a funder wants you to show expenses but not show indirect costs, or a funder wants you to show in-kind on a separate form, you still have one budget that, internally, is *right*.
- Get the best numbers for that budget. Don't guess. Since funders read lots and lots of proposals, what makes you think they don't already know what a reasonable cost is for a computer, a transportation service, or a rental space? Get estimates—three is a good idea. And be prepared to back them up.
- Explain. Everything. Anything that's unclear at all will be focused on by the board of trustees. Anything that's unexplained *will* be explained by them, and perhaps not in a way advantageous to you! So always, always, always add budget narrative to explain.





Al Onkka

Al Onkka is a principal consultant at Aurora Consulting, a Minnesota-based firm serving nonprofits. He works at the leadership level to help nonprofits plan for the future and evaluate their impact. Al has worked in the field of evaluation, promoting data-based decision-making and organizational learning, since 2009. He is inquisitive, analytical, good at connecting ideas, practical, and affable.

Al earned his master's degree in Evaluation Studies from UMN's Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development. He recently served on the board of the Minnesota Evaluation Association and chaired the board of Rainbow Rumpus, a Minneapolis literary nonprofit.



ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT



Strategic Planning

We welcome Al Onkka back to Toledo as a Thought Leader in the 2018 C4NPR Workshop Series. Al opens the series with two workshops: Understanding Strategic Planning for Nonprofits and Facilitative Leadership.

C4NPR had a chance to catch up with Al to chat about best practices in the area of strategic planning.

C4NPR: Strategic planning is a best practice. What would you say are the benefits?

Al: First off, nothing about strategic planning is easy and there are no shortcuts or quick answers. But the benefits outweigh the costs. Organizations that do strategic planning well have a clearer focus, stronger teams, empowered employees, and transparent management.

C4NPR: What are the impacts you have seen from organizations that have engaged in successful strategic planning?

Al: How do we determine that a strategic plan was successful? In the end, it's the strength and impact of the organization. Strategic plans define the change an organization wants to make to be stronger and more impactful. Drawing an example from my work, one organization was anticipating both major changes in their environment and a key leadership transition. After strategic planning, they reorganized their structure to promote internal collaboration, weathered an election that put their national funding at risk, and managed an unanticipated leadership change, all while using the plan as a guide. The strategic planning sessions were the first time the board and staff had ever been together. Later, the staff told us that these sessions kickstarted a cultural change in the organization.

C4NPR: From your experience, what are some common mistakes you have seen organizations make when it comes to strategic planning?

Al: I see a few common nonprofit strategic planning mistakes. Usually, the people coming to me don't want to repeat them! Strategic plans fail when they aren't used. Any plan that is used is better than no plan. What contributes to a strategic plan gathering dust on a shelf? If organizations view strategic planning as a box to check, rather than a fundamental organizational activity, it won't be used. Likewise, many organizations are good at getting everyone together and completing a strategic plan, but they struggle with sustaining ongoing implementation planning. Then, everyone loses steam and feels like the strategic plan was a failure. Strategic planning is an investment in the organization's future, but organizations often try to do strategic planning in the least amount of time when clearly more

ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT



time would result in a better plan. Finally, organizations that don't include either the staff or the board in creating their strategic plan are missing a key voice and advocate.

C4NPR: When you work with organizations, what are the predictors for success to optimize the strategic planning process?

Al: Great question. This is really about assessing your capacity to use a strategic plan. It's one thing to check the box and do strategic planning. It's another thing to be able to use the strategic plan. Strategic planning is a management practice. Many nonprofits are not doing strategic management, they are doing survival management. They are being reactive to everything that's coming at them, rather than being proactive about what their direction is. This is just a reality in the sector that will never go away, but organizations that step out of reactive mode in order to strategic plan have a better chance of being proactive when possible. More specifically, organizations that understand that strategic and implementation planning are important and rewarding efforts, and budget time and resources accordingly, will be successful. In my work, we believe that organizations already have everything they need to strategic plan well; the challenge is to carve out the time and effort to do it. ⚙️



Collaboration

Unlock Your Organization's Impact Potential

We recently sat down with Karen Ray to talk about collaboration. During our conversation she shared with us some best practices and things to consider when setting expectations for collaborations.

To tap into her vast collaboration experience watch the excerpt below.



Karen Ray

Karen Ray is a recognized authority in building and sustaining collaborative ventures. Her experiences in the 1970's as executive director of a literacy-focused agency mandated to collaborate by state and federal funders led to seminal research in collaboration.

Since 1983 she has combined this collaborative experience with her training expertise to problem solve with agencies involved in joint ventures. Karen has helped to found dozens of collaborations and consulted with hundreds of others across the United States during the last 33 years.

<https://youtu.be/lx4r7YRidtq>



FUNDRAISING

What is a Major Gift?

A major gift is different at every organization and to every donor. My career in fundraising illustrates this point. I started my career in fundraising at the battered women's shelter. We rarely received gifts over \$1,000. Our first \$10,000 gift was cause for major celebration! That was a MAJOR Gift. Any personal gift over \$1,000 was a major gift there.

Rutgers University was my next stop. There, a major gift was \$25,000 or more. Just down the road was Princeton University, where major gifts didn't start until \$100,000 or more. I'm certain it's \$1 million or more now.

If you're at a small organization, just getting started with personal giving and major gifts is enough of a challenge. It would be ridiculous to hold you to the standards of Princeton University.

Let's set some parameters for determining the size of major gifts at your organization.

3 Reasons Why Size Matters

There are three important reasons for knowing how much a major gift is at your organization.

1. Donor Recognition

Special Donors get special recognition. Setting the major gift amount focuses your recognition efforts. Knowing what a major gift is determines who gets recognition on things like Donor Walls. Major Donors get personal recognition, like calls from a board member and a handwritten note from the executive director. It's nice to think that every single donor to your organization will receive a personal call and a handwritten note, but sometimes that's simply not practical or even possible. Knowing your major gift levels will help you determine who must get the royal treatment. You'll want to acknowledge all donors, of course, but your major donors should always get VIP treatment.

2. Time Management

Setting a major gift size helps you manage your time. If it makes sense to go meet with a donor to ask them for \$1,000, then that's a major gift at your organization. If you're thinking, "No way!" then how about \$10,000?

It's a matter of time management. I don't know many development directors who wouldn't make time to visit with a donor to ask for \$10,000. Leadership level gift managers spend their time focused on donors who could give \$1M or more, but we're not quite there yet.



Amy Eisenstein

Amy Eisenstein, ACFRE, is an author, speaker, and trainer. Her published books include: *Major Gift Fundraising for Small Shops*, *Raising More with Less*, and *50 A\$ks in 50 Weeks*. She became an AFP certified Master Trainer in 2009.

Amy recently completed her service as the president of the board of the Association of Fundraising Professionals - New Jersey Chapter. She became a Certified Fundraising Executive (CFRE) in 2004 and received her advanced certification, ACFRE, in 2013. She also developed the online course, *Mastering Major Gifts*.

continued >>>

3. Accountability

The third reason for setting a major gift size is for accountability and tracking metrics. If your major gift levels start at \$10,000, then you will be able to easily track how many \$10,000 plus gifts you received this year.

So How Big is a Major Gift for You?

Now that we know some benefits of setting a major gift size, let's determine what works at your organization. Remember, gifts don't have to be over six figures to be considered major, and they aren't only for capital campaigns. There's no better way to skyrocket your annual fund than to infuse it with some major gift power. These action items will help you determine what constitutes a major gift at your organization.

Action Items

Step 1: Run a list of your top donors. The simplest way to determine a major gift level is to run a list of your top 10 donors for the last 12 months. Exclude any foundations or corporations on the list. Let me say that again — you'll want to eliminate any foundations or corporations from the list. (However, if you have donors who give from their family foundations without grant applications, it's fine to include them.)

Also, exclude any extreme outliers or one-time gifts. In other words, if you received \$100,000 from a bequest or in honor of someone, but it's unlikely you'll receive another gift of that level this year, don't include it in your top 10. Total up the donations from the top 10 donors (they may have given multiple times throughout the year – use their total giving in your calculation). Now divide by 10.

Step 2: Average your top 10. Take the average of the top ten donor's totals from last year. Now round up to the nearest \$5,000. If your average major gift level is \$8,500, then round up to \$10,000.

Remember, fundraising is an art and a science. In this case, there are no hard rules to determining what you consider a major gift at your organization.

Be realistic yet optimistic when picking an amount. Be optimistic, because you're growing your major gift program and you don't want to play it too safe or small. Consider where you want to be three years from now, not simply where you are today. However, if you've never received a gift of over \$1,000, then \$25,000 is probably too high. Start with a more realistic number like \$5,000. ⚙️



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ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT



**Patricia
Moten Marshall**

Patricia Moten Marshall is the president of SynerChange Chicago, a change leadership practice. During the early years of her career, Pat achieved recognition and credibility as an accomplished healthcare executive for university, teaching, and community health care systems in Chicago.

Pat has an undergraduate degree from Kansas University, and a master's in hospital administration from St. Louis University. She serves as faculty for the Lake Forest Graduate School of Management. She is the past Chair of the Board of Trustees for Adler University.



Establishing an Environment for Innovation

The Director of The Center for Nonprofit Resources, Heather Bradley, spoke with Patricia on her thoughts regarding nurturing innovation— including cultivating the right mindset for change, collaborating as a team to create new and different ideas, and how to achieve the best outcomes using innovation. Check out the link below to watch the complete video.



<https://youtu.be/s1YzKy0DxmM>



FUNDRAISING



Social Entrepreneurship: An Introduction



Sarah Jo Twitchell

Sarah has over 30 years of experience in educational and nonprofit management and leadership. She has demonstrated an ability in bringing together a variety of social service organizations, governmental units, faith-based and educational institutions to solve problems.

Sarah received her BA and PhD from The University of Toledo, her MSSA from Case Western Reserve University, and is a Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW-S) in Ohio. Currently teaching at the college level, consulting, and writing grants, she has completed the week-long Competing for Federal Grants and also Social Enterprise for Nonprofits through the Grantsmanship Center.

Director Heather Bradley interviewed Sarah Jo on social entrepreneurship before her workshop through The Center.

During their chat, they discussed how social enterprise helps support the missions that nonprofits have established. For more, watch their full conversation below.



<https://youtu.be/AleqQislkJE>





Katena Cain

Katena Cain is a management consultant with Nonprofit Network where she is skilled in cognitive coaching, a certified Bridges Out of Poverty trainer, and is a co-creator of a statewide Diversity, Inclusion and Equity toolkit.

Katena serves on the board of da Vinci Institute in Jackson, MI and holds a bachelor's degree from Michigan State University, a Master's degree in Organizational Management from Spring Arbor University and is a PhD candidate in Organizational Leadership at Grand Canyon University.

Embracing the Power of a Diverse & Inclusive Workplace

Research suggests organizations supportive of diversity and inclusion tend to have higher levels of engagement and retention. For nonprofits, this results in a greater impact for their communities.

Building an Inclusive Team

Diversity and inclusion is not a luxury, but an important foundation for organizations. Building an inclusive team and having a diverse candidate pool to hire from is a primary and critical step in the process of creating a diverse and inclusive organization.

Creating a More Diverse Pool of Candidates

- Review your recruiting processes. Posting your position in the same places or relying on the same groups/people for referrals will get you the same candidates with the same profile. Opportunities shared on a wide variety of platforms generates a more diverse pool of candidates.
- Build relationships with cultural groups and organizations that work with diverse communities. They can become trusted partners to spread the word about your opportunities beyond your current sphere of influence.
- Promote the culture of your organization. Align both internal and external messages with the commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure your actions and messages are in alignment to your commitment. Walk the walk and talk the talk.

While increasing the diversity of your team is critical, it is not enough. System changes may also be necessary to demonstrate your commitment to these priorities.

How will people know your organization embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity?

Observing the following will provide evidence of your commitment:

- Continuous learning opportunities to strengthen understanding and competencies
- Equitable systems of recognition
- Collaborative conflict resolution processes
- Actively building and strengthening community relationships





LEADERSHIP & HUMAN RESOURCES

Begin Your Cross-Cultural Communications Journey Today

Imagine you are in a car. Your vehicle is – unsurprisingly – on the right hand side of the road. Suddenly, you see an oncoming vehicle in your lane. In the wrong lane! Your mind is racing, what should you do? Feelings of fear, anger, and your survival instinct cause you to change lanes. As you cross paths, you lay on the horn to demonstrate your disgust with the other driver. They do the same. Neither driver stops to ask of the other why they were on that side of the road, no one questions if they may have been on the wrong side. You both drive on.

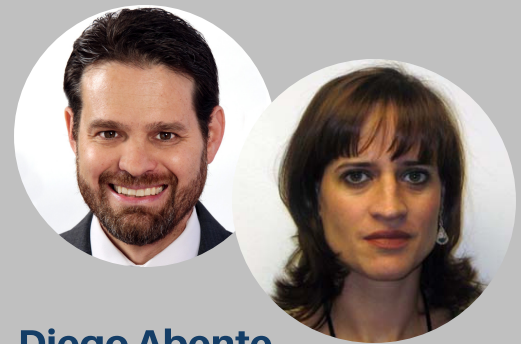
Now, what if I told you the other driver was from Mauritius, where the ‘right side’ of the road is the left. If you had just stopped to ask why they were driving as they were, you would have quickly learned that, and been able to help them learn the rules of ‘our roads’. Alternatively, what if I told you that you were driving in Mauritius and, therefore, you were in the wrong lane. If the oncoming driver had stopped to talk to you, you would have quickly adjusted.

Our cultural identity, much like the road rules, paves a logical path for people within a community to follow. In context, and absent of other cultures, you can travel easily along life’s path. However, in our increasingly globalized world, different paths cross more and more often. These interactions are, like in the story, inevitable. The question is if you will be prepared to stop and learn something from them, or as in the case of our imaginary drivers, just drive on.

The first step in learning about cross-cultural communications is to learn about yourself and your culture. Only then can you accurately identify that which is different. Only then will you know if you are driving in the US or Mauritius.

The second step is to learn how to communicate about your culture, and then ask, and learn about others. It is how to engage once you have stopped the car.

Finally, cross-cultural communications is a life-long journey. You have to keep driving and you will encounter different drivers in oncoming traffic. At each crossing, you have an opportunity to learn something new and further your cross-cultural communications journey.



**Diego Abente
&
Sarah Barekzai**

Diego Abente is Vice President of Economic Development of the International Institute and President of the International Institute CDC. Diego leads two major programs that help refugees and immigrants become positive members of the community.

He has a Masters in Governance and International Development, a law degree from his home country of Paraguay, and is pursuing an MBA. Prior to joining the IISTL he spent several years managing nonprofit programs in Africa and Washington D.C.

Sarah Barekzai is Sr. Language Services Specialist and Project Manager for all translation projects at the International Institute of St. Louis and has worked in that capacity since August of 2003.

She studied Business Administration and Banking in Switzerland, received a Certificate in Translation from French into English, has an A.A. in Communication Arts and Foreign Language, a B.S. in Human Resources Management, and is working on a M.A.Ed. in Instructional Design. In addition to English, she speaks French, German, Swiss German, and is learning Dari.





Ditch the 30-Second Commercial. Build a Messaging Platform.

Nonprofit leaders and key stakeholders will spend days, weeks, even months discussing the precise wording to capture the mission and vision of an organization. They then place the mission statement carefully on the website, annual report, and other key documents.

But it often stops there.

Just making the mission statement available is not enough. To truly communicate your purpose, goals, and story to your audience, it is important to thoughtfully and purposefully create a messaging platform that inspires others to get involved. A messaging platform is a document that provides a solid foundation for how all staff, volunteers, and other key stakeholders of an organization will communicate with the public. It includes specific word choices, themes, and other guidelines for how to create messages in any circumstance. Think of it like a style guide for words.

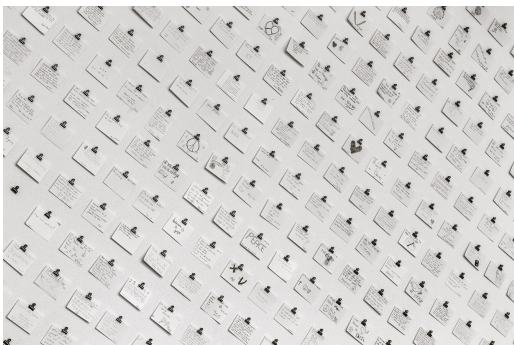
“Well,” you might be thinking. “I have a 30-second commercial. That’ll do, right?” To put it bluntly: no. Thirty-second commercials are useful to a certain degree, but they often have two primary drawbacks:

They are too generic. Not everyone thinks the same way or is inspired by the same messages. They sound too rehearsed. This becomes painfully obvious if the commercial-giver stumbles to explain anything off-the-cuff.

Why Should I Care?

To discuss your nonprofit in a way that is compelling, it is important to tailor your message to your target audience while also having a number of talking points to call on in conversation. Developing a messaging platform connects your mission statement to regular interactions you have with potential donors, volunteers, or the people you serve. It also provides your key stakeholders with consistent messaging to use whatever the circumstance.

So, what should be in a messaging platform?



- The name (or nickname) of your organization as consistently used across platforms
- Names and descriptions of programs/efforts
- An organizational lexicon (agreed-upon terms, such as calling those you serve “clients” or “customers”)
- Target audience analysis
- Mission statement
- Vision statement
- Tagline
- List of positive impacts

Taking the time to create a messaging platform is well worth the effort. The result is consistent messaging that you can build upon to create case statements, grant proposals, fundraising campaigns, and yes—even talking points for those networking conversations.



Tana Schiewer

Tana M. Schiewer, PhD, is the CEO/President of Schiewer Consulting LLC, a consulting firm that specializes in helping nonprofit organizations and small businesses establish operations, fundraising plans, and communications that lead to success.

In addition to spending 10 years in nonprofit management, Schiewer spent 15 years as a grant writer and seven years as a freelancer, researcher, and consultant. Schiewer received the 2014 C.R. Anderson Research Grant from the Association for Business Communication for her research and dissertation work on nonprofit communications.



Laura Macknick

Laura M. Macknick, MA, CFRE, has over 15 years' experience working in nonprofit fundraising, grant writing, communications, public relations and event planning. She has personally guided donors to make more than \$20.5M in charitable contributions and managed fundraising projects of more than \$60M in her career.

Laura completed her Bachelor's degree in History at Purdue University and her Master's degree in Nonprofit Administration and Philanthropy from the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at IUPUI in 2015. Macknick is also a graduate of the Leadership Lafayette program.

3 Top Ways to Increase Your Marketing Return on Investment

There are blogs, workshops, seminars, and even full textbooks that examine how to conduct effective marketing initiatives for your nonprofit organization. Where do you start? Start with these three aspects of marketing and you will surely increase the return on your marketing investment.

1. Understand the value of storytelling

At the core of nonprofit messaging, regardless of the marketing platforms being used, is the ability to tell a story. We should express, in a persuasive manner, the value of services provided to our intended clients, and why the community should value these efforts enough to volunteer, donate funds or advocate for our respective causes.

2. Know who you are trying to reach

Perhaps another challenge many nonprofits face is that they try to be all things to all people instead of taking a more strategic approach. Do an analysis; who specifically are you trying to reach? What medium are they using? Reaching teens for a new program may very well fit on Snapchat or Twitter but reaching out to a more mature generation may require more traditional methods through press releases in newspapers or public service announcements on radio stations they listen to.

3. Have a plan

Arm yourself with a marketing plan. Whether it be designed like a calendar, or a more structured written document, the plan should have larger goals, SMART objectives and tactics that map up. Otherwise, how will you benchmark your success?



ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Understanding Your Stakeholders



Nonprofits are, at their core, champions for the best in their communities. To best assess how well they are advancing their missions, reaching target audiences, or enacting social and community change efforts, nonprofits need to gather focused and targeted data from engaged stakeholders and from those community members they seek to serve.

How you go about gathering information about or feedback from your stakeholders (participants, audience or community members, donors, or other people who are or may become connected to your nonprofit) will be specific to your organization. Your efforts should be focused on your mission, your programs, and the communities you seek to serve.

Starting with your nonprofit's mission and vision, or the intended outcomes of a particular program, consider what questions you have that only your stakeholders can answer. Here are a few big-picture questions you might ask:

- How aligned is our internal understanding of and our community's understanding of our brand, mission or purpose?
- How does our community think about us, about what we are here for, and about who we serve?
- How aligned is our intended audience and our actual audience?
- What sectors of our community are we actually serving vs who we want to serve?
- How well are we achieving the different aspects of our mission?
- How are our participants, board members, and other community stakeholders participating in or connecting with our mission?

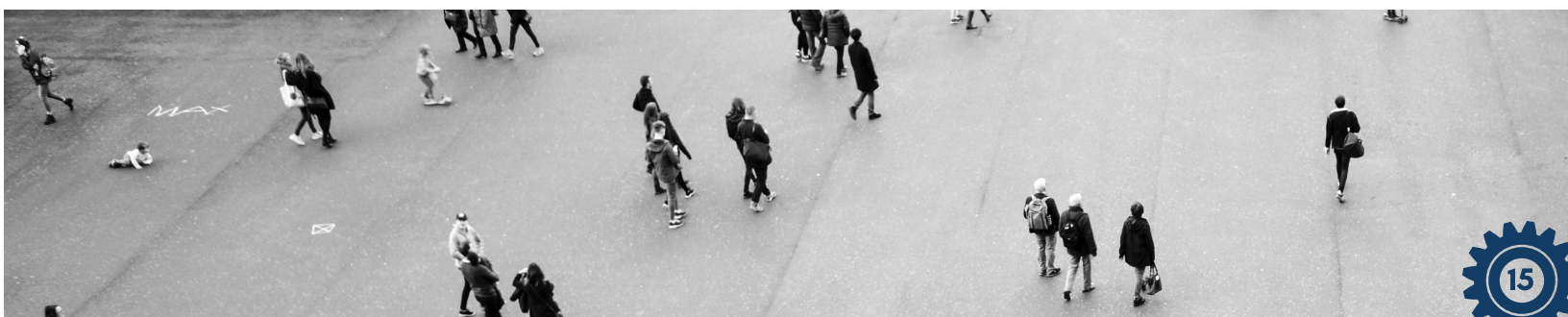
Starting with big questions such as these will allow your evaluation efforts to focus on gathering the critical information you do not yet have about how well you are serving your community and your mission. Nonprofits exist to advance community-grounded efforts, provide necessary services, and to, ultimately, provide positive social good for individuals, groups, or the entirety of our communities. By integrating practices that allow us to gather information from and about those we serve, or seek to serve, our nonprofits can continuously refine our programs, practices, and engagement efforts to make a meaningful difference in our communities.



Sarah Cohn

Sarah Cohn is a Principal Consultant and Partner of Aurora Consulting, working across the nonprofit sector for the past 11 years. Sarah focuses her work with nonprofit organizations around evaluation capacity building, audience engagement research, strategic planning, and board development.

Sarah received her BA from Bowdoin College and completed her Master's degree at the University of Minnesota in 2010. She has facilitated professional development workshops and sessions for over eight state and national associations, ranging from the American Evaluation Association to Grantmakers in the Arts.



A NOTE FROM THE CENTER

The Center for Nonprofit Resources curates the publication of *Nonprofit Thought Leadership: A Year in Review*. The inaugural issue in 2017 was met with rave reviews and the 2018 issue continues to provide nonprofit professionals and board members with concepts, tools and resources sure to get you thinking about the possibilities for your nonprofit.

We thank each of the thought leaders who shared their knowledge and expertise via blog posts and online interviews as a prelude to their workshops. C4NPR hosted workshops throughout the year in the six tracks listed in the Summary of Contents listed below.



Heather L. Bradley
Director



Lexi Haas
Associate Director

Handwritten signatures of Heather and Lexi in black ink.

**The
Center**
for nonprofit resources

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Board Governance

Pages 3, 4

Financial Management

Pages 2, 5

Fundraising

Page 8, 9, 10

Leadership & Human Resources

Pages 11, 12

Marketing & Media

Pages 13, 14

Organizational Management

Pages 6, 7, 10, 15

Workshop hours in the six tracks count towards the C4NPR Nonprofit Management certificate program and the C4NPR Minority Executive Leadership certificate program. CFRE credits are also approved for workshop hours.