TIM MAGEE

Non-Profit Consultant, Writer, Trainer, Mentor

724 Via Santo Tomas
Claremont, CA 91711

6 Avenida "A" 13-41 Zona 9
Ciudad Guatemala, Guatemala, América Central

Non Profits: What Can't You Get Done in Your Work Week?
Survey Results Analysis & Solutions August 2014
Read this newsletter online.

First, thanks to all of you who filled out the survey: "Non Profits: What Can't You Get Done in Your Work Week?" You can see the completed survey results of the bottom of this newsletter—and an analysis just below.

The idea of the survey was to help me update our non-profit training program —Version 2.0 is set to launch in September—and I want to make sure that it best addresses your needs.

Participants were able to check as few or as many boxes in the survey as they deemed appropriate. The percentages are the number of respondents that checked that box. So for example, 62% of respondents found "finding foundations" important and checked the box.

Analysis of the Survey
By focusing on items that more than 50% of respondents felt were important—I arrived at the following analysis.

Respondents chiefly had four overarching areas of concern where they felt they needed the most help:
1. not knowing how to design a project that will solve challenges faced by their constituents
2. not being able to find the funding to accomplish project goals
3. having their project stall—either during implementation or at the end of the grant cycle
4. after evaluating the project realizing that project objectives had not been met

For more information on the analysis—and solutions for the challenges above you can:
- continue reading this newsletter
- download a PDF of the analysis and solution descriptions
- see a graphic presentation that shows the interrelationships within the challenges and details solutions

Over the next three weeks I will share with you how you can incorporate these solutions in a step-by-step fashion into the process of project design, funding, and implementation.

Areas Where Respondents Felt They Needed the Most Help:
1. Failing to design a project that will solve challenges faced by their constituents. Areas needing help:
- 57%: clearly identifying underlying causes for challenge that needs to be solved
- 82%: finding solutions which have shown evidence of success

Solution. Conducting a community needs assessment allows us to gauge need, its underlying causes—and also identify community assets which could be in support of the project. Researching scientific studies about the underlying causes can provide us with information on solutions which have shown evidence of solving them. Developing project management documents using this solid information can help lead to funding and project management successes.

2. Not being able to find the funding to accomplish program goals. Areas needing help:
- 70%: developing program budgets, action plans and schedules
- 54%: learning effective online fundraising techniques
- 69%: improving donor development and engagement
- 62%: identifying foundations for funding programs
- 57%: writing effective donor email newsletters

Solution. Engaging with donors can be greatly enhanced through well supported documentation that can increase funding opportunities.

Know your audience: Preliminary donor communication falls into two general camps:
A. Management documents (budgets, action plans, schedules, fact sheets) which show that you have a thorough understanding of and capability of managing the project. These are most useful for an initial presentation to a granting organization.

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B. Compelling stories that show the human side of your community and captures the donor's heart and imagination. These are most useful for connecting with individual donors (individuals provide more than 70% of all non-profit funding in the US). These are typically a regular, scheduled communication such as a newsletter.

3. Having their projects stall—either during implementation or at the end of the grant cycle. Areas needing help:
- 60%: challenges in organizational management
- 65%: challenges with project/program management
- 64%: finding time to get everything done
- 60%: prioritizing and delegating

Solution. Planning, planning, planning. Conducting a needs assessment at the inception of an idea for a project allows you to identify underlying causes that need to be solved. Asking a community for their perception of their need begins building ownership within your constituent community for project sustainability.

Continuation: This ownership can lead to community support of project outcomes for the long term—even after the end of the grant cycle.

Developing solid project management and presentation documents means that 12 months from now, when the funding arrives, the team will know what to do. Developing modifiable templates for these management and presentation documents can reduce the time that you need for writing them. A well thought out set of these templates will also make it easier for you to delegate their production.

4. After evaluating the project realizing that project objectives had not been met. Areas needing help:
- 93%: project evaluations
- 48%: final reports

Solution. Including a simple monitoring and evaluation plan in your initial management documents means that upon completion of the project you're not going to need to determine what to evaluate. It also means that for a midterm evaluation, you can see if there are problems that can be nipped in the bud before project completion.

This is another example of how to find time to get everything done: standardized templates which include a monitoring and evaluation plan will reduce time necessary for designing a new one for each project—and will reduce the time for performing the evaluation at project's end. It also means that transparent communication with donors will be quicker to develop and be professionally articulated.

In summary:
A well-designed project will take organizational mission and community need, and focus on solving underlying causes using evidence-based best practices. This in turn will lead to well developed project management documents. These will increase your opportunities for project funding—and project management successes.

Including a simple monitoring and evaluation plan will help lead to greater successes in meeting project objectives. Developing community ownership in the project will lead to a greater chance of long-term continuation and sustainability of positive outcomes.

All of these tools will provide the resources for developing end-of-project donor communications that will help in securing future funding—and will provide staff with lessons learned for improving the next project design cycle.

One concern. My single concern from the survey is that only 14% of respondents felt that it was important to determine if their community could be part of the solution. This is scary. What happens when funding ends at the completion of the grant cycle? Community ownership in a project can, if well planned, lead to the sustained continuation of positive outcomes through their sense of ownership and support.

Please follow this link to see an interactive graphic of these concepts and to download a PDF of this newsletter.

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HERE ARE THE FULL RESULTS OF THE SURVEY
See the original survey here.

Percentages indicate the percentage of total respondents who checked that item feeling it was important for them to improve.
Where do you need the most help?

Program design
- 9%   identifying a community in need for developing a new program
- 57%   clearly identifying underlying causes for a challenge that needs to be solved
- 14%   determining if your community can be part of the solution
- 82%   finding solutions which have shown evidence of success

Program and organizational management
- 60%   challenges with organizational management
- 65%   challenges with project/program management
- 70%   developing program budgets, action plans and schedules
- 33%   volunteer management

Fundraising
- 36%   undeveloped plan for online fundraising
- 54%   learning effective online fundraising techniques
- 69%   improving donor development and engagement
- 62%   identify foundations for funding programs
- 60%   identifying compelling stories to share with donors

Communications
- 57%   writing effective donor email newsletters
- 36%   writing webpage content
- 47%   maintaining a regular blog
- 47%   orchestrating social media

Post-project
- 93%   project evaluations
- 48%   final reports
- 34%   annual reports

What are your biggest personal challenges with accomplishing all of your tasks?
- 64%   finding time to get everything done
- 60%   prioritizing and delegating
- 48%   lack of training for starting some of the tasks listed above

Free zone:
Write in anything else that we missed that is important to you.
Here are a sample of your responses.
- Monitoring and Evaluation activities.
- It is very important to share success stories from field projects on different thematic areas so that these could inspire online course participants .
- human resources stories of experiences and ways it was negotiated for woman staff to work with male leaders and staff in developing countries.
- effective grant writing techniques.
- As a coach for several non-profits --- a beyond the pilot project vision and plans for strategic implementation are common challenges that I have observed. Many simply think a good cause will carry the day. A great survey list .

Sincerely,

Tim Magee