



Setting up Your Non-Profit for Sustainable Growth:

Acquiring New Resources & Doing More with Less



raefConsulting

raefConsulting, Pty. Ltd.

www.raefconsulting.com

© Copyright 2021

“The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people.”

Woodrow Wilson (U.S. President, 1913 - 1921)

Table of Contents

Introduction.....Page 4

I. Making the Case for Growth.....Page 5

II. Aligning to Client’s Greatest Needs.....Page 6

III. Identify & Mobilise Resources.....Page 7

Diagnostic Framework.....Page 8

About *raefConsulting*, Pty. Ltd.....Page 9

Dear Leaders... *Thank You!*

This *Practical Guide* is provided as a small token of my *thanks* for your participation in our *Non-profit Leader (NPL) Survey*. As you will recall, the purpose of the survey was to identify the primary challenges facing leaders in today's uncertain environment.

The survey response collected insight from professionals representing a broad cross section of charities such as grassroots, volunteer-driven organisations to international NGOs. The respondents were diverse, but their responses were not - *If you're a leader in the non-profit sector*, your greatest source of anxiety likely centres around *one of three critical issues*: 1) leaders lack the resources they require to meet demand; 2) underperforming teams; and/or 3) the relentless expectation on leaders to do more with less.

In twenty years of work in the non-profit sector, I have discovered no silver bullet, no one-time easy fix – *yet* acquiring new resources and getting more out of what is already in place is very much attainable.

With confidence and optimism, I suggest the process begins with a fresh focus, not on financial resources alone, but on sustainable growth as the necessary prerequisite of greater impact.

I hope that you'll find the following brief guide of practical use in your daily important work. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if I can be of service to you and your organisation.

Best Regards,



Chris Wilborn

CEO, raefConsulting
0447 712 299 – cwilborn@raefconsulting.com

www.raefconsulting.com

I. Making the Case for Growth



It should be noted that *growth* is a relative term, so it's highly important to make the distinction about what it means for your organisation - or better yet, *what it should mean*.

There is a propensity for Non-profit Leaders (NPL) and decision-makers in all fields, to feel they must be *all things to all people*. Instead of focusing on, “*What does our mission require of us?*”, we become easily distracted because of the promise of funding or other support, even when it diverts us from our organisation’s enduring charitable purpose. Traditional growth metrics such as year end financial gains are no less critical to the vitality of a non-profit, but as you bring into focus *what growth means* for your organisation, consider the following *key drivers*:

- ♦ *Is growth necessary, so that **more** people may be helped (quantity)?;*
- ♦ *Is growth required to **enhance** the service to your clients (quality)?; or*
- ♦ *Is growth the **last hope** (survival)?*

In my experience, two examples that put this into perspective include:

The Board of a US-based NGO made clear their belief that growth should be defined solely in terms of yearly revenue increases. Over time, this single success metric was no longer viable. It wasn't enough to approach donors to re-up or increase their contribution, just so that year's target could be surpassed. Growth and success had to be redefined to clearly articulate how donor entrusted funds were measurably improving the lives of the local disadvantaged.

The CEO of a long-standing Australian charity recognised their membership numbers were rapidly declining. The decline was due to a variety of factors, most of which were beyond their control. A simple, yet profound suggestion was put forth. “What if growth was re-imagined to emphasise the quality, or level of member engagement, rather than solely on numbers alone?”

Definitions of growth will be as varied as the individuals and organisations they lead, but critical to any success is the NPL ability to project a compelling vision of *the rationale for growth*, so others are willing to join the cause. Your *definition of growth* and *of success*, must be inextricably linked to the founding purpose of your organisation, thereby incorporating *vision, mission* and *values*. The importance of these guiding principles can’t be overstated. Seek out opportunities to revisit them in order to ensure their continued relevance *and* to help key stakeholders better understand how they fit into the big picture. As Chuck Palahniuk, author of *Fight Club*, once stated, “All the effort in the world won’t matter if you’re not inspired.”

II. Aligning to the Client's Greatest Needs



Non-profit growth is dependent upon two key factors: 1) an ability to demonstrate the organisation is making a measurable, lasting difference; *and* 2) that services provided align to the client's greatest needs. If you have not already begun to do so, non-profit leaders (NPL) must pursue both of these business elements simultaneously, each with the same degree of vigour and determinism. An example from personal experience that brings clarity to this growth concept is:

Facing declining revenue, the leadership of a regional non-profit determined a comprehensive review was needed to better understand the underlying needs of its young clients. A broad community conversation was launched, which encouraged the organisation to 'turn outward' and seek the perspective of clients, service providers, educators and local government. Through this consultative process, three critical areas of client need were unearthed. Once equipped with this new insight, the non-profit was on strong footing to frame for donors its impact strategies and investment products, which resulted in subsequent record-breaking campaigns.

As one who has been directly involved in numerous change management efforts, both as an NPL and a consultant, I can testify the process, though necessary, brings with it a whole set of new challenges. When striving for real lasting change, expect to encounter roadblocks and impediments during the process. Conversely, the process of realigning growth to a focus on your clients' greatest needs will, undoubtedly, unlock numerous new opportunities to reframe and refashion your products and services, whilst bringing new awareness of key issues.

It should not be a surprise that donors, grantors and volunteers have become increasingly sophisticated. Indeed, they have every right to demand the work undertaken by their favourite charity is *actually making a lasting difference*. When NPL postulates the sole basis for needing more money (or volunteer time) is to go towards an issue or problem that only seems to worsen each year (with no explanation of how they're making a stand to actually do something about the issue once and for all), trust deteriorates. In the first instance, it's imperative to align your organisation's efforts to the client's greatest needs. Jane Goodall summed it up quite well: "What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

III. Identify & Mobilise Resources



A final tenet for sustainable growth in the non-profit sector, is that *everyone in the organisation* can and should be involved. Staff and volunteers (at all levels) should be treated as key stakeholders and *engaged early in the process*. Early adopters are far more likely to support the change that's required for growth to be attainable, assuming they are engaged proactively rather than reactively.

In working with many such non-profits, large and small, the 'all hands on deck' approach remains an essential ingredient for success. This is especially true in organisations where resources are limited and NPL are under pressure to *do more with less*.

Growth requires new mindsets and new behaviours. Old habits must be broken if new results are desired. "Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets" (W. Edward Deming). There are clear *benefits of lateral thinking* when we seek to mobilise resources as seen through the following example:

In order to achieve an ambitious national agenda affecting key population segments within the NDIS, a start-up peak body sought to cultivate a diverse membership base, which covered all AU states and territories. A key challenge facing the non-profit was the recruitment of new members, as many prospects were themselves start-ups with limited funding. "How can we charge fees to members who are worried about paying their own bills?" The organisation's leadership subsequently considered an 'outside the square' solution -- for members with the financial means, full membership fees would be expected; however, for those falling beneath a particular threshold, an alternative form of dues would be accepted, such as seconded staff specialising in key areas of business operations, co-branding opportunities and loaned office space. Several years later, the peak body has more than doubled its membership, whilst allowing its member-base to establish its own footing.

The point is, that growth leadership is different from status quo leadership. NPL must become willing to broaden their definition of 'resource' beyond financial and human capital. This begins by posing the question: "How important is it that we are successful in achieving our growth potential?" It cannot be overstated—the less important it is, the lower it will be prioritised, the fewer resources it will be allocated and hence, the lower its prospect in delivering the desired outcome. The old African proverb perhaps best sums up this principle, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Setting up your Non-profit Organisation for Sustainable Growth

Diagnostic questions to facilitate the conversation around readiness

Making the Case for Growth

- Our Board and executives have *engaged in discussions on the rationale for growth*, why it's important and what's at stake if growth goals aren't attained. YES__ NO__ UNSURE__
- There are *compelling reasons* for my organisation to grow (e.g., we should reach more clients, enhance our service delivery or arrest declining revenue). YES __ NO__ UNSURE__
- The leadership of my non-profit has developed a *common definition of growth*. We have developed our definition collaboratively and it has been *clearly communicated* with key stakeholders (i.e., staff, volunteers, etc.). YES__ NO__ UNSURE__

Aligning to the Client's Greatest Needs

- Our *vision and mission* statements are as relevant today as when they were when first developed. YES __ NO__ UNSURE __
- Our *clients are invited to provide feedback* on services they receive, including opportunities for improvement. YES__NO__ UNSURE__
- My organisation consistently *monitors all work, measures results and makes course corrections* when the desired results are not being attained. YES__ NO__ UNSURE__

Mobilising Resources

- Our definition of 'resources' is broader than just finance and human capital. YES__NO__ UNSURE__
- Leadership supports utilising all our resources to attain the growth goal. YES__NO__ UNSURE__
- Every person in our organisation (paid & volunteer) understands their role in achieving growth. YES__NO__ UNSURE__

... Hopefully most of your responses to the above readiness assessment were, "YES." If so, you are well on your way. However, if on the other hand, "NO" or "UNSURE" was a frequent response, I hope you will contact me today so that I can share how raefConsulting can assist you and your organisation.

About *raefConsulting*

With a diverse background in leadership and service to the non-profit, corporate and government sectors, Chris Wilborn brings over twenty years experience to the role of CEO of *raefConsulting*, Pty. Ltd – a values-driven management consultancy. The core services of *raef* are:

Non-profit Growth

NDIS Provider Maximisation

Business Advisory & Leadership Coaching

Prior to launching his consultancy, Chris held several notable roles with international non-profits in both AU and abroad, including the *St. Vincent de Paul Society*, NSW and *United Way Worldwide*. He has served in leadership positions on numerous boards and commissions, and currently serves as the inaugural Chair of *Good Start to Life*, a regional Queensland-based, early intervention disability services organisation for children and young adults.

Whether serving as an award winning President of a global non-profit, as team leader charged with helping local communities throughout the US or serving as the lead officer coordinating the federal government's giving campaign, Wilborn has shown an ability to envision the big picture, while recognising the individual steps necessary for success.

Chris holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and Communications from Palm Beach Atlantic University and a Master of Art in Political Science with an emphasis in Public Policy from the University of Colorado at Denver.



You can reach Chris and *raefConsulting* by calling **0447 712 299** today or by sending an e-mail to cwilborn@raefconsulting.com.