

NonProfit **PRO**

November/December 2020

**RETHINKING
EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

**RECRUITING AND
ENGAGING
HIGH-QUALITY
BOARD MEMBERS**

WHAT NONPROFITS HAVE LEARNED FROM A VERY UNPREDICTABLE YEAR

**JEANNETTE FOURNIER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CARING FOR FRIENDS**

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BY NHU TE

A TIME TO REFLECT ON 2020

What a year this year has been. It's safe to say that we've all been through it in 2020 — from a raging pandemic, a series of unfortunate events that evoked a worldwide social justice movement, continuous environmental crises, with a unique presidential election on top of it all. And for nonprofits that are continuing the fight for social good, the impacts and pressures are incredibly high. I mean, realistically, nonprofits are in the middle of it all — and they are the ones driving the change.

But let's take a step back for a moment. I think it's as good of a time as any for a bit of self-reflection. As every year comes to a close and the door opens for the next year, I always take a little bit of time to look back on the year to take in the bad, the good and the lessons I've learned. And trust me — we have had a lot to learn this year.

As nonprofits, you all have had to climb steep mountains to get through the hurdles that the pandemic has thrown at you: learning how to work remotely with the distractions of daily life (significant others who are working in the same room, screaming kids, barking dogs, ringing doorbells during video calls), learning how to communicate with supporters about your mission during a worldwide health crisis, learning new technologies and solutions to manage staff and volunteers virtually, learning how to transform your in-person events to engaging virtual events and the list goes on and on.

And while the job of making a difference in this world is so important, what's equally important is taking care of yourself. With everything that has changed how we live, mental health is now more important than ever. So when you're in the middle of brainstorming new fundraising and marketing strategies or you're hosting a virtual board meeting, to name a couple, and you feel overwhelmed — remember to take some time for self care. Trust me, a little bit goes a long way, and you will feel recharged, reenergized and ready to tackle anything that life throws at you.

And you're going to need all that you can get this busy and unusual year-end season. As you really home in on year-end giving and navigate through the rest of 2020, I'm sure you're also strategizing on how you can build a stronger organizational base for when the next crisis hits (whether it's in 2021 or beyond). Be sure to check out NonProfit POWER, a three-day virtual event that focuses on direct marketing strategies, peer-to-peer fundraising strategies and technology. It's all happening December 14 through 16, and you're invited to attend this free event. For more information, visit power.nonprofitpro.com.

And remember, we are all human after all, so be gentle and take extra good care of yourselves! Undoubtedly, this year has brought a lot of sadness and even some anger, too. But at the same time, I'm sure that really, really good things have happened as well, so remember to soak in that

goodness. I'm reminding myself of that every day. For me, it's my health, my friendships, my family and my sweet fur babies. (My fiancé and I adopted a new girl two months ago — her name is Susie. And she's... adorable of course.) So tell me, what are the good things you're grateful for? I'd love to know. Shoot me an email at nhute@napco.com.

I'm incredibly grateful to have you on this journey with me. I'm wishing you and your loved ones all the best this holiday season. We all need a little extra love and care — this year especially. I hope to see you again in 2021.

Nhu Te
Editor-in-Chief
NonProfit PRO

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DMFA

member spotlight

Q: What is the most important lesson you learned in 2020?



Shannon McCracken
CEO
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selves, too? Learning to give myself, and others, the grace to blend makes me a better mom, colleague and friend. Take that, 2020!



Marc Pitman, CFRE
Founder
The Concord
Leadership Group

even more grateful for donor generosity. And for being able to get a front row seat of it.



Kelley Hecht Stewart
EVP
Pursuant

way things are done to align around what we need to get things done. As I look back on this year and consider the organizations we partner with at Pursuant, I celebrate the accelerated transformations so many organizations achieved and hope that we always remember what we are capable of.

A. Forget work-life balance, embrace the blend! Balance implies two sides of a scale that are stable, even and separate, a concept that never jived for me. This year snatched away the commuting transition time and turned our living space into a living-office-school-gym-staycation space. And it hit me: I've spent my career burning down silos to create systems that were more robust and resilient. What part of that shouldn't apply to the best parts of our whole

A. For over 20 years, I've thought donors gave in certain seasons, motivated by regular rhythms. 2020 has completely upended that. We've seen donors give. And give. And give. We've seen nonprofits hit December donation levels in March. And April. And May. And June. When nonprofits saw a dip in giving in July, we discovered a fascinating correlation: Donations slowed when asking stopped. Fundraising staff got tired before donor generosity gave out! 2020 is leaving me

A. 2020 was the year I learned (or better said, confirmed) that our industry is, in fact, capable of rapid and dramatic change. Not only are we capable, when we embrace it, we can achieve extraordinary outcomes. I learned that in times of crises, we embody the best of humankind. This year, we faced multiple, unprecedented challenges, but we did not face them alone. We turned to each other — colleagues, agency partners, peer organizations and more. Together we reframed the

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pulse

BY NHU TE

SURVEY SAYS...

Newport ONE recently released a new white paper, "How Do You Help Others? 2020 Giving Survey," to gauge American sentiment toward helping others. The survey asked more than 2,000 people about their attitudes toward personal responsibility and helping others; beliefs in charitable organizations and their operations; and their preferred information sources — printed media, TV, online media and more.

The authors asked what people had done in the first three months of 2020 to help others — 60% helped friends and family and 58% gave money to friends and family in need. Additionally, 30% volunteered for charity, 44% gave something to a stranger in need and 69% said they did something independently "to make things better," such as picking up trash or changing a stranger's tire.

The research found six personas that represented shared actions and values, which were categorized as donor personas or non-donor personas. Donor personas include "Gale Giver" (27%), "Vic Volunteer" (16%) and "Reese Reluctant" (29%). Non-donor personas include "Pen Promoter" (7%), "Izzy Infrequent" (12%) and "Shelby Seldom" (10%).

"The personas identify unique donor types based on giving money or time combined with individuals' values or attitudes," Craig DePole, president of Newport ONE, said in a press release. "Across all six personas, clear



communication about how their gift to a charity would make a difference was desired. We are sharing this information to help charities craft their list segments and appeal messages.

We also think the feedback on donor confidence, preference and expectation to give on PayPal is critical for nonprofits to hear right now."

When it comes to those who fit in the donor persona, they are more likely to be women or married men and more likely to attend worship services at least once a month. To download the full white paper, visit bit.ly/2Urp1GU.

INFOGRAPHIC

This year has brought on many events — a pandemic, a social justice movement, a presidential election year, among others — that have had serious implications for us all, nonprofits included. But the big question our sector is asking is how has all of this impacted American generosity?

Classy recently released "Why America Gives 2020: How the COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Justice Movement Have Changed Giving," which provides insight into how these events have changed giving and donor sentiments in the U.S.

Some key findings from the study include:

- **COVID-19 is fueling charitable giving.**

Thirty-nine percent of Americans say that they definitely or probably will give more to nonprofits in 2020 than they did in 2019.

- **Health causes ranked ahead of disaster relief and education for the first time.** Health causes rose to the top this year, ahead of disaster relief, which was the number one cause that Americans supported in 2018 and 2019.

- **The fight against social justice is introducing new donors to racial equality causes.** Forty-two percent of survey respondents said they had donated or planned to donate to social justice causes in 2020, with a majority of

respondents noting that they are giving for the first time. Fifty-eight percent said that 2020 was the first year they had ever donated to this type of cause.

- **With cancelled in-person events, virtual fundraising events became an effective means of generating attention and donations.** Thirty percent said they have supported or participated in a virtual charity event since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those, 60% said they actually donated and/or raised more in the virtual environment than they have for past in-person events.

"When COVID-19 hit, the world had to come together very quickly to meet the critical needs emerging from the pandemic," Scot Chisholm, CEO and co-founder of Classy, said in a press release. "Our 2020 report is a testament to American generosity. When our society was most vulnerable, we were also the most generous. What was even more inspiring was the financial generosity of essential workers and the broad and overwhelming support for social justice efforts."

To see the full report, bit.ly/35MWFNX.



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PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN THE NONPROFIT WORLD



TWERSKY

The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation: *Fay Twersky* will be the new president, which will begin February 2021. She is currently the VP of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.



HASHEM

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation: *Atiqua Hashem* has been hired as VP, general counsel and corporate secretary. She will serve as an officer of the Hilton Foundation and join its executive leadership team.



OLSEN

Moore: *Andrew Olsen* has joined as president of ResourceOne Fundraising Group, a provider of multichannel marketing solutions.



SIMPSON

The Russell Family Foundation: *Kathleen Simpson* has been appointed CEO by the board of directors. She has been serving as TRFF's interim CEO since January and CFO since September 2015.



AHRENDTS

Save the Children International: *Angela Ahrendts* has been named chair of the board of trustees. She will be the first independent chair from outside Save the Children to hold a seat on the SCI/SCA board.

datebook

December

14-16: NonProfit POWER. Hosted by NonProfit PRO. bit.ly/39xPSrw

January

27: #Empower2021 Hosted by ProServeIT and Microsoft. bit.ly/2IP61jk

February

17-18: 2021 Winter Conference. Hosted by ANA Nonprofit Federation. bit.ly/3kFep20

March

23-25: 2021 Nonprofit Technology Conference. Hosted by NTEN. bit.ly/2Hflg4r

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BY MATT GOLIS

fundraising connection



GIVING CAN BE ENGAGING AND FUN DURING A PANDEMIC

REIMAGINING THE 'HOW' VS. THE 'WHY'

With galas, golf tournaments and even product-based fundraising on hiatus while COVID-19 drags on, nonprofits shouldn't just wait for the world to get back to normal. Many nonprofits are urgently shifting to online forms seeking donations, which, for most donors, is neither engaging nor fun. Millennial donors do not respond in the same way as the "ask" of Generation X and Baby Boomers — being mindful of the difference is paramount to nonprofits reestablishing a successful fundraising strategy.

A silver lining for nonprofits enduring this difficult fundraising environment is that it is forcing many causes to reevaluate the "how" rather than the "why." The "why" is the importance of sharing the impact of the cause, and nonprofits know they must articulate the work they do to reach donors and drive engagement toward giving. The "how" on the other hand can be more difficult to embrace for a variety of reasons:

- **Tradition:** Events and/or product sales are how supporters think about the organization and expect to either get involved through volunteering and/or financial support.
- **Perception of Technology:** As tools have emerged that understand how to reach supporters digitally, anxiety over data security, the learning curve with

donors and staff, and wondering "if it will actually work."

- **Change:** Doing something new takes a leap of faith, but it also can be healthy for an organization where donors/supporters may have "fatigue" either from the ongoing pandemic or from the lack of evolving with the times.

There is a solution that can address the how in a new way — and the pandemic has just accelerated the need for nonprofits to reimagine the ways they engage with donors and supporters virtually: gamification.

Using elements of gamification, your virtual fundraising can benefit your cause in a variety of new ways:

- **Leaderboard:** Show both overall progress in working toward a collective goal by highlighting the individual/team contributions of your most active donors. This method can work as a way to create friendly competition that both highlights successes and motivates for the goal that has yet to be accomplished.
- **Achievements/Points:** As a donor, what can I get in return for having supported the cause? For the next generation of donors, connecting with them where they are with mobile gaming can really make your cause stand out over others competing for donor support. Not to mention, establishing a "currency" of earned value could be exchanged for branded apparel or other items that help market the cause and make for low-cost publicity.
- **Gamifying Sports and Pop Culture Events:** By leveraging the major sports, Hollywood award shows and reality TV



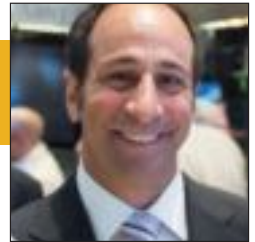
Photo: Getty Images by pressureUA

shows that people watch anyways, why not tie giving to supporters choosing who might win an event? It isn't gambling if there is no prize for a donor — it just is a more fun way to support a cause that creates competition for bragging rights with fellow supporters. What started with office pools at March Madness and other major sports can be extended throughout the year in a way that supports the cause (without any of the negative connotations of gambling).

- **The Ask Without the Ask:** This might be one of the best reasons to incorporate gamification: Donors and supporters won't feel as much like they are being approached for the "upteenth" time for money if there are fun elements offered in a way they can engage with the cause. Asking for money the same way every time isn't going to boost giving — getting creative with engagement that differentiates your cause reduces that friction with donors.

Regardless of what your cause does, the combination of the current pandemic and end-of-year giving means that now is the time to reevaluate how to better engage (and fundraise) going into 2021. We all are looking forward to a better 2021 — let's make it fun, and the generosity will follow. **NPPRO**

"As a donor, what can I get in return for having supported the cause? For the next generation of donors, connecting with them where they are with mobile gaming can really make your cause stand out over others competing for donor support."



B CORPS CREATING MORE DISRUPTION IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

SO WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS?

BCorporations have existed for years; however, they are in the process of expanding, and this is something nonprofit leaders should understand. Before now, not too many companies or social enterprises became B Corps (under 4,000). Sure, there were notable ones, such as Ben & Jerry's and Patagonia. However, recent social events, such as the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, have pushed corporations to embrace capitalism — and social good — together.

It's no secret that corporations exist to make money and a profit. That said, in the current environment, with Millennials and Generation Z being activist generations akin to what the Baby Boomers used to be decades ago, corporations realize that they must now do more than primarily give capital to causes. For instance, as noted in Stanford Social Innovation Review, in 2020 alone, companies such as Coca-Cola and Ford pulled Facebook advertisements for not doing much against racism and hate speech. Also, Disney signed Colin Kaepernick to produce movies on social justice.

Becoming a B Corp is a demanding process; however, corporations understand the public's mood and sentiment, so they see the value of going through it. The largest B Corp in the world is now Danone North America, a \$6 billion company, but it will soon change.

B CORP BENEFITS

Obtaining B Corp certification demonstrates to the public that a company is adhering to prescribed social and environmental performance metrics that are positive for society. A B Corp's operations and business model gets evaluated using the highest standards: impact on the community, the environment, workers and customers. Moreover, once companies or social enterprises become B Corps, they are obligated to meet the standards.

Once an organization becomes a B Corp, it has bragging rights, so to speak.

In other words, it could promote that it is one step ahead of its competitors for the benefit of society, its community, the environment and its workers. In turn, this becomes an excellent tool for recruiting top talent and retaining and expanding the customer base.

THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

Currently, 37 states in the U.S. have passed legislation promoting B Corps, and an additional four states are in the process of doing so. New laws are necessary because directors of for-profit companies must ensure financial returns to their shareholders. Meaning that if they engage in activities for social good, they must demonstrate shareholder value.

Therefore, by enacting new laws in promoting B Corps across the U.S., corporations and their subsidiaries gain more flexibility. In short, directors at B Corps allow directors and corporate officers to expand beyond shareholder profits and demonstrate value when engaging in social responsibility. With legal recognition of B Corps, companies and corporations can more freely focus on social impact than they would if they were solely recognized as for-profit businesses.

THE CHANGING SOCIAL GOOD LANDSCAPE

Unfortunately, the nonprofit sector is not one that fully embraces risk, innovation and disruption. Sure, there are leading nonprofits such as charity: water. However, generally speaking, most nonprofits have small budgets, don't fully understand the ramifications of artificial intelligence and its impact, and don't innovate to become large enough to have a broad reach in their community.

As we know, in cities and large towns, separate organizations are doing the same work. Yet, if they consolidated their resources, they would have a more substantial reach and attract more fundraising dollars. The larger the organization, the more money it attracts.

Corporations are now moving into the social good space. Sure, Ben & Jerry's

was there from the beginning, but now you have Danone and Avon. Moreover, corporations such as SC Johnson, Procter & Gamble, Campbell Soup Company and Anheuser-Busch Exchange Commission have subsidiaries that are B Corps. The B Corp movement poses a challenge to nonprofits.

WHAT CORPORATE B CORPS MEAN FOR NONPROFITS

What is the bottom line of the corporate “takeover” of B Corps? It means nonprofits have a lot of new competition. Think about it: These companies have billions of dollars. Now that they have started to go through the rigors of getting certified as B Corps, or having subsidiaries certified, it becomes a competitive advantage for them in support of social good.

For instance, what prevents a company such as Avon from expanding its view of corporate social responsibility through a B Corp certification? Meaning, it demonstrates to its consumers and the public that it is a socially responsible company. In turn, it retains and attracts more consumers to its products. Then, it takes its philanthropy directly to the communities it serves by supporting impact investing and for-profit social enterprises or creating its own nonprofit subsidiaries.

In short, nonprofit leaders must absorb a fundamental truth that is happening. Nonprofits are no longer the primary means for creating programs, efforts and initiatives that support social good. Increasingly, philanthropy is getting corporatized, and people are much more comfortable with companies making a profit and doing social good.

Therefore, it's my prediction that within the next decade, the nonprofits that will thrive will be those that understand the changes happening in philanthropy, such as B Corps, and the rest will flounder. There's a whole new paradigm shift happening in the sector, and nonprofits are no longer the only solution for philanthropy and social good. *NPPRO*



leading the board

BY MIKE BURNS



NONPROFIT BOARD MEMBER AND OFFICER ELECTIONS

AN EVENT THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR

Welcome to the elections edition of this column! I am sure that if you live in the U.S., this election period has been exhausting. You are likely questioning my rationale in even broaching the subject. While political elections may be over, the work to select and take action to determine who will get a seat and who will “lead” has arrived for many nonprofit boards. And for those whose tax year is different from the calendar year, your job of filling member and officer seats has just been deferred. This is a task for all boards that value bringing in individuals who are equally committed to moving the mission.

Governance committees are becoming the center of board member recruitment and officer selection. At minimum, I propose the following to be coordinated by the governance committee:

1. Conduct an annual board member self-assessment. You can find plenty of tools with a quick Google search. I recommend Board Check-Up, a board assessment service from Yvonne Harrison and Vic Murray. This assessment will help the governance committee learn what is working, the type of skills needed for the board and where change is needed.

2. Create and implement a multi-year board recruitment plan, and remember that diversity is essential. The plan should be updated annually and include assignments specifying recruit-

ment roles for all board members — this is everyone’s job!

3. Develop and implement a plan for cultivating those who could become officers so that every member has the potential to serve, and when called, they will be prepared.

4. Develop and implement a plan for supporting those who are elected as officers, including a mentoring and education plan. If elections were conducted three to four months ahead of new officers’ terms, officers would be better prepared for their duties.

5. Ensure the election process is more than just “Here’s a slate of candidates. Now vote.” The event should ensure that education about the candidates is shared and include discussion about the direction (reflective of what was learned in the self-assessment) and a vote that maybe even offers choices depending on the size of board.

6. Evaluate, evaluate and evaluate to ensure the plans are effective and lead to results that are positive for the board and organization.

7. Celebrate and acknowledge. The board should take time at the conclusion of the election process to formally thank and celebrate those who have agreed to serve. For example, an event with a certificate or name badge with the nonprofit’s logo for new and retiring members and maybe a small useful gift (like computer screen cleaner) for officers would help create a positive moment for all while providing a positive start for the next era. And yes, this is doable in COVID-19 times.

While thinking about this subject, I went to view what States, the regulatory body that creates corporations, has to say about the required seats. The only office that every U.S. state requires be filled is that of the secretary’s.

This tidbit of information should remind board members that the seat that is important but often not given the recognition of its value is that of secretary’s. I would further offer that while

Photo: Getty Images by hanibaram



those who fill this position are often the “last person standing,” skills are required and can be transferred to prepare for service for the next year. And of course, appreciation and recognition of the individual and their tasks should receive as much acknowledgement and applause as the chair.

In conclusion, board member and officer elections is a year-long event that is designed and managed by a governance committee. The culminating event is the actual vote in which multiple choices for member and officer seats can emphasize the value of the job and the recognition that there are many who want to support the mission and many who can lead.

And finally, preparation and support matter to ensure new members and officers can do their jobs effectively. Bottom line: The election process is a system-wide activity that is essential to moving the mission forward and ensuring a healthy, productive board. **NPPRO**

“Create and implement a multi-year board recruitment plan, and remember that diversity is essential. The plan should be updated annually and include assignments specifying recruitment roles for all board members.”



STAYING CONNECTED TO TAKE ON 2021

NONPROFITS NEED TO STRUCTURE THEMSELVES TO BE RADICALLY COLLABORATIVE AND TRANSPARENT

The social good community is defined by its unwavering commitment to the notion that good can take over. The incredible work continuing across mission areas is a testament to the dedication of so many professionals who have committed their lives and careers to social good. As we look ahead to planning for the new year, it's important to look back and remember how, across the span of a few months, the events, goals and benchmarks we set for 2020 were quickly uprooted.

Facing a year like no other, we altered the day-to-day operations of our institutions. For some, this has magnified existing cracks in the foundations of our practices. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic upended the world, many social good organizations were affected by the same operational problems that all sectors experience: disjointed strategies, siloed teams and competition for limited resources.

While the pandemic adds complexity and uncertainty to our operations, an engagement model rooted in those kinds of organizational dysfunctions can be more detrimental than ever before. As we continue engaging our constituents who meaningfully impact our missions, we must structure our organizations to be radically collaborative and transparent. From reducing your manual processes through workflow automation to thriving in remote working environments and embracing new platforms, organizations

"From reducing your manual processes through workflow automation to thriving in remote working environments and embracing new platforms, organizations must adhere to a new focus on delivering strong digital experiences to their stakeholders."



Photo: Getty Images by Giang Nguyen Truong / EyeEm

must adhere to a new focus on delivering strong digital experiences to their stakeholders.

A focus on donor retention and stewardship will advance your cause and keep your organization resilient through challenges. You will also want to be sure that you are speaking to your stakeholders through the channels and platforms they are embracing. Consumer behavior continues to show itself across the social sphere, making it increasingly clear that individuals are more eager to sit in the driver's seat of their engagement. The acceleration of avenues like crowdfunding, do-it-yourself and peer-to-peer fundraising will continue to be cohesive components of overall fundraising strategies. Speaking to individuals on a one-to-one versus a one-to-many level, these campaigns continue to gain traction, connecting people to the causes they care about through the channels they regularly use.

An organization's success in these arenas lies in leading their staff and stakeholders. Whether you are leading your organization through shifts in your day-to-day operations, moving your in-person programming online or heading toward a full digital transformation, you must be prepared to support the donors, followers, supporters and networks who advocate for you best. Although our minds

may try to steer us differently, we need to be even more communicative and collaborative during crises.

Communicating about the needs and understanding the realities that your community and staff are working within will help you find tech tools that match their access and skill options. Just as the challenges may have changed, so, too, have new challenges been presented to your staff and community.

Thankfully, there are steps every part of the organization can take to move past barriers and focus on what really matters: driving greater good. By leveraging technology to stay connected across teams, the benefits are endless — stronger supporter relationships, increased internal efficiency, the ability to secure more funds, more gratified employees, greater outcomes for our missions and more. As we plan for 2021, many of us are still navigating how to incorporate degrees of virtual work culture and virtual events. In embracing this "new normal," we must eliminate operational silos and radically rethink how our teams collaborate to create a better world. When we can unleash the power of collaboration across our teams through technology, we can drive more of the social good that will be crucial as we embrace 2021 and another year of unknowns. *NPPRO*



WHAT TO CONSIDER DURING BOARD RECRUITMENT

ALWAYS KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR BOARD TALENT

Now probably more than ever, our communities need exceptional board members to volunteer. Let's face it: Our nation is hurting from the pandemic, and millions of people remain out of work. However, nonprofits are also in need of a lot of support. Most nonprofit executives who understand how to lead, it's also vital for organizations to have the right board leadership. Some of the reasons why nonprofit board leadership is necessary include the following:

- **Nonprofits boards have legal and fiduciary responsibilities for organizations.** Good board members ensure that the nonprofit meets its compliance obligations and responsibilities to the government and the community where it serves.

- **Boards serve as a bridge between the nonprofit organization and the community.** When board leaders go into the community and leverage their networks and speak on behalf of the nonprofit, they understand they are not "hired guns" — they serve because the nonprofit does quality work.

- **Board members help ensure that the nonprofit has everything it needs**

"Your nonprofit has to be smart with its board recruitment. In other words, you shouldn't recruit people to your board who don't have the skills and expertise that you need."

to create excellent programs for its community. For instance, they seek to help organizations raise money and hire the best people for their programmatic and operational work.

HOW TO RECRUIT QUALITY BOARD MEMBERS

Your nonprofit has to be smart with its board recruitment. In other words, you shouldn't recruit people to your board who don't have the skills and expertise that you need. For example, if you want to ensure that you have the best oversight for your nonprofit's finances, make sure to recruit board members who have strong financial backgrounds. If you want to understand how to reach into your community for marketing and fundraising, then you should also recruit people to the board who have that kind of expertise and skill. Moreover, it would be best if you also considered the following:

1. **Understand the needs of your organization, and develop board profiles.** For your nonprofit to have the very best people on its board, you must understand your organization's needs. By knowing what you need in your nonprofit leadership, you can ensure that you create the fitting board profiles. Therefore, think of every functional, programmatic and operational area for your nonprofit. Next, think of the skills you need for people who will serve as overseers through respective board committees. As I mentioned above, it would be ideal, for example, if your program team has a chair of a board program committee who understands what a good program should look like for the community. This way, when planning happens, you know the strategy and work plans across your entire organization have the best oversight.

2. **Make sure you have a strong nominating and board development committee.** Although many nominat-

ing committees are not as robust as they should be, you can make sure that yours is one of the organization's most vital groups. These are the people who should get charged with ensuring you recruit the best people for your board leadership. While all your board committees should be robust, make sure that is also true of your nominating committee, which you might want to make a "nominating and board development committee." By expanding its work beyond only nominating, you allow the committee to learn and understand nonprofit board best practices. It then becomes their role to recruit and ensure that your board works at an optimum level and is trained to do so.

3. **Create continual opportunities for board recruitment.** Think of your nonprofit organization as a living and breathing organism. What that means is that it is in a continual state of change and evolution. And in particular, during the digital age when everything happens so quickly, it's essential to remember that you don't know what could happen six months from now, let alone a year from now. Therefore, you always have to seek to keep your eyes open for board member talent. So make it a point to inform all of your board members and members of your executive team to stay aware of successful, motivated, talented and energized individuals. That way, when you have a board opening, you could ask these people to join the board after a vetting process.

Finally, the Council of Nonprofits provides excellent information if you would like to know more about recruiting a nonprofit board. You'll find links to great resources about how to ask someone to serve on your board, and it also offers everything you need to know about the ins and outs for a high-quality board of directors. *NPPRO*

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WHAT NONPROFITS HAVE LEARNED FROM A VERY UNPREDICTABLE YEAR

FROM AN ONGOING HEALTH CRISIS, TO CIVIL UNREST, TO A HISTORIC ELECTION: WHAT ORGANIZATIONS HAVE LEARNED, HOW TO MOVE FORWARD AND HOW TO REBUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR THE YEARS TO COME

BY **Nhu Te**

It's safe to say that 2020 has been a year like no other, and it's definitely a year that will be remembered for generations to come. This year has brought on so many uncertainties with no end in sight— from a pandemic that has killed over a quarter of a million Americans to date since January, to a series of incidents bringing back into view the racial inequality and injustice that, unfortunately, is still prevalent in our society, to a presidential election that may be among one of the most contentious our nation has witnessed.

All of this said, 2020 has brought on a series of unfortunate events that has impacted everyone, the nonprofit sector included. But with a health crisis, civil unrest, topped with a very contentious election year, it seems fair to say that nonprofits are needed more than ever — to raise money and awareness for related causes. However, nonprofits have felt the burden and pressure of this year, especially at the onset of the pandemic.

Back in June, NonProfit PRO surveyed our audience to understand how the pandemic impacted nonprofits and how nonprofits have acclimated to their new environment. When asked how organizations have changed their approach during the pandemic, here's how 350 survey participants responded in the following areas:

- **Number of channels used to communicate with donors:** 48% increased, 43% stayed the same, 7% decreased and 2% didn't know.
- **Frequency of fundraising and market-**

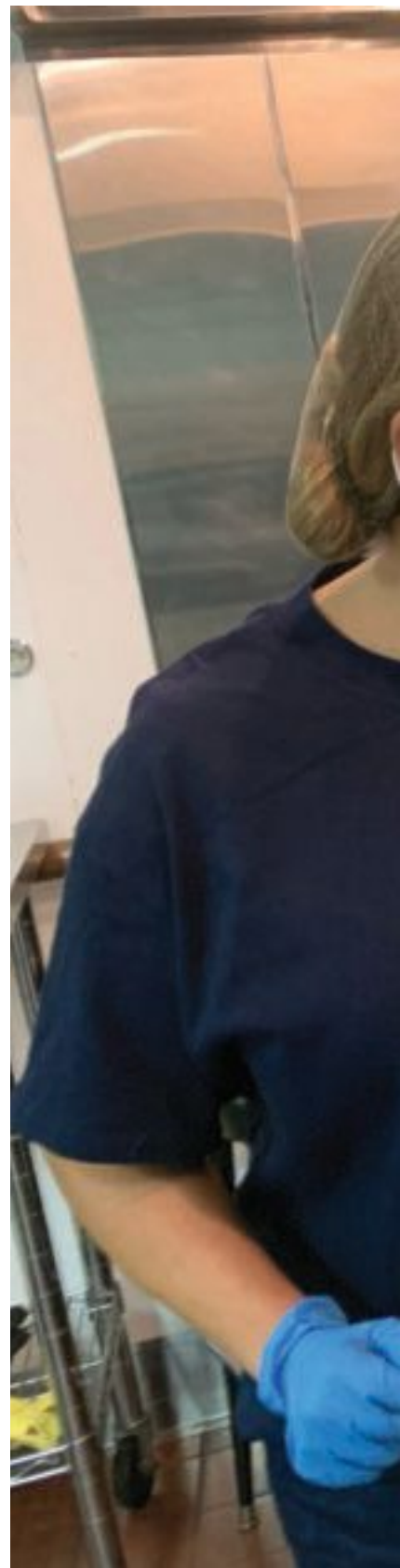
ing communications: 54% increased, 26% stayed the same, 18% decreased and 2% didn't know.

- **Staffing levels:** 8% increased, 65% stayed the same, 27% decreased and <1% didn't know.
- **Spending on nonprofit and marketing technologies:** 20% increased, 53% stayed the same, 24% decreased and 3% didn't know.
- **Spending on fundraising programs:** 12% increased, 54% stayed the same, 32% decreased and 2% didn't know.

Additionally, also in June, Independent Sector released survey results on the impact of COVID-19 on mid-sized and large organizations and found that 83% of organizations experienced a reduction in revenue, 71% have responded with a reduction in services or available operations, 53% of organizations have had a reduction in individual giving and there was a 47% total reduction in nonprofit jobs reported when comparing April 2020 to years prior — this includes 67% furloughed employees and 51% laid off employees since the start of COVID-19.

While the need for nonprofits to keep operations afloat has heightened, it clearly shows that many organizations had to make big changes internally and to their strategies in order to keep their doors open. One of the biggest lessons nonprofits learned this year is to never pull back on communication and/or fundraising in times of crisis.

In particular, food banks have been





The image above shows Jeannette Fournier in action in the kitchen. Credit: Caring for Friends



The image above shows Caring for Friends' volunteers loading up a van with meals and groceries to be delivered. Credit: Caring for Friends

severely impacted by the crisis. Because of the health and economic crisis brought on by COVID-19, there was and still is a much elevated need for food banks. And food banks needed to figure out a way to serve more people, perhaps with limited staff members and volunteers, and figure out a strategy for safely getting food to the men, women and children who are hungry.

For this cover story, we are highlighting how the pandemic has affected one particular food bank, how it has pivoted and how it is preparing for 2021. Caring for Friends is a food bank that serves the five counties in the Greater Philadelphia area, including Bucks County, Chester County, Delaware County, Montgomery County and Philadelphia. To date, the organization's senior meals program serves over 28,000

people, many of whom are homebound seniors and veterans.

Jeannette Fournier, a proud immigrant, a three-time open-heart surgery survivor and a mother, serves as the executive director of Caring for Friends. When asked what drew her to the Philadelphia nonprofit, she said, "... the mission of food and friendship. Traditional food banks do a tremendous, amazing job getting food out the door and what I think is different about Caring for Friends is that we also get that soul-nourishing factor as well. We take the time to talk to people. We take the time to hang out and get to know them."

AS A FOOD BANK, CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE CHALLENGES YOU ENCOUNTERED DURING THE PANDEMIC?

I would say the sudden demand. I've never seen anything like it — I've been a part of organizations that helped build playgrounds in New Orleans after Hurricane

Katrina, and I've been a part of organizations that supported lobbying efforts against weapons of mass destruction. We went from serving 1,400 seniors a week to somewhere between 23,000 and 28,000 during the height of quarantine.

And we're still serving about 23,000 right now, and that's one-on-one, hundreds of one-on-ones, where our volunteers actually sign up with us. But there are dozens of churches that are bringing meals and groceries to seniors in their neighborhood every week. I'm still getting three to six calls a day from seniors asking for food. People who used to donate to us are now picking up. And it's heartbreaking, and it's never enough, but when you're trying to be that caring community, then it becomes natural.

In April, the pipeline broke down entirely. There was

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The image above shows Caring for Friends' volunteers cooking meals for seniors. Credit: Caring for Friends

no more food coming into Greater Philadelphia. Luckily, we had restocked and reshaped our shelving earlier in the year. The strategy of just seeing how far we could push our capacity in January was a miracle because come April, we had food when others didn't, which is why so many people came to us.

In terms of things that have been really hard, this is where that disruptor Warby Parker mentality comes in with me, is trying to deal with bureaucracy in an unprecedented crisis that nobody could have planned for. What made us able to scale our three-year plan in three months, is the fact that we have three leaders. We hop on one phone call, like the Goldman Sachs people do it, and say, "Let's fix this problem." We don't have to have 12 phone calls. We were, in our innocence and ignorance, able to be very nimble and agile because, to us, it was, "These people showed up on our doorstep. Clothe and feed the hungry — let's do it. How do we do it? Who do we talk to?" If we hadn't done what we did, we wouldn't be helping over 100,000 people.

There's just no way. And so now we're making sure that we are doing surveys and we keep making sure our volunteers are happy. Of course we've had some staff turnover, all of that is normal when a new leader comes in, which is me and our CEO and board chair Vincent J. Schiavone. When we came in, we were disruptors by our very nature — he's an entrepreneur, and I'm a fundraiser. I tell it how it is, and all of that is very natural to me. It's not

necessarily natural to people who've been doing it one way for 20 years. I never intended to be such a disruptor, but I just... I couldn't stop long enough. I couldn't stop long enough because in my head, every time I stopped, there was a whole neighborhood that didn't get their food.

BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, DID YOU HAVE A PROTOCOL OR A PROCESS IN PLACE FOR WHEN A CRISIS OCCURS?

About 10 to 15 years ago, there was a situation where there were government discussions about shutting down individuals making meals for others because of food safety reasons. Our founder panicked and said, "What if we can't rely on donations? We'll have to make all those meals in-house instead. We can't leave our people in the lurch." So she set out to create a warehouse and a kitchen, so we have a 2,000-square-foot kitchen that is a production kitchen. And so when the crisis hit, we began producing meals like crazy.

At the height, we were making 10,000 meals a week because we could. Now it wasn't easy, and we were really tired and upset with each other and all the things that come with a high-stress situation, but we were able to keep supplying food however we possibly could to the people we had committed to supply food to.

We were already certified for safe food handling, already wearing hairnets, beard nets and gloves, and handwashing all the time. We just added masks, ►

temperature checks and additional hand sanitizing/ washing protocols, sick leave protocols and kept going.

WHAT DOES THAT STAFF LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO CREATE 10,000 MEALS A WEEK?

We have a kitchen manager and a head chef, Abdellah Abdul-Qawi, and dozens of volunteers a day. He is actually the executive director of Muslims Serve. He's my equal, my peer and my friend, and he and I met at the Hub of Hope, which is a homeless facility underneath City Hall [in Philadelphia]. When we met him, we asked, "[Caring for Friends] has a kitchen that needs to be used more. Would you come and help us manage our volunteers and manage our kitchen production? And you can do whatever you need for your organization at no cost."

It's a fabulous partnership with two unlikely bedfellows. Because we didn't traditionally serve homeless organizations. It wasn't something that we necessarily did, not because we didn't want to; just because it was not something we'd grown to do organically over time, but now we do — including a dozen or so mosques that have caring kitchens as well. We've opened up entirely to a whole new Black and Arab mosque-serving world. And again, it's that caring community.

At our core, I think we all know that we're blessed to be around each other and to have these, I hope, lasting friendships.

LOOKING BACK, WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST LESSON LEARNED IN 2020?

Trust my instincts. And I think that we don't give enough merit to the gut, which is ironic since I talk about those personal relationships all the time; but if something feels a little off in your tummy, chances are it'll come to haunt you. There have definitely been a few situations where I felt like, "That's too shiny and bright. That's not real."

HOW IS CARING FOR FRIENDS PREPARING FOR 2021? WHAT DOES THAT REBUILDING STAGE LOOK LIKE?

Three things: First, we have created a food acquisition task force. So we have a cohort of very experienced tenured professionals who are kindly supporting us as external advisors in how to get food, where to get food and how to distribute food. The second, we just wrapped up discussions about budget, about how to put away for another emergency reserve. And then the third piece is gratitude. I'm going to call, meet with or write close to a thousand people between now and Christmas to just say, "Hey, thanks!" And my colleagues are going to do the same thing. *NPPRO*



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RETHINKING EMPLOYEE RETENTION

WHY STAFF TURNOVER IS INEVITABLE AND HOW TO MOTIVATE YOUR STAR PERFORMERS

BY PAMELA BARDEN, DBA, CFRE

When nonprofit staff discuss employee retention, the consensus is typically that employee turnover is a problem we need to fix.

I totally agree — sort of. Having a stable workforce can improve efficiency, provide institutional memory and significantly benefit donor relationships. Yet, retaining the wrong employees can be more detrimental to the organization, demoralizing to staff and the managers who eventually have to deal with personnel problems that have festered year after year.

As a fundraiser, it's easy to see the importance of retaining employees, especially those who have relationships with key donors. "Donors desire to 'plug in' personally with someone from the organization," Joe Dominguez from Phoenix Rescue Mission said. "If they can make the connection, the long-term benefits are endless: increased giving, volunteering and soliciting others to support the mission."

"Donors often see retention as a mark of organizational stability," Lisa O'Leary, a seasoned fundraiser at a community college foundation, noted. "When employees are committed to the institution, donors are more likely to want to provide the same commitment. These donors value the relationships they have built over the years and appreciate the ease of working together."

WHY COMPLACENT EMPLOYEES ACTUALLY HURT THE ORGANIZATION

But with that said, retaining employees "no matter what" actually hurts an organization. For example, employees who have discovered that average is good enough at your organization often become complacent. Dominguez was hired to lead a team that had staff with 10 to 25 years of service in their positions. ►

Photo: Getty Images By Klaus Vedfelt

“Despite their tenure and vast experience, they were unable to meet the department goals,” he recalled. “They believed they knew the best way to do things because they had been in the position for so long.” Over time, Dominguez added team members whose “primary focus was not to keep their jobs but to figure out how they could do the best job. Their enthusiasm and drive helped change the landscape and propelled us to meet our objectives.”

Additionally, retaining staff who are unexceptional at best and incompetent at worst can send a message to star performers that all work is equally rewarded. An employee can produce good, bad or mediocre work and remain employed. “There is almost nothing more demoralizing to star performers than feeling like their hard work and the results they produce aren’t recognized,” Kellie de Leon, an experienced marketing and fundraising leader in nonprofits and the agencies that serve them, said. “When you retain employees with mediocre performance, it shows your entire team where the bar is set: low. You disincentivize your best employees.”

The end result is often that the very employees who could help your organization grow and succeed leave for other positions, and you are left with sub-par performers who are perfectly happy with the way things are now. Your organization survives, but it can’t thrive and reach its full potential because the people who should be pushing you forward are comfortable right where they are. It’s like trying to win a game of tug of war when a few people are pulling with all their might while the rest are barely keeping their hands on the rope. You may not totally fail, but you’ll likely never make progress.

HOW YOUR NONPROFIT CAN BEST PREPARE ITSELF

A better approach is to embrace the fact that turnover is inevitable and is not a bad thing unless you — and your employees — are perfectly content with status quo, both in terms of organizational performance and personal career growth. With this attitude, you can focus on preparing for — and embracing — turnover.

First, commit yourself to developing current position descriptions that are reviewed annually and updated when needed. “Department work processes are always in a state of flux, and it’s our responsibility to be diligent in regularly reviewing job descriptions and responsibilities,” Dominguez said. This activity needs to be part of regular reviews that cover strengths and weaknesses. de Leon knows that “it’s natural to want to avoid challenging conversations, but we owe it to each employee to be as transparent about negative feedback as we would be about praise.”

You must also make sure there is a healthy environment for cross-training and knowledge-sharing. “In organizations where turnover is minimal, employees may retain tacit knowledge that is often not passed on to other employees before their departure,” O’Leary noted. “Although this can be beneficial when the employee is still there, it can be difficult for future employees to complete these tasks since the knowledge (to do so) was not documented or shared.”

It is also critical to identify your key performers, work with them to define a career path and help them pursue that path. When an employee is committed to personal growth and career enhancement, seeing no place to go in your organization sends a loud message: I have to work elsewhere to keep growing.

Perhaps the most important practice nonprofit leadership must commit to — even if you don’t work in the fundraising department — is to insist on copious reporting of donor inter-

“When employees are committed to the institution, donors are more likely to want to provide the same commitment. These donors value the relationships they have built over the years and appreciate the ease of working together.”

— Lisa O’Leary

actions. This must be a “trust but verify” task because it is so critical when you have turnover of any staff person who has interacted with a donor. A second part to this is to never, ever let only one person have a relationship with a major donor. While one may have the primary relationship, one or more others need to have ongoing, consistent interaction — even if it is a supportive role — so the donor has a familiar point of contact if an employee leaves. These two actions, taken together, are essential for maintaining major donor connections despite inevitable staff turnover.

REWARD YOUR STAR PERFORMERS

Finally, no matter how little funding you have for raises, reward employees for performance, not just for staying around. “Think deeply about how each team member contributes to the promises you make to donors, whether that’s how your programs get carried out or how efficiently you work to make sure their donations stretch,” de Leon said. “Then reward the behaviors and people that align most closely with carrying out your work.”

When you identify your star performers and give them the raises and the support that enable them to achieve their career goals, you will likely retain the people who can help move your organization ahead — and that’s far better than retaining everyone but never moving ahead.

In closing, each person that I invited to contribute to this article has shown himself or herself to be a rising star — two while working on my team and one in the classroom where I was the instructor. Each one has risen to my expectations and then moved beyond, and I could not be prouder. If any had remained where they were when I first met them, the nonprofit community would be less than it is today, and important causes would have suffered. I urge you to join me in accepting that turnover as inevitable — but more importantly, in embracing it as a way to grow people, organizations and missions. **NPPRO**

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RECRUITING AND ENGAGING HIGH-QUALITY BOARD MEMBERS

A DETAILED LOOK INTO HOW TO BUILD MUTUALLY
BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH BOARD MEMBERS

BY JEFF JOWDY

A successful nonprofit organization has a stellar board of directors. It's that simple — and that complicated. An effective board embodies credibility and confidence in its institution. It's one to which leaders aspire to serve; one that knows its strategic role, its fiduciary role and where members leverage their influence to help secure support and engagement — this includes philanthropic support.

Photo: Getty Images By Compassionate Eye Foundation



Serving as a board member is one of the most challenging and rewarding volunteer experiences, both a genuine honor and a serious commitment that, too often, is underplayed. To truly honor your mission, your board must constantly evolve and improve. With the board being so integral to a non-profit's success, it is important that the board constantly evolves and improves. By continually raising the bar in terms of the leaders you want on your board and how the board functions, you enhance fulfillment of your mission.

The first step is an honest analysis of your board development program. This includes examining the following:

- The role and function of your board through the bylaws, job description and other documents.
- Your board composition and any needed enhancements for criteria, including professions, connections and diversity (racial, gender, etc.).
- How meetings are run — when materials are provided both before and after, what is included in the agenda, how meetings are facilitated (ensuring engagement but also respecting members' time and keeping anyone from dominating or derailing the meeting).
- Keeping in mind prospective and aspirational board members. Engage your top 10 or 20 candidates, so they readily accept when you extend an invitation.
- Developing procedures for identifying and vetting prospective board members. Seek nominations from current and former members, staff leadership, major donors and other key friends. Barring extraordinary circumstances, the CEO should have veto ability for any prospective members.
- Establishing your onboarding program — from orientation and resources (such as a board manual) to how you welcome them (e.g. buddy system, mentoring, specific members reach out and welcome members as they are elected and after they participate in their first meeting).
- Having ongoing education and support. Provide support for the board and especially the officers and chairs, so they can maintain their strategic involvement (e.g. developing committee reports, meeting agendas, officer reports, etc.).

Now, here are some tips for keeping those stellar board members engaged:

- **Match members' skills and interests with your organization's needs.** Carefully assign them to a project or committee of interest to them. Ask for their help as an advisor or to provide special counsel.
- **Keep them motivated by giving them a personal connection with your mission.** Have them interact with key staff, other board members and those you serve.
- **Empower your board to make a difference.** Outstanding board members are used to making things happen. Be sure that their involvement is meaningful.
- **Make it personal.** The CEO, board chair and other leadership should be intentional in connecting with members outside of meetings. Provide opportunities for their families to be involved through special programs and events.
- **Connect members with each other and other leaders.** Connections are one of the ways you can thank and

provide a benefit to your board. A board directory that is regularly updated can facilitate this.

- **Communicate with your board regularly through personal updates by phone and email.** Your CEO — and ideally the board chair — should meet personally with each board member at least once a year one on one.

- **Show appreciation through recognition, thank-you notes and cards on special occasions.** Celebrate the board during major events for your institution as well as during National Volunteer Week. Most organizations can find some small perks to provide in appreciation for board service.

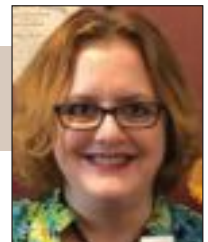
- **Provide recognition to your board members that will benefit both them and your organization.** List the board on your website and in publications. Send news releases about new and reelected members, officers and committee chairs. Recognize them on social media, in internal communications and at board meetings and organization events.

- **Help members learn new skills.** One may welcome the opportunity to grow their team-building skills, while another may need help in presiding at meetings or making a personal fundraising ask.

- **Make it fun!** Stellar board members have many opportunities to serve. Be sure that you provide a rewarding board experience and one that is fun. Celebrate often!

- **Provide ongoing formal and informal evaluations** (e.g. through visits, surveys and focus groups), so members know what's expected, how they're doing and how they can improve, and how your organization can better support your board and ensure a rewarding experience.

High-caliber board members are in increasingly high demand. To ensure that the relationship is mutually beneficial, provide a rewarding experience that shows your deep appreciation for members, nurtures their innate talents, opens doors for them both personally and professionally, and gives them a chance to shine. *NPPRO*



NONPROFIT OPERATIONS AND FUNDING: MIDDLE GROUND CAN BE GOOD

BEING OPEN TO LEARN IN ORDER TO MAKE OUR SOCIETY BETTER FOR EVERYONE

Generational workers are not the focus of this article, but I'd like to start there. Years ago, companies often looked at Gen Xers like they weren't exactly sure what to do with us. We didn't fit into the Baby Boomer mold; therefore, we did not always fit into the corporate model that had dominated for decades. But that was the 1990s. But let's focus on Gen Xers at the management and executive level of companies — specifically, we'll zero in on managers and executives currently working at nonprofit organizations.

In my opinion, Gen Xers are the great connectors. We are often the intermediaries between Baby Boomers and Millennials. We understand enough about each of them to function as translators. We push one group to think beyond what they are comfortable with and we try to help the other group find ways to get work done within organizational structures without dimming their enthusiasm and light.

THERE'S ALWAYS A MIDDLE

In the nonprofit sector, as in society, there are many situations that have the potential to be very polarized, even if it is accidental polarization based on the verbiage we use to describe situations.

Divides might be caused by the ways we perceive donors and clients. Differences of opinion often arise regarding the best "model" for fundraising to support organizational missions. And there are always people who believe the cause they care about is more important than the causes other people choose to support. When there is a wide disparity of opinions, chasms exist between the "sides."

POLAR MODELS

Penelope Burk made donor-centered fundraising the standard for fundraising in the early 2000s. It is based on the idea that nonprofits should center the entire experience of giving around the donor. From Cygnus Applied Research's website, "Donor-Centered Fundraising is an integrated and collaborative approach to rais-

ing money that inspires donors to remain loyal longer and give more generously sooner." The sector has spent years honing the donor experience to make the act of charitable giving feel good for the donor.

Enter Vu Le and his colleagues and their model of community-centric fundraising. "Community-Centric Fundraising is a fundraising model that is grounded in equity and social justice." In a presentation, Le described how he believes donor-centered fundraising often creates a "white savior complex" by seeming to value the donor as a more important part of the equation than the people or community being served.

CROSSING THE DIVIDE

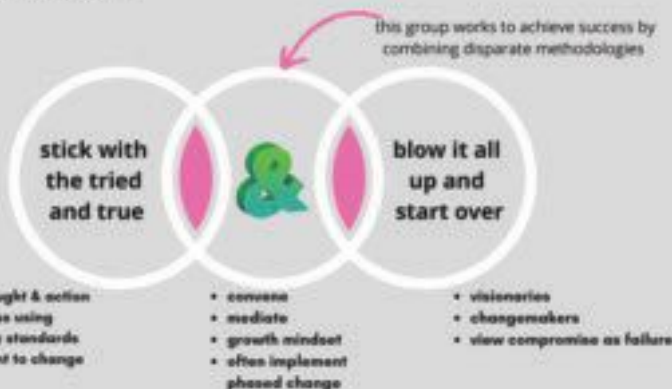
You can see how these two fundraising models exist on opposite ends of the spectrum. What I am saying is that while the chasm between the two schools of thought is often rife with disagreement, it also leaves a lot of room for a combined approach. In some cases, the answer may be to change methods completely. In other situations, a compromise is the answer. Nonprofit structures and philosophies don't need to be all-or-nothing propositions. They could be a calculated combination of ideas, or they could be stepped evolution from one method to another.

The middle ground is full of people who are continually willing to learn and take the best from any schools of thought in order to make their work, their nonprofits, our communities and our societal systems increasingly better for everyone. The independent sector as a whole benefits when there are willing intermediaries, people who help nonprofits understand the characteristics, benefits and pitfalls of varying courses of action, and then choose a path that is best for *all* of the nonprofit's stakeholders. **NPPRO**

Editor's Note: This article has been shortened for this November/December print edition of NonProfit PRO. To read the full article, visit bit.ly/2IWLk4M.

EVOLVING FUNDING IDEALOGIES

When nonprofit operation and funding schools of thought are polarized, a blended approach and a phased process of evolution can be key components to successful adaptation to changing times.



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EDITOR'S PICK

5 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR OUTER ENVELOPE DO ITS JOB

By Willis Turner



Some things are simple. Take your outer envelope, for example. As our founder, Jerry Huntsinger, said, its “purpose is to get ripped open with as much anticipation as possible. Nothing else.”

Another copywriting legend, Herschell Gordon Lewis, wryly added that the envelope’s purpose is also “to keep the contents of the package from falling out,” but that doesn’t make any demands on copywriters, so let’s stick with getting your OE opened for the moment.

There are many ways to encourage people to open your OE. Show a photo of a hungry child or a wet dog, for example, and use the teaser, “Please help” is a classic. It touches the heart, and if the reader is sympathetic to your cause, there’s a pretty good chance they’ll look inside.

It’s a tried-and-true approach, but it has its built-in limitations. First, it only works on people who are already inclined to help. Second, it’s only useful if you’re raising funds to help struggling children or abandoned dogs, or doing other social services work. Third, no single approach works all the time.

To keep donors and prospects excited enough to rip open every package you send them, you need to vary the ways you get their attention. Here are five other OE ideas that have been proven to compel people to see what’s inside:

1. Make an irresistible offer. If you have a front-end or back-end premium, put it right out there. “A special gift for you,” “Your gift will be doubled,” “Your free notecards enclosed” or anything else that promises something tangible in return for their gift will help encourage recipients to open the package or email and see what’s in it for them. (Premiums, of course, aren’t for everyone. And even when they are effective, they are a double-edged sword. More about that in a future message.)

2. Ask a question. People don’t like ambiguity. It creates anxiety. They crave answers. “What will this hungry family do on Thanksgiving?” “How do you know if you have cancer?” “Who was the worst president in history?” Inquiring minds want to know, and they’ll rip open your envelope to find out.

“Sometimes the best teaser is no teaser at all. A plain envelope with no message other than your return address can be very compelling.”

Photo: Getty Images By Carol Yepes



3. Create a fund. Winter fund, spring fund drive, back-to-school fund — for reasons that aren’t entirely clear, donors tend to respond well to funds, drives and similar fundraising “events.” An added bonus is that they’re repeatable. Long-term donors feel a reassuring sense of continuity when they receive the same fund appeal, at the same time, year after year. And if they respond once, it’s likely they’ll respond again.

4. Ask for a favor, also known as the Ben Franklin Effect. Old Ben observed that when a person has performed some small service for you, they are even more likely to do another one. In fact, asking someone to do you a favor actually creates more loyalty than doing a favor for them. So ask, “Please RSVP” or “May I have your opinion?” People who help you with something little will feel so good that they’re even more likely to want to help you do something big.

5. Do nothing. Sometimes the best teaser is no teaser at all. A plain envelope with no message other than your return address can be very compelling. Many organizations find this is the most effective approach of all for them. Just be aware that the success of the blank teaser seems to come in waves, so test it often.

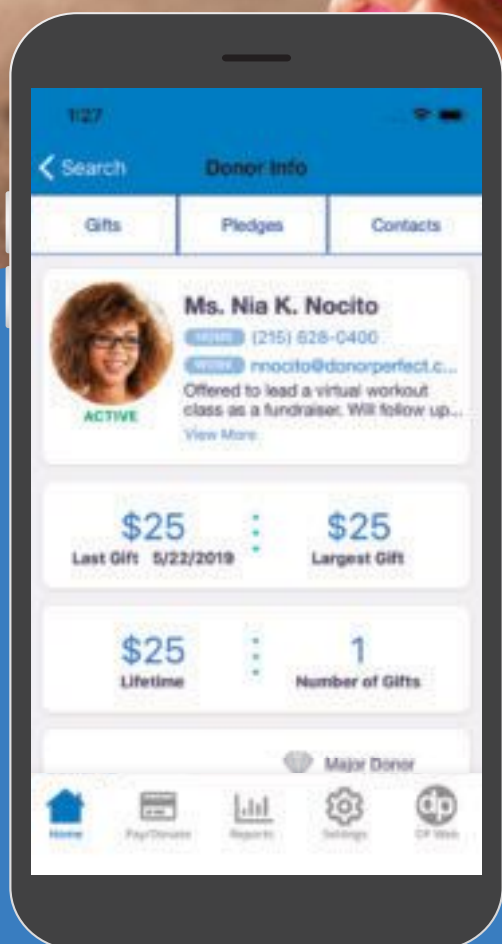
You put a lot of hard work into crafting a great letter and a lot of investment into putting it in front of a carefully selected recipient. With so much riding on your message, you need to do everything you can to ensure it gets read. A few well-chosen words — or no words at all — can spell success or failure... or frustrating mediocrity. Spending time on serious research and testing to find the teasers that work for you will be time well spent. *NPPRO*



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