

## CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP &amp; GIVING GUIDE

# Navigating the Post-Pandemic World as a Nonprofit

By MARK KAWAUCHI

Staying on a mission — no matter what obstacles stand in the way — is challenging for any nonprofit. Add in a pandemic and things can often get even more complicated, especially for healthcare organizations.

COVID-19 is now the leading cause of death in the U.S. according to an article in Live Science that discusses how the virus has beat out previous top contenders: heart disease and cancer. For nonprofits seeking to serve vulnerable and at-risk populations, this represents an unprecedented challenge.

## PROVIDING CONTINUED CARE WITHOUT INTERRUPTION

The common theme seen with nonprofits who have been able to successfully sustain their mission has been their ability to adapt to change quickly.

For healthcare organizations, there has been a rapid adaptation from in-person appointments to telehealth and adjustment to new regulatory requirements for monitoring and responding to the pandemic. Overall, nonprofit healthcare organizations around the world have had to pivot to a less-traditional way of delivering care.

Additionally, nonprofits providing supplies to at-risk communities have to innovate in order to achieve their missions. The underlying commonality is being able to adapt rapidly to continue client outreach and ensure they receive care without interruption.

A similar trend is being felt by children and family social service organizations. A Harvard Business Review article on reimagining nonprofits to survive the crisis suggests reimagining the impact that the organization wants to have by collaborating with team members and defining a strategy. The team should then analyze people within that organization and ensure leadership is genuinely in touch with staff and reflective of the people the nonprofit serves. From there, organizations can focus on finances and community efforts and use their findings to take advantage of opportunities the pandemic presents.

## MAKING STRATEGIC MOVES AND AVOIDING BURNOUT

Given the uncertainty that COVID-19 will bring in the next six to 12 months, nonprofits need to continue to look ahead. Business strategies will need to evolve and change. For leadership this can present certain challenges — and opportunities.

One key area is avoiding employee and volunteer burnout. Prior to stay-at-home initiatives, working from home was considered a luxury for many employees. Now, high-traffic daily commutes have been reduced, families have seen cost savings of out-of-pocket expenses and people are able to spend more time with their families.

But as the pandemic enters its ninth month, burnout is becoming more and more apparent — especially for nonprofits trying to continue to serve their communities. Challenges of a lack of face-to-face human interaction are apparent, true collaboration with coworkers is missing and networking in the industry has become more of a chore as people experience Zoom or Microsoft Teams meeting fatigue.

In order to avoid this burnout, leadership should make sure to set goals daily on what needs to be accomplished and be

realistic on what tasks can wait. Encourage collaboration between coworkers to hold each other accountable to meet tasks. It is also important for leadership to encourage employees to have dedicated home office space, set boundaries on their time and take breaks during the day or take an occasional full day off to re-energize and regroup.

## FUNDRAISING DURING A PANDEMIC

In the nonprofit space, most fundraising events have also become virtual. Getting donors to attend yet another Zoom meeting has proven to be a real challenge — and getting them to engage once they attend can be harder. The influence or peer pressure of seeing other individuals donating at a live event is no longer there. Nonprofits should continue to reach out to potential donors and network, however, because these virtual efforts also help to build a solid digital engagement strategy and virtual fundraising toolkit that can help them grow their impact over time — despite a pandemic.

## GUIDING TEAM MEMBERS THROUGH CRISIS

A common concern among C-suite executives is “unproductive time” working from home. Competing tasks become evident for those with children, families or parents who require care. A recent Forbes article about keeping employees engaged during a pandemic states that it all comes down to two things: connection and recognition. It is critical for leadership to guide teams by showing compassion and empathy while still communicating clearly — and, in turn, this helps nonprofits maintain their culture, mission and team cohesion.

Providing opportunities to connect with



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volunteers or employees in meaningful ways helps to counter the negative side effects of the pandemic and reinforces loyalty to a nonprofit's mission and team members. These opportunities could be anything from scheduling virtual coffee breaks to check in on mental health or home life, to discussing workload challenges.

This empathy, in addition to consistent recognition, will have a significant impact on morale. In fact, a Harvard Business Review article about employee recognition noted that a survey found 82 percent of employees do not feel recognized enough for their contributions, and 40 percent of employed Americans say they would put more effort into their work if they were recognized more often.

## SILVER LININGS FOR THE FUTURE

There are still innovations that have come out of the challenges brought up from the pandemic. For community clinics, telehealth services may be the future of how they deliver care to more patients, without rapidly needing to increase the size of their facilities. It may also lead to better

preventive care due to the ease of patients attending a telehealth appointment rather than going to a clinic.

Having to pivot during the middle of a pandemic is not easy — and so many nonprofit healthcare organizations are on the front lines of providing essential services during this time. The challenges may seem overwhelming, but there are opportunities for innovation and growth that develop out of crisis. And in the midst of the pandemic, nonprofits can still be inspired to continue their responsibility for helping others.



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