innovative nonprofit *solutions*

Inside This Issue

Our Mission

The INS Group helps nonprofits, government agencies, and faith-based institutions create innovative solutions to build their capacity and sustain their programs and services.

We accomplish this by assessing, designing and implementing organizational development strategies that focus on improving effectiveness and enhancing the organization's sustainability. The INS Group was established in 1999 and provides organizational development and capacity building services nationally.

Message from the President

As summer approaches autumn, there is no better time than a change of season to assess your organizational awareness. How well are your internal systems operating? Do you have the right technology and people in place? Are you providing the highest quality services possible? This issue of The INS Group newsletter is devoted to helping you answer these questions by providing you with tools to make an accurate and comprehensive assessment of your nonprofit.

Have you ever considered the happiness of your employees, board members, and volunteers? What motivates people to put effort toward a cause differs from individual to individual. It is important to attune your management skills to make the most of diverse incentives and create a culture that engages your team. For more on this topic, read "Motivating Your Organization: Inside and Out" on page 2.

Bringing your internal systems in line will also require examining the technology you use. Items as obvious (and important) as data sharing or stakeholder tracking may be overlooked on a daily basis, but ensuring your technology infrastructure is appropriate for your needs can ultimately save you much-needed time and effort. Many software tools exist today (see "Software Solutions for Nonprofits" on page 3) that can make activities such as applying for grants, appealing to donors, and advertising in the community more effective and efficient.

Organizational awareness is about how socially and emotionally intelligent a nonprofit is in all its internal and external functions. Starting on page 4, The INS Group invites you to evaluate your organizational fitness and develop a plan to address your self-assessment results. As you work through the exercise, make a concerted effort to identify both those areas in which you excel as well as those that require attention. Then make a plan and follow it to ensure the continued health and growth of your nonprofit as you move into the next season!

Ruth A. Peebles, President & Founder of The INS Group

Motivating Your Organization: Inside and Out

The mechanics of motivation are easily overlooked in reviews of organizational performance. Fundamental incentives may vary, ranging from individuals who aspire to carry out a vision under a nonprofit umbrella to people who seek to quietly volunteer a few hours a week. Whatever the motivation, understanding when and how to engage board members and staff is a necessary aspect of organizational management.

Motivation falls under two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to satisfaction derived from the enactment of a job itself. Stemming from internal reasons, an intrinsically motivated person enjoys completing a task solely for the nature of the task. In contrast, those who are extrinsicly motivated seek tangible rewards, such as income or prestige.

Traditional values regard work as satisfying a physical need or, more modernly put, a method of obtaining financial security. However, motivation may also integrate social needs such as bonding over a common cause or recognition for community undertakings. This is especially true for unpaid staff members who volunteer their Different motivational appeals can be employed to strengthen the connection between staff members and their work, improve communication within your organization's hierarchy, or broaden the outreach of your mission.

Interact. Depending on the size of your nonprofit, it's important to properly structure interactions among board members, staff, and volunteers to facilitate productivityVolunteers should know from the start what is expected of them and what they should anticipate in return. Staff should be able to clarify these responsibilities and their own, avoiding role confusion and micro-management.

Communicate. Communication should be tailored to what motivates an individual or group. Consider, for instance, a nonprofit's strategic plan, which is designed to articulate the protocols and assignments of its members in order to reach a collective goal. Do board and staff members each have a solid grasp of their roles in relation to the organization as a whole? Do purposeful objectives within a realistic timeframe offer sufficient instructions to the detail-oriented? Do they also communicate the "big picture" to the broader thinkers?

Reach out. After you have internally fine-tuned the function of your nonprofit, share your resources and capacity-building techniques with relevant local organizations. Building new relationships and reinforcing old ones strengthen your active presence in the community. Establishing ties with local partners will also offer continued opportunities to reflect on your nonprofit's mission statement and to find support from others.

Knowing the motivational dynamics of the individuals who contribute to your nonprofit will guide you in customizing a management approach that brings out the best in everyone.

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Sofware Solutions for Nonprofit Management

In today's world, technology is a fundamental component of just about everything, and that holds true for nonprofits as well. Software can be a great asset to your nonprofit, assuming it meets your organizational needs and is used appropriately.

Organizational management software offerings number in the thousands, and new programs are constantly being introduced. Selecting the most appropriate solution for your nonprofit can be overwhelming, but a few preliminary considerations will help you narrow the choices and make the process seem less daunting.

Prioritizing your needs and answering the questions on the right can potentially save a lot of time and money, especially if you discover your current software can already meet your needs. The full functionality of many computer programs is often rarely utilized, and it is worth the effort to investigate the features of an application you already have. If your needs are not being met, then you should look for more robust or relevant solutions.

Depending on the size of your organization, you will want to seek departmental or staff input on their needs. When asking questions, consider not only present requirements but other potential features that could help your nonprofit in the future.

Do you want an events management-oriented tool for providing services to the community, or a more internally-focused program with which to track expenses, summary reports, and donor information? Will every staff member need access to all its components? Additionally, if an online presence is important to your nonprofit, you may want resources to quickly update a website and manage relevant online campaigns.

Software companies such as Blackbaud and Salesforce target larger organizations with a sizeable customer base, offering support for functions that include event registration, donations, custom messaging, stakeholder tracking, and presentations. On the smaller scale, GoodCloud and Mission Research are two examples of companies geared toward quality with affordability. Such businesses offer similar products and services as their larger counterparts but are more segmented in nature, allowing users to control use of single software tools that flexibly match needs and finances.

Prices vary depending on the customized features you desire for your nonprofit, but expect a range in the thousands for high-grade services and hundreds for mid-grade services. Some companies charge on a per-subscription basis, while others are priced at a flat fee. When evaluating software, seek out peers who have experience with the technology. As users, they can provide you with a wealth of information that includes their assessment of ease of use, customer support, and how well the product met their expectations.

A helpful resource for choosing the right organizational system is TechSoup, a technology focused nonprofit that offers discounted software solutions for registered charitable organizations. Featuring products from a multitude of companies that include Microsoft, Adobe, and Symantec, TechSoup is a great resource for software, training, and used hardware.

No matter which software you choose to meet your organization's needs, remember to keep it simple! If the demands of your nonprofit are straightforward, your selection process should be as well.

On a Shoestring? Two No-Cost Tech Solutions

Microsoft Charitable Contributions Database:
http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/charitable-contributions-TC010251225.aspx

Razoo Online Fundraising:
http://www.razoo.com/

Questions you should consider when evaluating software options include:

What are the most important functions your nonprofit requires?

What needs aren't being met with your current software system?

What can your existing infrastructure support (or can you afford to buy new hardware)?

How much training will be required to use a new program?

Is your team virtual or are you headquartered in one location?

What online and/or mobile access services will you need?

Register for our 90-minute webinars!

Go to www.theinsgroup.com to register for the following online learning events:

August 22 at 2pm ET
Grant Writing Made Simple

September 19 at 2pm ET
Unleash the "Inner Fundraiser" in your Board of Directors

October 17 at 2pm ET
How to Grow your Individual Donor Base

November 13 at 2pm ET
How to Create a Sustainable Nonprofit Strategic Plan

Cost per seat: $30

The INS Group can help you learn more about evaluating your nonprofit and capacity building through comprehensive assessments, which are designed to promote healthy organizational maintenance and growth.

To learn more about our innovative solutions for nonprofits – including consultation services for executive coaching, project management, and marketing communication – visit our website at **www.theinsgroup.com**.

Nonprofit Self-Assessment: Free Fitness Tests

Are you ready to look in the mirror? Few of us can't find at least one aspect of ourselves we'd like to improve. While satisfaction is tough for one person, scrutinizing an entire organization can reveal an array of "not-so-pretty" features.

A self-exam of your nonprofit doesn't have to be intimidating. Identifying which aspects of your organization need more attention is a step in the direction of organizational awareness. Similar to understanding and maintaining physical health, organizational awareness is the ability to recognize how your nonprofit measures up in terms of its strengths and weaknesses: What are your available resources? Are they being effectively utilized? How strong is your leadership? What are your nonprofit's possibilities for greater outreach and collaboration? Being able to answer these questions and more will give you a healthier understanding of your nonprofit's needs and how they align with its overall mission.

To help you get started, we recommend a few nonprofit self-assessment tests that can be found online for free:

- A **Checklist of Nonprofit Organizational Indicators** is available from the Free Management Library, a community resource developed by Authenticity Consulting LLC. The checklist contains six indicators (legal, governance, human resources, planning, financial, and fundraising) on a weighted scale that reviews which facets of your organization have fulfilled their essential needs and which need more work, with offered consultation post-assessment (www.managementhelp.org).

- A **Self-Assessment Tool for Nonprofit Organizations** is offered by the Nonprofit Association of Oregon. Covering items from board governance and strategic planning to financial management and fundraising, this tool helps nonprofits determine to what extent they have achieved such activities as developing meeting bylaws and auditing finances. This 90-point questionnaire is designed to give nonprofits a quick overview of the status of their key functions (www.nonprofitoregon.org).

- The **Rapid Development Self-Assessment** (RDSA) toolkit is provided by Development Diagnostics LLC, a St. Louis-based nonprofit. Designed specifically for nonprofit development, the RDSA offers full-scale diagnostics for larger organizations and compressed diagnostics for smaller, more immediate analyses. A more comprehensive tool than those above, the RDSA will help your organization discover more implicit needs (www.developmentdiagnostics.com).

Finding Grants: A Resource Guide

Pinpointing the right grant opportunity is part of your organization's capacity-building process, but it can be time-consuming for even the most knowledgeable grant seeker. The INS Group is dedicated to helping organizations reach their greatest potential with sustainable planning, so we've compiled a guide to the different forms of grants and how to find them:

Foundation Grants: Money offered by individuals, a community collective, or corporations for charitable purposes. Depending on your location and search preferences, we've narrowed your options to three comprehensive databases:

- **The Foundation Finder** (www.foundationcenter.org) offers basic information for foundations in the United States and is searchable by granter name, city, state, zip code, and EIN number.
- **The Ford Foundation** (www.fordfoundation.org) is searchable at a regional level within and outside of the United States. The search engine also offers a convenient option to narrow results by issues and initiatives (e.g. human rights, educational, economic fairness) and approaches (e.g. advocacy, litigation, and reform, network building, public policy analysis).
- **GuideStar** (www.guidestar.org) is useful for researching information about a nonprofit if you already have a particular one in mind. GuideStar promotes transparency and information-sharing among nonprofits for quality purposes.

Corporate Giving Programs: Unlike corporate foundations, which are separate legal entities, corporate giving programs are offered by a company directly, do not have endowments, and are not required to publicly disclose their activities (unlike private foundations which must do so to the IRS through the 990-PF form). The Ford Foundation's grant finder includes the option to search for corporate giving programs in addition to foundation grants. Another option is to check out GrantDomain's (www.tgci.com) corporate giving database, with more than 1,200 corporations and 1,000 corporate foundations searchable by name, city, county, and/or zip code.

Government Funding: This is offered at federal, state, and local levels. Some federal agencies may award discretionary grants that are direct funding for nonprofits; however, most money is dispersed to the state or local levels to distribute accordingly. Grants.gov (www.grants.gov) contains information for more than 1,000 federal grant programs. For more locally based grants, NCGrants.gov (www.ncgrants.gov) covers information and resources for grant applicants, recipients, and state agencies.

As you search for grants, keep in mind 1) the community need your organization will address and 2) your capacity to actually carry out a proposed program. This will help you keep an eye out for the appropriate qualification criteria for activities for which you want to request support. Knowing which type of grant and what amount to apply for is imperative to the grant-writing process and will enable you to submit a much stronger, more successful application.

12 Steps for Successfully Securing a Grant

This CD learning tool is perfect for the novice grant writer or as a refresher for the more experienced grant writer. Available for only $10, you can purchase your CD today at **www.theinsgroup.com**.

The INS Group can assist you with:

Organizational Assessments

Strategic Planning

Strategic Fund Development Planning

Board Development

Grant Writing and Research

Board Fundraising Training

Executive Coaching

Project Management

Marketing Communication

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