The Importance of Mission for NGO’s

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Mission Statement

- The scholarship related to mission statements is varied.
- Some research suggest that mission statements are not helpful, perhaps detrimental to the activities of NGO’s.
- In the USA, the law requires NGO’s to have a mission statement.
- I would like to look at mission from that perspective.
Mission Statement

- In the USA, scholarly findings indicate that a clear, motivating organizational mission helps an organization to focus its attention on those innovations that will most likely support the accomplishment of that mission.

- Such a mission also creates a climate in which innovations are given a fair chance to succeed. As a result, non-profits with clear, motivating missions tend to be more innovative.

- But this is not without risk. (Mission Drift)
What is a Mission Statement and What Does It Do

- The mission statement is the “raison d’être” of any organization.

- At its best, a nonprofit's mission statement is a succinct expression of an organization's essential reason for existence or core purpose.

- Some mission statements may include other elements, such as references to how an organization achieves its impact or what it most values.
What Does a Mission Statement Do?

- The mission statement should succinctly define the organization’s purpose and programs.

- The statement needs to be carefully thought out because it is an important tool in planning, recruiting board members, raising funds, and communicating with the public.
A mission statement should answer the following questions:

- **What** are the organization’s services and programs?
- **For whom** are the services and programs intended?
- **(Where)** Which geographic areas(s) is (are) served?
Mission Statement

- The mission statement should remain relatively unchanged from year to year.

- It should be broad enough to allow for organizational growth, but not so broad as to allow for complete changes of direction or focus.
Mission Statement

- It is essential that the organization’s leadership understands the purpose of the arts agency and is able to articulate its programs.
Mission Statement

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### The Good and the Bad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Good Statement...</th>
<th>A Bad Statement...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses language your constituents use.</td>
<td>Uses jargon, doesn’t understand your audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is emotionally stirring.</td>
<td>Is logical and cold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates the “why.”</td>
<td>Communicates only the “what” or “how.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is concise.</td>
<td>Is really long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is a single, powerful sentence.</td>
<td>Is a rambling paragraph.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sounds good spoken out loud.</td>
<td>Is full of clauses and hard to say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is memorable.</td>
<td>Is forgettable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surprises.</td>
<td>Is dull.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is actionable.</td>
<td>Can’t be quantified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is specific.</td>
<td>Is vague.</td>
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What does research say about mission?

- Many years, most nonprofits were evaluated for their mission and the good that they set out to do, rather than by their measurable impact.

- In the 1990s, there was a shift related to the funding source for nonprofits.
The technology boom made some people wealthy, and a new donor emerged that was younger, outcome focused, and wanted to view their donation as an investment.

They expected a return on that investment and required nonprofits to demonstrate their success and impact.
At the same time, there were some scandals in the nonprofit sector that led to a call for accountability.

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Has this been successful?

- The risk of the pressure to operate an NGO like a business ought to be obvious.

- NGO’s are mission not profit driven.

- A significant risk is *mission drift*. That is, modifying the NGO’s mission or simply moving away from it to accommodate the pressure to be more business-like.
Mission Drift

- Financial pressure is often the cause of mission drift.
- An NGO needs more money and sees an opportunity to generate additional income that involves an activity or activities outside the mission.
- This is justified because of financial need.
Avoiding Mission Drift

- All organizations benefit from developing a strategy. The most well-developed strategy models come from the private sector and focus on markets, customers, and competition.

- BUT, these models fail to take account of two crucially important features of nonprofit organizations
Avoiding Mission Drift

- the value produced by nonprofit organizations lies in (a) the achievement of social purposes rather than in generating revenues;

- and (b) nonprofit organizations receive revenues from sources other than customer purchases.
Avoiding Mission Drift

An alternative strategy model for NGO’s focuses the attention on three key issues:

1. public value to be created,
2. sources of legitimacy and support,
3. operational capacity to deliver value.
Avoiding Mission Drift

- This alternative strategy model resonates powerfully with the experience of nonprofit managers precisely because it focuses attention on social purposes and on the ways in which society as a whole might be mobilized to achieve them.
Conclusion

- The **mission statement** defines purpose, this is **important** to drawing volunteers, donors and other sources of assistance to help the nonprofit.

- Nonprofits often exist on donations and volunteers. Without either, the organization may not be able to operate.

- So, I would argue that an effective mission, carefully and responsibly adhered to, is critical to the survival of NGO’s
Thank you

Questions