

# The Path Forward

## For New & Growing Non-Profit Organizations



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### Check Out These NPO Resources Online:

**www.donatecarusa.com** ~ This organization serves more than 300 American charities by facilitating a car donation program. Once you register your organization with them, you can advertise that you accept donations of used cars. They pick up the car from the donor and sell it, doing all of the paperwork involved in the sale as well as receipting the donor. Then they keep half of the sale price. Usually, old donated cars get sold for \$400 so your organization would realize an average of \$200 for each car. In the past 25 years, the National Kidney Foundation has raised over \$150 million from the sale of more than 650 thousand used cars.

**www.nonprofitexpert.com** ~ This is a wonderful website that contains answers to all kinds of questions that come up everyday for nonprofits like—how to find the fair market value of a donation and what responsibility the organization has legally towards the donor etc.

**www.melissadata.com** ~ When you do donor prospect research you can use this site to find addresses, phone numbers, and information about an individual. You can also enter the name of a grant-maker organization and discover its local addresses, contact people, and worth. This is one way to find smaller foundations that don't make it into the larger data bases. You can do about 50 searches per day for free once you make a free profile.

**www.missionfish.org** ~ This is Ebay's answer to giving to nonprofit organizations. You can register your organization with Mission Fish. Once you are registered, anyone who wishes to contribute a portion of their Ebay proceeds to a good cause can select your organization as the beneficiary.

**www.paypal.com** ~ Paypal assists nonprofit organizations to collect online donations by allowing them to create a viral paypal widget. They can be placed on FaceBook pages, MySpace pages, and on a personal blog or website. They allow donations to be made by the click of a mouse that go directly into your organization's account. Paypal charges a transaction fee for each donation.

**Finding The More To Do More With.** Recently, the executive director of one of my client organizations complained that her board has always required her to "do more with less." The statement jarred me as I instantly imagined what "less" looked like as it became less and less again. Pretty soon this all too common approach results in burn-out, frustration, and a general paralysis that permeates the entire mood of a whole organization. I challenged her assumption that this modis operendi works and assured her that our current job is to find the more to do more with. This phrase embodies the essential task of the current season which has to be Dickensian in that it is concurrently the worst and the best of times.

As I write this, Pres. Obama has just signed the \$800 billion stimulus package into law and the stock market is down over 270 points for the day. According to *Giving USA*, 42% of all corporations and 37% of all foundations predict that they will give away less money this year. Mary Moore wrote this in an article for the *Boston Business Journal* published on January 30: "The [nonprofit] sector has the feel of a triage unit." In other words, there are many nonprofit organization casualties all arriving at the emergency room at the same time, all needing urgent care, many of them bleeding profusely. Are you one of them?

It is the worst of times in which competition for philanthropic dollars is even more severe than ever before. Maybe this reality will end some of the magic thinking that many nonprofits slip into without even knowing it— that they will inevitably find the leprechaun's gold at the end of the rainbow if only they keep chasing him without radically reevaluating the way they function and raise funds.

It is absolutely the time for wisdom, that commodity that doesn't answer when we call urgently in an emergency because wisdom only emerges after having been developed nuance upon nuance from the least audible of whispers heard in that still place where the crowds rush past oblivious. Here are 12 questions for a wise leadership to consider about the working ways of your organization:

1. Are you solvent?
2. What do you contribute to whom that no one else does in the same way or with the same level of excellence?
3. How will your organization be different one year from now, two years from now, five years from now? What would make it unnecessary?
4. What would happen to your organization if something happened to you so that you could not continue in your current role?
5. Why should someone be interested in learning about what you do?
6. What are the returns on investment that a donor to your organization realizes?
7. How do you move small donors to major donors?
8. Do you have a fundraising budget? How did you arrive at your figures?
9. Who would miss your organization if it ceased operating tomorrow? Why?
10. How can you use those people to strengthen what you do internally and externally today?
11. Would your board members miss your organization if it disappeared?
12. Do you believe that you have a serious mission to accomplish? What is it? Can you describe your core mission in 30 words or less in terms to its benefits to your clients?

It is the best of times for those nonprofit organizations who have the courage to take an honest evaluative look at themselves and then make the decisions to change whatever is not working. Once you have analyzed your current situation with cut-throat honesty, you can use the pause that the economic down-turn makes easy enough to explain to refuse to continue business as usual. Perhaps you need to do some strategic thinking in the board room. Perhaps you need to do some cost-benefit analyses. Perhaps you will come through this period changed, matured, and more true to your original vision. Perhaps you will refine and redesign your vision and mission to make it reflect more who you have or intend to become. I know that this is the best of times in which to maximize the potential of your organization so as to emerge (dare we say?) victorious.

**"A fool with a plan can outsmart a genius with no plan any day." ~ T. Boone Pickens**

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