



view from the **EDGE**

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Sweat the Big Stuff

Another board meeting. Your agenda has the usual suspects – a financial report, a program overview, an update on your next fundraiser. But what about your vision? Your mission? Your impact? Have they failed to show up on the meeting's to-discuss list?

Don't get me wrong – I'm not disparaging a good financial report. However, big-picture thinking is absolutely necessary if you're going to keep an ever-changing group of people on the same page and engaged in your mission. (Think about it – How many current board members or staff members were with you three years ago?)

To get you started, here are three questions (borrowed from Tom Suddes, www.forimpact.org) to get your board, staff, and stakeholders out of the minutia-of-the-moment and engaged in the bigger picture:

1. *How can we go out of business?* Remember, you exist to change lives, save lives or transform lives –not just to exist. How often do you re-examine your activities and ask, “Can we find a solution?”
2. *What would you do with \$100 million?* The number isn't as important as the concept – pick a number that is ten times higher than anything your board is thinking about now and dream about new programs, education, and advocacy opportunities. Until the question is asked, most board debates will hover around incremental tactics – not vision or strategy.
3. *What strategic partnerships can we pursue?* There are nearly 2,000,000 nonprofits and many more socially focused businesses, yet most of our current structures and strategic planning ignores partnership options and focus on organizational bloat. What sorts of partnerships could help accomplish your mission? Why are they being overlooked? What would it take for you to invest in looking for and establishing mission-based partnerships?

Big-picture thinking is the hard work of re-mapping your direction and destination and reaffirming the reason you exist – and it's vital to your organization's success. So next board meeting – sweat the big stuff! SDB



September EDGE Events

Webinar

*Funding the Invisible:
Fundraising messages that work
September 24, 1:30 p.m.*

Get additional information and register for our FREE webinars at www.theEDGEgroup.org/webinar.htm

The 3-Minute EDGE

Straight to your computer or mp3 player, this weekly podcast is packed with tips to help you lead and fund your organization. Sign-up at today at www.theEDGEgroup.org.

Website information

Our website has resources for your benefit. Check it out at www.theEDGEgroup.org.

The EDGE Blog

Info and tips on all aspects of nonprofit health and impact: <http://theEDGEgroup.blogspot.com>

Book Recommendation

Begging for Change by Robert Egger. Written by the founder of the innovative DC Kitchen, this book will push your concept of what nonprofit organizations can do when they put their creative minds to it. Edgy, direct, and a must read for nonprofit leaders.

Contact Information

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Messaging Madness: Why fundraising messages fail and what to do about it

The ability to communicate mission driven outcomes is directly connected to the ability to raise long-term and sustainable funding. Many nonprofit organizations fall short of their fundraising goals because they haven't created or implemented a sound, visible fundraising message.

So what's the secret to creating a visible fundraising message? (1) Communicate outcomes not business process. (2) Tell your nonprofit's story. (3) Talk about the people you serve and the mission focused outcomes achieved in recent days. (4) Talk less about your operation (salaries, buildings, problems) and more about your people and the impact they are having on the community.

By keeping your message focused on your organization's outcomes you can stop the messaging madness. The money will follow! JRS

Missions, Not Mission Statements

Many organizations have allowed their mission to grow stale. Catering to stakeholders who are uncomfortable communicating values and emotion, they create "corporate" statements that describe *what the organization does* rather than *why it exists*. Too many nonprofits are content with having mission statements instead of having missions.

A good mission statement is a compass, pointing you in the right direction. All other tools – strategic plans, business plans, marketing, and fundraising campaigns – are the means for reaching your destination. Don't settle for a mission statement; make sure you have a mission! SDB

Capital Campaign vs. Annual Fund: What's the difference?

While fundraising methods used for capital projects are often similar to those used for your annual budget (direct mail, grants, events, etc.), capital projects have longevity that operation budgets do not and have the potential to provide benefit for years to come. By emphasizing the long-term return-on-investment, you help donors justify making significant gifts to capital projects. So, although the methods may be similar, the message is completely different. JRS



The power of giving back

I absolutely believe in the power of tithing and giving back. My own experience about all the blessings I've had in my life is that the more I give away, the more that comes back. That is the way life works, and that is the way energy works.

Ken Blanchard