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Can Nonprofits Justify Not Planning?

The response continues to amaze me when I ask audiences of nonprofit leaders to indicate how many do strategic planning, have an annual action plan, or make time to plan out the projects and activities which are critical to their success.

The results of that exercise always show many nonprofits are operating without the benefit of planning.

There are plenty of excuses given and one of the most frequent is, "Everyone is just too busy".

With all of the challenges nonprofits face, time for planning should be a top priority. Don't we all want ways to reduce pressure, alleviate stress, save money, get more done in less time with fewer people, and find solutions to a seemingly never ending list of other problems?

The benefits of planning are unlimited. Structure and focus are created, Solutions to potential problems are identified, time is saved, and measurable goals with specific strategies for achieving them are established. Desired performance levels are set which allows for evaluation and accountability.

I understand many will consider this advice to be a no-brainer but again my point is while most recognize its importance, a large number of organizations fail to take action regarding planning.

It is hard to believe but there are nonprofits that own real estate, operate businesses, and provide services with substantial amounts of money involved; yet don't operate with developed plans for what they are doing, where they are going, or have any direction on how they will get to where they want to be.

If your organization is one of those that is just too busy to plan, you are pretty much just winging it and should not be surprised at your inability to do as well as you would like.

If knowing that devoting time to planning means ensuring success, I would challenge your organization's true commitment to its purpose if planning isn't a regular activity.

Planning doesn't have to be difficult or overly time consuming. Plans don't have to be perfect. Once written, plans can be revised and updated.

Commit to writing about who you are, what your purpose is, and what you want to achieve. Your goals should be measurable. List specific strategies and timelines for realizing your goals. Include what the cost will be for implementing your plan and identify where the needed funds are coming from. Recognize any obstacles that may keep you from being successful and their needed solutions. Who is going to do what tasks should be also included.

Get others involved with planning development; the more ideas the better and an added benefit from expanded participation is you create buy-in.

If you are in a leadership role as either professional staff or as a volunteer, it is your responsibility to make sure attention is given to this simple and effective tool which is critical for realizing the success your organization says its wants to achieve.

A Speaker Who Gives Audiences Motivation, Humor, and How-to

"Hardy was referred to me as a speaker for a Palm Coast Chamber of Commerce Breakfast meeting. There are not enough superlatives to describe his presentation. We were lucky to have this pro and any organization would be as well."

Linda Grabiec Friess

Benefiting leaders of nonprofits, associations, community groups, and volunteer based organizations is the purpose of this monthly newsletter. Your suggestions for issues to address in future editions are certainly welcomed!

My email address is hardy@hardysmith.com and telephone number is [386-451-0652](tel:386-451-0652). I would welcome an opportunity to discuss your organization's needs and how I might be able to help you with practical, easy to implement solutions.

My mission is to increase the performance of America's nonprofits and associations and their essential leadership teams. For testimonials on my ability for delivering results please visit: www.hardysmith.com

