



MISSION CONTROL: BOARD LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Preparing Leaders to Serve with Confidence, Clarity & Impact



Mission Control: Board Leadership Training
Program Agenda

9:00AM - Welcome & Orientation

Objective: Set the tone for the day and establish participant expectations.

- Icebreaker activity: Participants share their motivations for joining a nonprofit board.
- Identifying your passion
- Overview of the certificate program objectives.

9:15AM-10:00AM Understanding Nonprofit Governance

Topics Covered:

- The role of a nonprofit board.
- Legal and fiduciary responsibilities (duty of care, loyalty, and obedience).
- Governance vs. management: Defining boundaries.
- Activity: Case study discussion on governance challenges.

10:00AM –11:00AM - Financial Oversight and Accountability

Topics Covered:

- Understanding nonprofit financial statements (budget, balance sheet, income statement).
- Ensuring financial transparency and compliance.
- Activity: Hands-on exercise reviewing a sample nonprofit budget.

11:00AM -11:15AM - Break

11:15AM-12:15PM - Fundraising & Resource Development

- Board role in fundraising (giving, getting, advocacy)
- Building donor and community relationships
- How to support staff in fundraising without “asking for money” directly
- Role-play: Making the case for support

12:15PM -1:15PM - Strategic Leadership and Mission Alignment

Topics Covered:

- Setting and aligning with the nonprofit’s mission, vision, and values.
- Role in strategic planning and goal setting.
- Monitoring organizational performance.
- Activity: Workshop to draft a strategic goal for a sample nonprofit.

United Way of Hunterdon County

20 Fulper Road

Flemington, NJ

Tel: (908) 782-3414

www.uwhunterdon.org



1:15PM -1:30PM - Break

1:30PM -2:30PM - Effective Communication and Advocacy

Topics Covered:

- Building relationships with stakeholders (staff, volunteers, donors, community).
- Advocacy for the nonprofit's mission.
- Crisis communication strategies.
- Activity: Role-playing exercise on donor engagement and advocacy.

2:30PM-3:00PM - Closing Session

Topics Covered:

- Recap of the day's learnings.
- Open Q&A session.
- Distribution of certificates of completion.
- Activity: Participants share one key takeaway and commit to one action they will implement as a board member.

**The ability to learn is
the most
important quality a
leader can have.**

Sheryl Sandberg

Welcome & Introductions **Evaluating & Choosing the Right Nonprofit Board to Join**



Evaluating and Choosing the Right Nonprofit Board

Choosing the right nonprofit board to serve on is a meaningful decision—it's a blend of passion, purpose, and practicality. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you evaluate and choose the right nonprofit board to join.

Clarify Your Motivation

- Ask yourself:
 - What causes or communities matter most to me?
 - Do I want to give back, expand my leadership skills, or build connections?
 - How much time and energy can I realistically commit?

Tip: Align your personal values with the nonprofit's mission.

Assess Your Skills and Interests

- Think about what you can contribute:
 - Strategic thinking?
 - Fundraising or finance?
 - Legal, HR, or marketing expertise?
 - Community connections or lived experience?

Tip: Boards need a mix of professional skills and diverse lived experiences.

Research Potential Organizations

- Look for:
 - A mission you believe in
 - A track record of impact and transparency
 - A leadership team (staff and board) you respect
- Check:
 - The nonprofit's website
 - IRS Form 990 (on Guidestar or ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer)
 - Social media and news mentions

Tip: Attend an event or volunteer first to get a feel for the organization's culture.

Ask the Right Questions

When exploring a potential board role, ask:

- What is the board's role in strategy, fundraising, and oversight?
- How often does the board meet? What's the time commitment?
- What are the expectations around giving or fundraising?
- Are there term limits or committee assignments?
- What training or support do new board members receive?

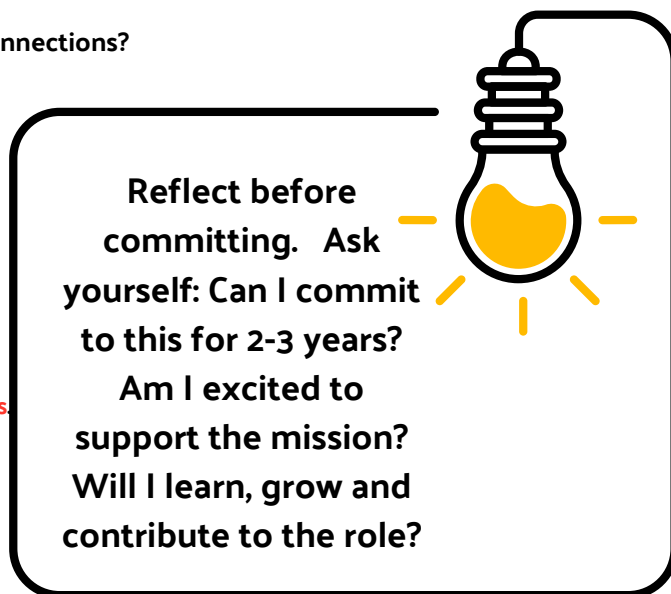
Tip: A good board values clarity, transparency, and inclusion from the start.

Evaluate Board Dynamics

Look for:

- Engaged, diverse, and respectful board culture
- Healthy relationship between board and staff leadership
- Clear policies (e.g., conflict of interest, financial oversight)

Tip: Ask if you can attend a meeting as a guest or talk to a current board member privately.





New Board Member Orientation Guide

You've just joined your board, congratulations! What's next? Here's a helpful guide on what you can anticipate as you onboard to the organization. Depending on the size of the organization, you may have a board point person, the CEO may guide your onboarding or you may need to seek some of the onboarding out yourself. It's a great idea to ask the Board Chair or CEO about the onboarding process and outline what you feel would be helpful as you settle in to your new role.

Introduction and Welcome

- Welcome from Chair or Executive Director
- Introduction of board members and key staff
- Brief history of the organization and its mission

Nonprofit 101

- Nonprofit structure and legal status (501c3, etc.).
- How a nonprofit board operates vs. for-profit boards.
- General responsibilities of the board (governance vs. management)

Roles and Expectations

- Job description for board members
- Time, financial, fundraising, and meeting expectations
- Conflict of interest policy, code of ethics, confidentiality policy
- Term limits and renewal process

Governance Model and Organization Chart

- Diagram of roles (board, executive, committees, etc.).
- Reporting relationships
- Decision-making process (committee vs. full board)

Key Documents to Provide

- Articles of incorporation and bylaws
- Strategic plan or goals
- Most recent financial statements and 990 filing
- Current budget and fundraising plan
- List of board members, committees, and contact information
- Staff organizational chart and key roles

Meetings, Communication, and Operations

- Calendar of meetings, retreats, and events
- Voting procedures, quorum, and attendance expectations
- How agendas are set and minutes kept
- Preferred communication methods (email, phone, etc.)

Introduction to Culture and Values

- Values, mission, and unique culture of the organization
- Stakeholders and community relationships
- Testimonials or stories from people we serve

Training and Support

- Training resources (governance webinars, workshops)
- Who to contact with questions (board chair, executive, committees)
- Mentorship or buddy program for new members

Understanding Nonprofit Governance

The Role of a Nonprofit Board

Legal & Fiduciary Responsibilities: Duty of Care, Loyalty and Obedience

Governance vs. Management: Defining Boundaries

Activity: Case Study



Role of a Nonprofit Board



Direction: The board guards the mission of the organization and through guidelines steers it in the right direction



Oversight: The board monitors the activities, the health and the ethical behavior in the organization



Resources: The board ensures that the organization is well equipped to fulfill its mission, i.e. has adequate finances, capable staff and an esteemed reputation



Nonprofit Board Fit Checklist

Use this checklist to assess and strengthen your board's governance practices.

Board-Staff Roles

- Roles and responsibilities between board and staff are clearly defined.
- Board members avoid direct supervision or direction of staff.
- There is a board-staff responsibilities matrix in place.

Board Engagement

- Board members attend meetings regularly and participate actively.
- Each board member has a clear role and expectations.
- Annual board evaluations are conducted and reviewed.

Diversity and Inclusion

- The board reflects the diversity of the community it serves.
- There is a recruitment matrix that identifies gaps in experience or background.
- Board members receive DEI training annually.

Financial Oversight

- The finance committee meets regularly and reviews reports.
- Board members understand financial statements and budget basics.
- The organization undergoes an annual independent audit.

Strategic Focus

- The board uses a current 3-5-year strategic plan to guide decisions.
- Board meetings focus on strategic and mission-aligned topics.
- Progress toward strategic goals is reviewed at least quarterly.

Accountability

- The Executive Director receives an annual performance review.
- The board conducts self-assessments at least every two years.
- There are clear policies for onboarding and removing inactive members.

Conflict of Interest and Ethics

- There is a written conflict-of-interest policy signed annually by each member.
- Conflicts are disclosed and addressed with transparency.
- Ethical concerns can be reported anonymously and addressed promptly.

Founder's Syndrome (if applicable)

- Leadership transition planning is in place.
- No single individual dominates board decisions.
- Policies limit long-term concentration of power in one person.

Legal and Fiduciary Responsibilities



The three core legal responsibilities of nonprofit board members—Duty of Care, Duty of Loyalty, and Duty of Obedience—form the foundation of good governance. These fiduciary duties ensure that board members act in the best interest of the organization.



DUTY OF CARE

Definition:

Board members must make informed and thoughtful decisions, exercising reasonable care and diligence in overseeing the organization’s activities.

What It Means in Practice:

- Attend and prepare for board meetings.
- Read financial statements and reports.
- Ask questions and seek clarification when needed.
- Make decisions based on evidence, not assumptions.
- Monitor the organization’s programs and performance.

Risk of Violation:

- Rubber-stamping decisions without review.
- Ignoring red flags (e.g., budget deficits or legal risks).
- Missing meetings or being unengaged.



DUTY OF LOYALTY

Definition:

Board members must act in the best interest of the organization—not for personal gain or to favor other interests.

What It Means in Practice:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, both financial and relational.
- Disclose potential conflicts and recuse yourself from related votes.
- Keep organizational matters confidential.
- Prioritize the mission and stakeholders above personal or professional gain.

Risk of Violation:

- Doing business with the nonprofit without disclosure.
- Making decisions that benefit your company, employer, or friends.
- Leaking sensitive information.



DUTY OF OBEDIENCE

Definition:

Board members must ensure the organization complies with all applicable laws and adheres to its stated mission and governing documents.

What It Means in Practice:

- Follow the organization’s mission, bylaws, and policies.
- Ensure proper IRS and state compliance (e.g., 990 filings, charitable registration).
- Keep the nonprofit focused on its purpose as outlined in its charter.
- Avoid “mission drift” in decision-making and strategy.

Risk of Violation:

- Using funds for unauthorized purposes.
- Taking on projects or grants outside the scope of the mission.
- Failing to ensure compliance with laws and regulations.

Governance vs. Management

Defining Boundaries



The Boundary Between Governance and Management



Governance (Usually the role of the board of directors)

The board focuses on the big picture and oversight. Specifically:

- **Setting mission and goals:** Establish and safeguard the organization's mission, values, and strategic direction.
- **Creating policy:** Develop policies to guide the organization's operations.
- **Accountability:** Monitor financial health, legal compliance, and overall performance against goals.
- **Hiring and evaluating the executive:** Select, support, and assess the chief executive (such as Executive Director or CEO).
- **Risk oversight:** Identify and manage risks at a policy and oversight level.

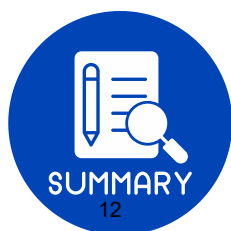


Management (Usually the role of the executive and their team)

Management focuses on day-to-day operations and implementation.

Specifically:

- **Running programs:** Develop and implement programs and services in line with the mission and goals.
- **Staff supervision:** Hire, manage, and evaluate employees and volunteers.
- **Administration:** Handle financial transactions, human resources, fundraising, and communications.
- **Reporting:** Provide the board with information about operations, financial health, and progress toward goals.



The board (governance) – sets direction, policy, and oversight.

Staff (management) – executes day-to-day operations.

A healthy nonprofit maintains a clear boundary between these roles while honoring a strong, collaborative relationship. The board focuses on “What” and “Why”, and the executive and team focus on “How”.

Best Practices for Navigating the Boundary between Governance and Management in a Nonprofit:

Clearly Define Roles and Expectations

- Develop written job descriptions for the board, executive, and key roles.
- Provide board orientation to clarify responsibilities and limits of their role.

Foster Collaborative Communication

- Establish open, constructive communication between the board and executive.
- Schedule regular meetings to align on goals and progress, without crossing into day-to-day operations.

Respect the Chain of Command

- Boards should communicate through the Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer instead of directing individual staff.
- The executive should be the main point of contact for all operational matters.

Develop Clear Governance Policies

- Adopt a board policy manual that specifies roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.
- Provide conflicts of interest policy, financial oversight policy, and other guidelines to help clarify responsibilities.

Support Continuous Improvement

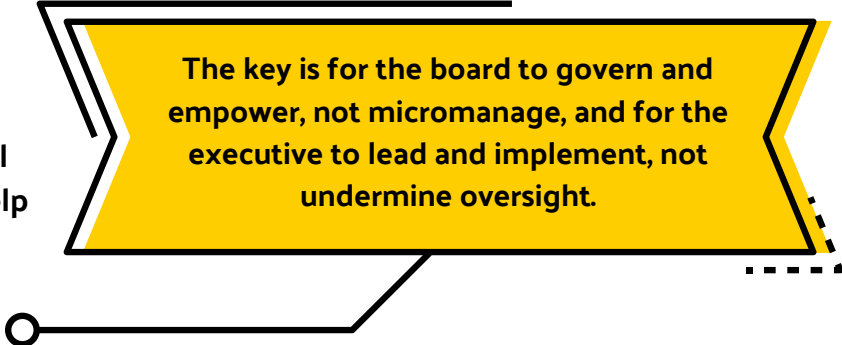
- Provide training and education for both board and executive on roles and responsibilities.
- Perform periodic self-evaluations of board and executive relationships.

Align Goals and Expectations

- Set shared goals at the outset of each fiscal year.
- Develop performance measures to track progress against goals – this guides oversight without blurring responsibilities.

Handle Conflict Appropriately

- Establish a clear conflict resolution process in case disputes arise.
- Encourage open, respectful dialogue to resolve differences promptly.



The key is for the board to govern and empower, not micromanage, and for the executive to lead and implement, not undermine oversight.

Governance vs. Management Scenarios

Objective: To distinguish between the strategic oversight function of the board (governance) and the day-to-day operational execution led by management (staff).



Unexpected Funding Opportunity:

Situation: An opportunity arises to apply for a significant grant that aligns with the organization's mission but requires a quick response and some deviation from the current operational plan.

What are the respective roles of the board and staff in deciding whether to pursue this opportunity and how?



Program Performance Issues:

Situation: Data indicates a key program is not meeting its desired outcomes and may be inefficient.

How should the board provide oversight and support, and what actions should the staff take to address the program's performance?



Staffing Challenges:

Situation: The Executive Director position becomes vacant unexpectedly, and the nonprofit needs to ensure continuity and leadership during the transition.

What is the board's role in this situation, and what management responsibilities are crucial for the interim period?



Potential Ethical Concern:

Situation: A conflict of interest issue arises regarding a board member's relationship with a potential vendor.

How should the board address this ethically and legally, and what is the staff's responsibility in maintaining transparency?

Financial Oversight and Accountability

Understanding Nonprofit Financial Statements

Budget, balance sheet, income statement, 990s

Ensuring Financial Transparency and Compliance

Fundraising and Resource Development Responsibilities



Fundraising and Resource Development Responsibilities

Culture of Philanthropy
Overcoming the Fear of Fundraising
Practice the Ask!



Board Member’s Responsibilities in Fundraising and Resource Development

Fundraising and resource development are vital to the sustainability and growth of the organization. As fiduciaries and ambassadors of the mission, board members play a critical role in ensuring the organization has the financial resources required to fulfill its goals. As part of their governance role, each board member is expected to actively support and participate in the organization’s fundraising and resource development efforts.

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:



Personal Giving (“Give”)

Each board member shall make an annual personal financial contribution to the organization that is personally significant. This contribution reflects commitment and leadership and demonstrates to potential funders and donors the board’s belief in the mission. Many foundations and major donors require 100% board giving as a condition for funding consideration.



Fundraising Participation (“Get”)

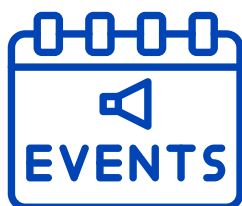
Board members are expected to assist in raising funds to support the organization’s mission. Activities may include:

- Identifying and cultivating prospective donors.
- Soliciting contributions, sponsorships, or in-kind support.
- Leveraging personal and professional networks to expand the organization’s donor base.
- Advocacy and Relationship Building



Board members shall serve as ambassadors for the organization by:

- Promoting the mission within their circles of influence.
- Making introductions to potential donors, partners, or stakeholders.
- Participating in cultivation and stewardship efforts, including meetings, site visits, and special events.



Event Support

- Board members are expected to:
- Attend and support major fundraising events.
- Help secure event sponsorships or in-kind donations.
- Assist with ticket sales and event promotion.
- Invite colleagues, friends, and networks to participate in events.

Board Member's Responsibilities in Fundraising and Resource Development (cont.)



Strategic Oversight

The board, collectively, provides strategic oversight of the organization's development efforts by:

- Approving and monitoring the organization's fundraising plan.
- Setting fundraising goals in collaboration with staff.
- Reviewing fundraising performance regularly.
- Supporting and/or participating in the Development or Fundraising Committee, if applicable.



Donor Stewardship

Board members are encouraged to take an active role in donor stewardship, which may include:

- Making thank-you calls or sending handwritten notes.
- Attending stewardship events and receptions.
- Sharing stories and testimonials that demonstrate impact.



Expectations and Support

To ensure board members are equipped to fulfill these responsibilities, the organization will:

- Provide orientation and training in fundraising practices.
- Offer opportunities for board members to engage in development according to their skills and comfort levels.
- Recognize and celebrate board contributions to fundraising efforts.



Effective fundraising requires the active involvement of every board member. By participating in both giving and fundraising, board members demonstrate leadership, enhance the organization's credibility, and help secure the resources needed to advance the mission.



Culture of Philanthropy

A culture of philanthropy is an organizational mindset where everyone—board, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders—shares responsibility for fundraising and values giving as an essential, mission-driven activity. It goes beyond just raising money; it centers on relationships, gratitude, and shared purpose.

A culture of philanthropy exists when:

“Fundraising is embraced as a core function by the entire organization, and every person sees their role as supporting philanthropy in some way.”

– Adapted from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

Mission and Donor-Centered Mindset

- Fundraising is seen as inviting investment in impact.
- Donors are partners, not just funders.
- Gratitude and storytelling are woven into communications.

Leadership Commitment

- Executive leadership and the board model engagement in fundraising.
- Leadership prioritizes resource development as a strategic function.

Focus on Relationships Over Transactions

- The organization invests in building, nurturing, and stewarding relationships.
- Donor engagement is ongoing, not just when money is needed.

Shared Responsibility

- Everyone plays a role—not just the development staff.
- Board members make connections.
- Program staff share success stories.
- Volunteers express appreciation.

Internal Alignment

- Fundraising is integrated into strategic planning, budgeting, and evaluation.
- Development staff are part of decision-making, not siloed.

Building a Culture of Philanthropy

- Educate the Board and Staff
- Offer training on fundraising principles and impact storytelling.
- Clarify that everyone’s actions influence donor relationships.
- Celebrate Philanthropy
- Acknowledge gifts, milestones, and donor impact often and sincerely.
- Share success stories internally to reinforce mission alignment.
- Embed Fundraising into Organizational Values
- Include philanthropy in job descriptions, evaluations, and onboarding.
- Discuss fundraising in regular staff and board meetings.
- Make thanking donors a shared responsibility.
- Create meaningful stewardship touchpoints beyond receipts.
- Encourage Cross-Team Collaboration
- Invite program staff to join donor events or contribute stories.
- Invite program staff to join donor events or contribute stories.
- Ensure fundraising staff understand the work they’re supporting.

A strong culture of philanthropy strengthens fundraising outcomes, deepens relationships, and fuels mission growth. It’s not about asking everyone to become fundraisers—it’s about inspiring everyone to be fundraisers in their own way.

The AAA Way to Fundraising Success

The AAA Framework is a simple and effective approach to help board members and nonprofit leaders engage in fundraising with clarity and confidence. It breaks fundraising success into three actionable components:



Ambassador

“Be the voice and face of the mission.”

As an Ambassador, your role is to represent the organization and help others understand its impact.

Key Actions:

- Speak passionately about the mission.
- Share success stories and personal connections.
- Invite people to learn more (e.g., events, tours, newsletters).
- Represent the organization at community or networking events.

Goal: Spread awareness and build trust.



Advocate

“Champion the cause and invite engagement.”

As an Advocate, you help build support and connect people to the mission in deeper ways.

Key Actions:

- Introduce potential donors, partners, and influencers to staff.
- Share fundraising campaigns with your networks.
- Ask for non-monetary support (e.g., volunteering, attending events).
- Help the organization gain visibility or access to resources.

Goal: Create connections and momentum.



Asker

“Invite people to invest in impact.”

As an Asker, you take part in direct fundraising efforts, encouraging donors to give generously and joyfully.

Key Actions:

- Make your own personally meaningful gift.
- Participate in donor meetings or campaigns.
- Ask for support during events, appeals, or one-on-one conversations.
- Follow up and thank donors sincerely.

Goal: Secure financial support and deepen relationships.

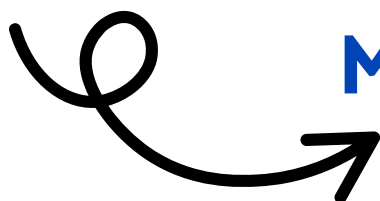


- **Share on social media**
- **Attend events** **Speak at events**
- **Host a house party**
- **Make warm introductions to donors**
- **Bring a friend to a tour**
- **Write thank-you notes**
- **Join a major gift solicitation**

Overcoming the Fear of Fundraising

Board members may hesitate to engage in fundraising due to:

- Fear of rejection or hearing “no.”
- Lack of experience or training.
- Misunderstanding fundraising as “asking for money.”
- Concern about pressuring friends or professional contacts.
- Belief that only wealthy individuals can make a difference.



Mindset Shift!

Fundraising is not just about asking for money—it is about:

- Inviting others to join a cause they care about.
- Building relationships and sharing impact stories.
- Creating opportunities for donors to make a difference.

When approached from a place of passion and purpose, fundraising becomes a powerful form of service.



Strategies to Build Confidence

Understand the Mission and Impact

- Learn the organization’s programs, outcomes, and success stories.
- Practice speaking about why the mission matters to you personally.

Start with Stewardship and Support Roles

- Make thank-you calls or write notes to donors.
- Invite people to events or tours—no direct ask required.
- Serve as a “door-opener” by making introductions.

Participate in Team Fundraising

- Pair with a staff member or experienced board member on donor visits.
- Join group solicitations or campaign committees.
- Co-host small gatherings with friends or colleagues.

Ask for Time, Talent, or Treasure

- Not all fundraising is financial. Asking someone to volunteer, provide in-kind support, share expertise, or connect you to their network—all contributes to development.

Practice Makes Progress

- Role-play conversations and donor asks in training sessions.
- Attend fundraising workshops or webinars.
- Share successes and lessons learned with the board.

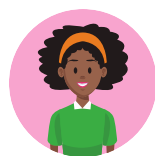
Practice the Ask



Lisa: Mid-40s café owner. Her niece is in your program. Attended a gala once, never donated. Curious about impact. Could give \$500-\$2,500.



Jorge: Retired school principal. Passionate about education. Long-time volunteer. Conservative giver, might consider \$100-\$250.



Tech executive, early 30s. Social media follower. No prior giving. Strong interest in equity and innovation.



Ravi: Mid-career engineer. Parent of a student. Wants details before giving. Could be a recurring donor.

Role play using each of the donor profile and tips below to craft a story, make an ask and follow up for their response and how to move forward. Remember to leave the conversation with clarity about the donation or next steps.



What Makes a Great Ask?

- ✓ Build rapport
- ✓ Share a compelling mission story
- ✓ Clearly state the ask: “Would you consider a gift of \$X?”
- ✓ Pause and listen
- ✓ Express gratitude

Strategic Leadership and Mission Alignment

Setting and Aligning with the Nonprofit's Mission, Vision, and Values
Role in Strategic Planning and Goal Setting.
Monitoring Organizational Performance.



Setting and Aligning with the Nonprofit’s Mission, Vision & Values.



Mission

The mission describes the organization’s purpose – what it does, who it serves, and how it serves them. It focuses on the present.

Example:

”To provide affordable and sustainable energy solutions that improve lives and support communities around the world.“

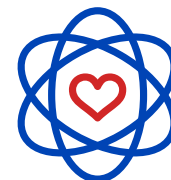


Vision

The vision expresses the long-term goal or desired future state of the organization. It’s aspirational and focuses on the future.

Example:

”A world where everyone has access to clean, reliable energy.“



Values

Values are the guiding principles and beliefs that shape the organization’s culture, decision-making, and behavior. They reflect what the organization stands for.

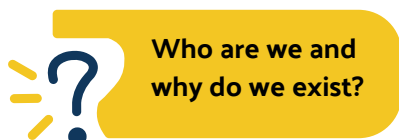
Examples of Core Values:

- Integrity - We act with honesty and transparency.
- Innovation - We pursue new ideas to improve and grow.
- Sustainability - We are committed to long-term environmental and social impact.
- Client Focus - We prioritize our clients in every decision.
- Collaboration - We believe in teamwork and mutual respect



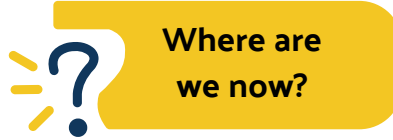
What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is a roadmap that guides the organization toward its mission and goals over a defined period of time (typically 3-5 years).



Who are we and why do we exist?

Answered by: Mission and Values. It explains your core purpose, whom you serve, and the principles that guide you.



Where are we now?

Answered by: Organization Background and SWOT Analysis. It assesses your current situation, resources, weaknesses, and opportunities.



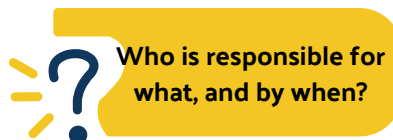
Where do we want to be in the future?

Answered by: Vision and Goals. It sets your future direction and desirable outcomes



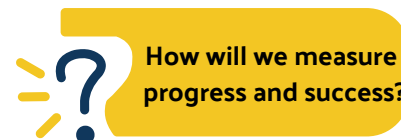
How will we get there?

Answered by: Strategies and Action Plan. It details the steps, initiatives, and approaches you will use to move toward your goals.



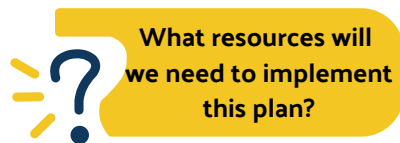
Who is responsible for what, and by when?

Answered by: Action Plan and Timeline. It assigns responsibilities and timelines to keep everyone on track.



How will we measure progress and success?

Answered by: Performance Metrics or Evaluation. It specifies indicators or benchmarks to track progress and adjust if necessary.



What resources will we need to implement this plan?

Answered by: Resources and Budget. It identifies financial, human, and material resources required.

A nonprofit's strategic plan answers these key questions to create a clear road map from its current state to its future goals. It guides decision-making, helps align stakeholders, and provides a basis for measuring progress and impact.

Role in Strategic Planning and Goal Setting

A checklist for board members participation and role in strategic planning and goal setting.

- ✓ **Set the Strategic Direction: Define and affirm the mission, vision, and long-term priorities.**
- ✓ **Provide Oversight, Not Operations: Stay at the strategic level – not in the weeds of day-to-day operations.**
- ✓ **Contribute to Environmental Scanning: Bring outside insights into the planning process**
- ✓ **Approve and Endorse the Plan: Formally review and adopt the strategic plan.**
- ✓ **Monitor Progress and Outcomes: Keep the plan alive through regular review and accountability.**
- ✓ **Support Goal Setting at the Organizational Level: Help set and review annual goals linked to the strategic plan.**
- ✓ **Champion and Resource the Plan: Be ambassadors and advocates for the plan's success.**

Understanding your role and supporting the senior leadership in their roles can help ensure the thoughtful development and execution of a meaningful strategic plan.



SMART GOALS

SMART is a widely used framework for setting clear, effective goals. Each letter stands for a key characteristic that makes a goal well-defined and achievable:

S mart

The goal should be clear, well-defined, and focused. It answers the questions:

- What exactly does the nonprofit want to accomplish?
- Why is this goal important?
- Who is involved?

M easurable

The goal should include concrete criteria for tracking progress and success.

- How much? How many?
- How will we know when it's accomplished?

A chievable or attainable

The goal should be realistic given available resources, time, and constraints.

- Is this possible?
- Do we have what we need to achieve it?

R elevant

The goal should be aligned with your mission, strategic plan, or priorities.

- Does this support broader objectives?
- Is it the right time?

T ime Bound

The goal should have a deadline or timeframe to create urgency and focus.

- When will this be completed?
- What can we do today, next week, next month?

SMART GOALS: EXAMPLES



Goal: Fundraising

Specific: Raise \$100,000 in unrestricted funding through individual donors and corporate sponsorships.

Measurable: Track total dollars raised against a \$100,000 benchmark.

Achievable: Based on past fundraising and new strategies, this is realistic with a 20% increase.

Relevant: Unrestricted funding supports operations and mission delivery.

Time-Bound: To be raised by December 31 of this calendar year.



Goal: Engagement

Specific: Increase board meeting attendance to 80%.

Measurable: Attendance will be tracked in meeting minutes and averaged quarterly.

Achievable: The executive committee will implement calendar notices and phone call reminders to boost attendance.

Relevant: Higher engagement signals stronger oversight and participation.

Time-Bound: To be achieved by Q4 of this calendar year..



SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis is a great tool for organizations to use to assess the overall organization, programs and opportunities as well as the risks associated with both action and inaction.

STRENGTHS

What do we do well? What internal resources do we have? What advantages do we have over similar organizations?

WEAKNESSES

What factors in our control detract from our ability to be more effective? What areas need improvement? What does our organization lack?

OPPORTUNITIES

What opportunities exist in our area of expertise that we can benefit from? Is the opportunity sustainable or one-time?

THREATS

What might threaten our effectiveness? What factors exist that are beyond our control? Are there any anticipated unfavorable trends?

Monitoring Organizational Performance

Monitoring organizational performance is a core responsibility of a nonprofit board. It ensures the organization remains mission-focused, financially healthy, and operationally effective. Here's a structured guide on how nonprofit boards can fulfill this oversight role effectively:



Monitor Strategic Goal Progress

What to Track: Implementation of the strategic plan; Key milestones and deliverables; Alignment of activities with mission and vision



Oversee Financial Health

What to Review: Budget vs. actuals (monthly/quarterly); Cash flow, reserves, revenue sources; Audit reports and IRS Form 990.



Track Program Impact & Outcomes

What to Measure: Number of people served; Program-specific outcomes and impact indicators; Feedback from beneficiaries



Executive Director/CEO performance

What to Measure: Leadership alignment with mission and goals; Communication and strategic thinking



Conduct Board Self Assessment

What to Reflect On: Engagement, attendance, and contributions; Governance effectiveness; Understanding of roles and responsibilities



Monitoring Organizational Performance

Sample Categories and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Category	KPI's	Target	Current Value
Mission Impact	# of People Served		
Mission Impact	Outcome Achievement Rate		
Mission Impact	Client Satisfaction Score		
Financial Health	Program Expense Rate		
Financial Health	Operating Reserve Ratio		
Financial Health	Fundraising ROI		
Fundraising	Donor Retention Rate		
Fundraising	New Donor Acquisition		
Board & Governance	Board Attendance Rate		
Board & Governance	Board Giving Rate		

Effective Communication and Advocacy

Building relationships with stakeholders (staff, volunteers, donors, community).
Advocacy for the nonprofit's mission.
Crisis communication strategies.



Five Best Crisis Communication Case Studies and Examples

Today's uncertain times increase the need for organizations to prepare for unexpected events. Explore these real-life examples of crisis communications case studies to protect your reputation and operations – in case fire lands on your doorstep one day!

Every brand, no matter how big or small, will face challenges from time to time. These can range from minor issues like a typo in a marketing campaign to major crises with global implications.

Some brands navigate these situations skillfully, while others struggle. Real-life crisis communication examples—including both best crisis communication examples and bad crisis communication examples—offer crucial insights into effective crisis communication strategies.

Whether dealing with internal crisis communication examples or broader corporate crisis communication examples, studying case study crisis communication scenarios helps organizations develop a robust crisis communication plan that effectively responds to difficult circumstances. For internal communicators and HR leaders, the crisis communication case studies in this article serve as valuable lessons in the art and science of dealing with crises.

What is Crisis Communication?

Crisis communication involves the technologies, systems, and protocols that enable an organization to efficiently communicate during a crisis. This strategic communication function is designed to mitigate damage to the organization's reputation by asserting control in situations that could potentially be chaotic and damaging.

When communicators ensure consistent messaging, manage stakeholder expectations and maintain trust through transparency and prompt updates, effective crisis communication plays a critical role in mitigating damage.

How Does Internal Communications Play a Role in Crisis Communications?

In a crisis, internal communications are not just about damage control—they're about safeguarding your organization's most valuable asset: its people. Knowing what to do—and what to avoid—when managing an internal communications crisis can make all the difference in how your organization emerges on the other side.

As an internal communicator, your responsibilities go beyond fostering engagement and connection. You must also be prepared to respond swiftly and effectively (use a modern internal communications tool!) when disaster strikes, demonstrating the importance of internal communications. Clear, consistent, and empathetic communication is essential in guiding employees through the turmoil, and ensuring that everyone understands the organization's stance and next steps.

The insights below will help create a comprehensive crisis communication plan template to navigate crises with transparency, speed, and accountability.

Crisis Communication Best Practices

To handle crisis communications, communicators should adhere to key principles outlined in a wide-range of crisis communication case studies:

1. **Stay consistent with your message:** Every message should align with the organization’s overall narrative. For instance, if transparency is a priority, all internal updates should reflect this value, as seen in corporate crisis communication examples.
2. **Practice what you preach:** Deliver on promises. If safety measures are announced, promptly implement them to build trust—another common theme in many case study crisis communication examples.
3. **Balance speed with accuracy:** Timing is key in a crisis, but so is accuracy. Rather than rushing to communicate incomplete information, prioritize getting the facts right. For example, if there’s an incident affecting operations, promptly acknowledge it, but follow up with detailed, accurate information as soon as it’s available. Successful crisis communication plans balance both speed with accuracy to maintain credibility.
4. **Lead with empathy:** Recognize the emotional impact of a crisis on employees and tailor your communication to acknowledge their concerns. For instance, if layoffs are imminent, express understanding and support, offering resources like counseling or career transition services. Internal crisis communication examples show that addressing concerns compassionately can strengthen trust.

By following these principles, you can navigate crises more effectively and maintain the trust and confidence of your audiences. And, if you’re looking for more on this front, our internal communications best practices article can help.

Stay crisis-ready with reliable communications

Send timely updates, track engagement, and keep everyone informed.

Five Best Crisis Communication Case Studies to Know

Wounded Warrior Lavish Spending Wounds Reputation

In 2016, CBS News and The New York Times published stories levying accusations that the nonprofit was wasting donor money. “It has spent millions a year on travel, dinners, hotels and conferences that often seemed more lavish than appropriate, more than four dozen current and former employees said in interviews,” the Times wrote. “Former workers recounted buying business-class seats and regularly jetting around the country for minor meetings, or staying in \$500-per-night hotel rooms.”

Employees specifically questioned the organization’s spending to take hundreds of the organization’s employees to a conference at a Colorado resort. They alleged that the nonprofit

spent nearly \$3 million, describing a party with excessive food, drink, and fun all fueled by donor funds.

The nonprofit first denied the allegations and demanded a retraction from the media. But the organization soon fired several key leaders, two of whom had been making \$473,015 and \$369,030, according to tax documents. According to the Washington Post, the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance suspended the charity's seal designation, and donations plummeted. In September 2016, about 85 employees were laid off.

While donations continued their precipitous decline in 2017, Wounded Warrior set about righting its ship. It brought on new leadership and started to rebuild and grow in 2018 under the helm of new Chief Executive Officer Mike Linnington. A retired general, Linnington pledged that Wounded Warrior Project would no longer hold lavish events and would increase scrutiny on spending for travel and all expenses. In addition, his salary was set at \$280,000, far less than his predecessors. After an investigation, the Better Business Bureau again gave the organization its seal of approval, finding that "its spending has been consistent with its programs and mission."

2. Slack: Honesty is the Best Policy When Failures Occur

Effective crisis communication is about managing a message and building trust through honesty and transparency. Slack showed exactly how to do this during a service outage that left many users without access. Let's take a look at the details behind Slack's standout crisis management:

Context: In February 2022, Slack, a widely used messaging platform, experienced a significant outage that left many users unable to access its services. The disruption was attributed to a configuration change that unexpectedly increased activity on the company's database infrastructure, causing instability and downtime.

Analysis: Slack's swift and transparent response serves as a strong crisis communication case study. The company posted updates on its status page approximately every 30 minutes, detailing its progress toward a solution and openly acknowledging any errors made during the process. Additionally, Slack used Twitter to keep users informed, using a tone that was both apologetic and sincere. This multi-channel approach ensured that users were kept in the loop throughout the five-hour disruption, demonstrating Slack's commitment to honest and transparent communication.

Discussion: By being open about the problem, promptly sharing updates, and acknowledging their missteps, Slack reinforced its reputation as a customer-focused company. Their communication strategy aligned with best practices by being timely, transparent, and empathetic, which are essential elements in maintaining trust and credibility during a crisis. Moreover, Slack's decision to use multiple platforms—its status page for detailed updates and Twitter for real-time communication—ensured that a wide audience was reached.

Conclusion: As one of the best crisis communication examples, Slack's handling of the 2022 outage is a compelling case study in crisis communication. Their approach illustrates the importance of transparency, timely updates, and multi-platform engagement in managing public

perception and maintaining trust during a crisis. By being forthright about the situation and openly acknowledging their errors, Slack not only managed to preserve user trust but also set a strong example for other brands on how to communicate effectively in the face of adversity.

3. Cracker Barrel: No Response is a Response

When Cracker Barrel unexpectedly found itself at the center of a social media storm over the firing of an employee, many expected the company to respond swiftly. However, Cracker Barrel opted for an unconventional crisis communication approach by letting the internet frenzy unfold without any public comment. This approach demonstrated that sometimes silence can be an effective part of a crisis management plan.

Our next case study explores how the brand's decision to remain quiet during a viral crisis became a surprising example of how no response can be a powerful crisis communication strategy.

Context: In February 2017, Cracker Barrel faced a crisis when a customer named Bradley Reid publicly questioned why his wife, Nanette, was fired from her retail manager position after 11 years. His post on Cracker Barrel's corporate website went viral, and the hashtag #JusticeforBradsWife began trending across social media. The situation quickly escalated, with over 17,000 signatures on a Change.org petition, altered Yelp and Google pages, and viral content on YouTube plus other platforms mocking the brand.

Analysis: Despite the growing public outcry and media attention, Cracker Barrel chose to remain silent. The company did not issue a public response, comment on the controversy, or acknowledge the online movement. While some brands and internet users capitalized on the situation for humor or publicity, Cracker Barrel's silence became a notable aspect of the crisis.

Discussion: Cracker Barrel's handling of the incident challenges traditional crisis communication techniques. While this strategy defied conventional wisdom, it ultimately had minimal impact on the brand's core customer base, showcasing that an effective crisis communication plan can sometimes involve choosing not to engage.

Conclusion: The key takeaway for brands is that while silence carries risk, it can also prevent further escalation, especially when the crisis is fueled primarily by online chatter rather than significant operational failures or ethical breaches.

4. Johnson & Johnson: Immediate Corrective Action Saves the Day

In 1982, Johnson & Johnson found itself at the heart of a public health crisis. Instead of deflecting blame, the company launched an immediate, transparent response that set a new benchmark for crisis management.

This crisis communication case study is now one of the most notable examples of crisis communication. Read on to find out how the company's approach became a model for corporate crisis response worldwide.

Context: Johnson & Johnson faced a major crisis when seven people in Chicago died after consuming Tylenol capsules laced with cyanide. Despite evidence suggesting that the tampering occurred after the product reached store shelves, the company's handling of the situation became a benchmark for effective crisis communication examples.

Analysis: Johnson & Johnson immediately took decisive action by halting all Tylenol advertising, issuing safety warnings, and sending 450,000 messages to healthcare facilities and stakeholders. The company maintained full transparency and did not attempt to downplay the situation, even expressing regret for not switching to tamper-proof packaging sooner.

Discussion: The company's response set a standard for crisis management, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and swift action. Johnson & Johnson's efforts were widely praised by the media and public, helping the Tylenol brand recover and setting a precedent for how companies handle similar situations.

Conclusion: This crisis communication case study is considered one of the best examples of effective crisis management in corporate history. By prioritizing consumer safety, transparent communication, and taking immediate corrective action, the company not only reduced the impact of the crisis but also reinforced its reputation for integrity and responsibility.

5. Pepsi: Taking Responsibility Builds Trust

When Pepsi released an ad featuring Kendall Jenner, the company quickly found itself at the center of a public relations firestorm. This crisis communication case study explores how Pepsi managed the crisis with rapid communication and what lessons can be learned from their approach.

Context: In April 2017, Pepsi launched an advertisement featuring Kendall Jenner that quickly led to controversy. The ad portrayed Jenner leaving a modeling shoot to join a protest, ultimately handing a police officer a can of Pepsi to "resolve" tensions. The ad was immediately criticized for trivializing social justice movements and co-opting serious issues to sell a product. The backlash was intense, with widespread condemnation across social media and traditional news outlets, labeling it as tone-deaf and culturally insensitive.

Analysis: Initially, Pepsi defended the campaign by describing it as a message of global unity and harmony. However, within less than 24 hours, the company shifted its stance in response to the overwhelming criticism. Pepsi pulled the ad from all platforms and issued a second statement acknowledging its mistake: "Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace, and understanding. Clearly, we missed the mark, and we apologize." This rapid decision-making showcased Pepsi's agility in crisis management and its recognition of the public's sentiment.

Discussion: Pepsi's response was notable for its speed and directness. By quickly retracting the ad and publicly admitting fault, the company took a proactive stance that demonstrated accountability and empathy. This helped contain the immediate fallout and prevent a prolonged controversy that could have further damaged the brand's reputation. Despite the initial uproar,

Pepsi's brand weathered the crisis relatively well, thanks largely to its quick acknowledgment of error and efforts to communicate openly with its audience.

Conclusion: Pepsi's swift apology and the decision to pull the ad were crucial first steps in mitigating negative reactions. By responding quickly and sincerely, Pepsi managed to limit the damage to its reputation. This crisis communication case study demonstrates the importance of prompt, empathetic communication and taking responsibility in a crisis, which can help protect a brand's image and maintain public trust.

Worst Crisis Communication Examples

1. Open AI: Surprises Aren't Always a Good Thing

After OpenAI abruptly fired its CEO, Sam Altman, the news sent shockwaves through the tech world. The decision, announced on a Friday afternoon with little explanation and no immediate plan for leadership succession, quickly escalated into a crisis. Let's examine the missteps and lessons learned from this controversial episode in tech leadership.

Context: In November 2023, OpenAI faced a PR crisis when news broke that CEO Sam Altman had been abruptly fired. The announcement came on a Friday afternoon, catching the tech world by surprise and leaving major stakeholders, including Microsoft, in the dark.

Analysis: OpenAI's response to the crisis was poorly managed and an example of bad crisis communications. The company failed to prepare for the backlash, and communication was inconsistent, with no immediate follow-up to address concerns. The decision to release the news on a Friday, without a clear successor or explanation, fueled confusion and criticism.

Discussion: This situation illustrates the pitfalls of inadequate crisis management. OpenAI's lack of preparedness, inconsistent messaging, and poor timing resulted in a loss of trust among stakeholders and negative media attention. The newly appointed CEO later admitted that the process had not been handled smoothly, further highlighting the missteps.

Conclusion: The key lessons are clear: have a crisis communications plan in place, avoid releasing significant news on a Friday expecting it to pass unnoticed, and ensure consistent, clear communication with all stakeholders. Proper preparation and transparency are essential to maintaining trust and minimizing damage in such situation.

2. Twitter: Confusion and Controversy Aren't the Way

When Elon Musk acquired Twitter for \$44 billion, his unconventional approach to managing the platform quickly became a crisis.

This social media crisis communication example examines whether Musk's unorthodox methods were reckless or a calculated risk — and what lessons can be learned from this high-profile rebranding saga.

Context: Since the Twitter acquisition, Musk had introduced a series of controversial changes, including firing employees, banning and unbanning users, charging for verification badges, and rebranding Twitter to “X” in 2023 without prior announcement.

Analysis: Musk remained active on the platform, nonchalantly implementing these changes without formal crisis communication strategies. The sudden rebranding unsettled some advertisers and users but eventually normalized as people adapted to the new brand name, “X.”

Discussion: While Musk’s unconventional approach garnered significant media attention, it demonstrated a lack of strategic PR planning. The rebranding could have been managed more effectively to avoid initial confusion and backlash.

Conclusion: Musk’s handling of Twitter’s rebranding offers a critical lesson: purposeful and well-communicated changes are crucial for maintaining brand trust and stability. The controversy underscored the need for structured crisis communication plans, especially during significant transitions.

3. Facebook: Slow and Vague Responses Breed Distrust

In the 2010s, Facebook found itself at the center of a massive data privacy scandal. This case study explores how Facebook’s delayed reaction to the scandal turned a breach of trust into one of the most significant PR disasters of the decade.

Context: Facebook faced a major crisis when it was revealed that Cambridge Analytica, a political consulting firm, had collected data from up to 87 million users without their consent through a third-party app. This data was then used to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election, sparking public outrage and leading to one of the biggest PR crises.

Analysis: Facebook’s response to the scandal was slow and marked by a lack of transparency, making it one of the worst crisis communication examples. It took several days for CEO Mark Zuckerberg to publicly address the issue, explain what had happened, and identify those affected. By the time a formal apology was issued, significant reputational damage had already occurred, and trust in the platform was compromised.

Discussion: This crisis communication case study underscores the importance of a timely and transparent response in crisis management, especially when dealing with sensitive user data. The company’s initial failure to clearly communicate the facts of the situation and outline corrective measures compounded the fallout.

Conclusion: The Cambridge Analytica scandal serves as an example of crisis communication failure, emphasizing the need for prompt action to prevent lasting harm to a brand’s reputation. The key lesson for companies is to quickly explain what went wrong, who was affected, and what steps are being taken to prevent future issues.



Appendix

Module: Governance vs. Management
Recommended Governance Practices
Ten Basic Responsibilities of Non-Profit Boards

Module: Financial Oversight and Accountability
Sample Financial Statement
Sample 990
How to Read a 990
Reviewing Form 990
Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3)

Module: Fundraising and Resource Development Responsibilities
Beyond Fundraising

Module: Strategic Leadership and Mission Alignment
Mission, Planning and Evaluation

