

Re-energizing Your Organization – A Summary

by Rosemary Bayer and Lee Gorman

November, 2010

Over the past ten months, we've shared with you several ideas about some things to think about and steps you can take to re-energize your nonprofit. So much advice, so little time! So, this month, we offer a suggestion on how to get started and a brief recap of key ideas.



How do we get started?

One simple way to start is to take a brief survey of key staff and board members. Find out what each thinks is going well, and what are their top areas of concern (besides raising money!). You should see patterns in the answers that suggest where there are opportunities to increase effectiveness and/or overall capacity.

Pick one or two small ones that align best with your strategy and are manageable, then:

- Do a quick implementation test
- Check on resourcing, timing, mission drift, and impact
- Decide if it is worth continuing.
- Measure! Define outcomes and indicators when you can, at least measure outputs – and

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Summary of Key Ideas

- It's important to look at the big picture once in a while, to make sure what you're doing is still in line with your mission, and your strategy and plans still line up and move you toward your bigger goals.
- A good strategic plan positions you to:
 - Compete for charitable dollars
 - Provide for continuity
 - Improve decision making and alignment
 - Uncover hidden or potential problems
 - Re-establish your organization in a world of overlapping services

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- The strategic planning process itself can:
 - Identify and correct misalignments between board, director, donor, and staff understandings of mission
 - Develop action plans to ensure that you are operating as efficiently as possible
 - Pinpoint work that can or should be undertaken.
- The Balanced Scorecard is a time-tested strategic performance management tool.
- Your Mission Statement is more than just a public pronouncement of what you do and for whom. It defines your daily work – your programs, clients or customers and the outcomes for which you strive.
- Our industry is moving away from reporting OUTPUTS to measuring OUTCOMES -- our opportunity to prove our effectiveness by showing overall impact, using a logic model that outlines how our efforts become positive outcomes.
- “Capacity building” means doing things that will improve (organizational) effectiveness. Performance improvement is a systematic approach to improving productivity, and competence, using a set of methods and procedures.
- You cannot improve what you cannot measure. Typical nonprofit logic models that assist with analysis and measurement generally consider resources; programs or processes; immediate outputs; and long-term outcomes.
- Prioritizing potential operational improvement projects and initiatives is key to getting the most out of your efforts. A score sheet is a great tool for this.
- The most successful implementations are based on solid action planning and communication, including establishing a process to keep plans and communications current.
- When implementing a project, test pilot implementations to get interim measures and make quick decisions about the full project before you spend a lot of time and money.
- There’s a movement toward more earned income; if you stick to earned income programs that align with and serve your mission, you will steer clear of IRS conflicts and increase your chances of success – because you are still focused on your mission.

You can review the full series of articles in the [NEWSNOTES archives](#). We hope that you have found some useful advice in the series, and we look forward to hearing your stories of success!

Lee and Rosemary

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Rosemary Bayer is Chief Inspiration Officer for ardentCause, L3C, a company dedicated to helping nonprofits increase capacity through operational performance improvement and the adroit use of technology. She has 25 years in the Information Technology industry, and excels at inspiring varied groups of people to pursue a common vision, as well as problem-solving and inventing. Experienced in both for-profit and not-for-profit ventures, she was a founder of the nonprofit Michigan Council of Women in Technology (now 650-plus members) and founder and president of the MCWT Foundation.

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