



SAC Nonprofit Experts Bulletin

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THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

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The last two years have been undoubtedly disruptive. On a personal level, we had to undergo changes in our daily routines, disconnection from our social lives, and quite likely difficulty in accessing our support systems. In the nonprofit sector, every organization entered the COVID era with great uncertainty. Long-term plans came to abrupt halts, fundraising campaigns were put on hold, and personnel decisions delayed.

So.. now what? In many ways the COVID era forced positive change: streamlined processes, greater utilization of technology, networking outside of our local communities. Perhaps the “silver lining” in such a disruptive and constantly evolving circumstance is a newfound resourcefulness.

As you’ll soon discover from a global group of nonprofit experts, cutting-edge leaders are adapting to the changing landscape with decisiveness and determination. We’ve assembled some of the most important resources about how to help you succeed in this unprecedented environment, and how to better work through the essential strategic and operational details. Share these resources with your staff, board and volunteer leadership, and consider these three topics as discussion starters:

- 1. What are the most striking changes you’ve seen in your nonprofit organization over the last 12 months? What changes will you keep in place?***
- 2. How have these changes affected your clients and/or the causes you serve? Have you responded accordingly?***
- 3. What are the lessons you can learn from other non-profits in your sector? Are there new opportunities to collaborate?***

As you ponder these strategic questions, consider the insight and resources provided by the nonprofit consultants below. They will help you take advantage of this unique time in your nonprofit's history to **reflect on the past, assess the present and better anticipate the future.**

The [Nonprofit Expert Community](#) is a specialist group within the [Society for the Advancement of Consulting](#), each of whom has been selected and approved for membership based on their consulting history, client endorsements, and ongoing commitment to a high standard of practice, ethics and professionalism.

EVOLVE BY REFLECTING ON THE PAST. Last year's unusually challenging environment forced many nonprofit leaders to reconsider practices and respond to the constraints with newfound resolve.



Martyn Drake's Article, "[HOW NON-PROFITS WILL EVOLVE: The post-pandemic leaps that leaders must now make](#)" allows readers new insight into how they can best evaluate the constraints of this challenging time acknowledge the new and often improved practices that emerged. Drake, the Director of **Binley-Drake Consulting**, shares that *"the most pressing way the nonprofit landscape is evolving is by organisations locking in their lessons from lockdown: embracing Digital by Default, making change in Weeks not Years, and approaching the future with Unbridled Ambition."*



Similarly, **Kris Putnam-Walkerly**, President of the **Putnam Consulting Group**, advises nonprofit leaders to be wary of a return to normalcy causing them to revert to less effective practices in her article, [A Year of Crisis Forced Foundations to Change Bad Practices. They Should Never Revert to the Old Ways](#). She shares: *"The most pressing way the nonprofit landscape is evolving is philanthropists speeding up their grant making, increasing flexibility, and reducing funding restrictions in response to crisis. Now is the time for funder to lean into this progress, get out of their own way, and transform how they give – for good."*

EVOLVE BY ASSESSING THE PRESENT. While an initial assessment of past practices will help realign your nonprofit's focus, additional opportunities exist to assure progress is being made.



Cheryl Hudgins Williams, CEO of **Hudgins Williams Associates**, notes in her article, [The "after times" are upon us -- is your nonprofit ready?](#) suggests that readers consider the effects of this year's boom in philanthropic causes, and maximize the support while also planning for the aftereffects of a potential decline. She utilizes a business perspective for considering this eventually changing system: *"The most pressing way successful nonprofits are evolving is by taking a page from the private sector handbook and shifting more quickly than ever before to address the critical needs of our stakeholders and our world. Here's how you can be one of those success stories!"*



Karen Eber Davis, President of **Karen Eber Davis Consulting**, reminds us that there has never been a better time to reevaluate the relationships with your most important stakeholders. *"The most pressing way the nonprofit sector is evolving is in developing leadership tools to organize and reduce confusion so your people can focus and act on strategic activities."* Her article focuses on practical tips and an implementation strategy to deliberately prioritize your goals in conjunction with community leaders and strategic partners. She also shares a great **Decision Tool** prioritization model in her article: [Your Donors, Sponsors, and Fundraisers: Can You Keep Them? Can You Get Them Back.](#)



Andrew Hollo, Director & Principal Consultant of **Workwell Consulting**, suggests a similar focus in his article, [The evolving landscape of nonprofits](#). Nonprofit leaders must be attuned to the needs of the people directly and indirectly affiliated with their organization, and assuring an even greater level of trust with those working most closely with you. Hollo also offers specific guidance to help them accurately measure the key data points that should be measured.

EVOLVE BY ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE. While reflecting on your nonprofit's past and assessing its current state are important, to fully embrace the evolving landscape of the future, nonprofit leaders must carefully anticipate the future.



One way to effectively navigate change is to deliberately plan for and anticipate strategic challenges before they occur. **Gail Bower**, President of **Bower & Co. Consulting**, notes in her article, [A Critical Skill to Navigate the Evolving Nonprofit Landscape](#), the importance of being a **futurist**. She encourages nonprofit leaders to anticipate and intelligently forecast their future needs and develop strategies accordingly. She advises: *“The most pressing way the nonprofit landscape is evolving is ongoing, relentless change and the need for new capacities to steer nonprofits out of 20th century skills and thinking and better anticipate and seize opportunity.”*



Rachel Healy, Co-Founder & Managing Director of **Open Eye Creative**, reminds leaders that future success requires enhancing your organization's content to better suit the learning styles and media consumption of younger audiences. In her article, [Your Secret Weapon In Nurturing Donors of The Future](#), she outlines exactly how to reach and secure the investment of the younger generations through the content they know best: **video**. *“The most pressing way the nonprofit sector is evolving is a need to build relationships with younger donors now by prioritizing video content.”*



Dr. Patton McDowell, President of **PMA Consulting**, interviewed several nonprofit experts on his podcast [Your Path to Nonprofit Leadership](#) about specific strategies they would employ to better anticipate the future. Dr. Michael Marsicano, President & CEO of the Foundation For The Carolinas, shared his perspective as the leader of one of the largest community foundations in the U.S. in an episode entitled [Moving Through the Pandemic: What Do We Do Now?](#) Chris Carnie, a research consultant specializing in strategic funding for international nonprofits, brought his global perspective to an episode entitled [Fundraising During A Perfect Storm](#).