

TECH TIPS FOR NON-PROFITS

Common myths and mistakes about technology — and ideas for what to do about them.

Technology is a necessary evil.

The fact is, technology is not only necessary, it is vital. As such, it needs to be as integral a part of strategic planning as marketing, fundraising and communications. The additional investment will pay dividends in future effectiveness. Without it, you may get too little or the wrong kind of technology – the system must be a good fit with your mission.

We've got extra money in the budget this year; let's buy some computers.

Technology should be a part of every budget, like rent and utilities. Yes, it's expensive. But if you include technology in your strategic planning, you'll know the value and the expected ROI. You need technology, need to make it work for you, and to do that, need to budget for it properly.

We bought the hardware and the software that is supposed to be the best. Why do so many of our staff want to go back to the old way of doing business?

If you hear complaints after installing new technology, you may not have realized that you were implementing a new “system.” Hardware and software are only part of it – how those interface with people and other systems is the total package. Too often, the whole focus is hardware/software, and little attention is paid to human and organizational factors. Think this through beforehand and your staff will thank you.

How fast can you train the secretaries to use the new system?

The real question is not how quickly but how thoroughly your staff can be trained – and all the staff who can benefit from the technology (not just the secretaries.) Thought must be given to how much training different people will need to be proficient in the system. If you want to see the benefit of the capabilities you paid for, you have to make sure your people can use it effectively.

This new system will solve our problems, right?

Technology is a way to handle information more easily. It's not a magic bullet. Data won't tell how to get staff to be more productive; it can tell where to start looking. Good data can support good decisions, but can't take the place of good judgment and management. It's quality, not quantity, of information that counts – and what you do with it.



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Helping Organizations Succeed in Their Missions

The Mission Works goal is to give non-profit organizations practical strategies and solutions for operating effectively and achieving their purposes.

A consulting firm with specialized expertise in non-profit management, our approach is to evaluate and enhance operations in these key areas:

Purpose – Are your mission, vision and strategic plan focused? Are they clearly and meaningfully communicated? Do they provide a map for administrators and staff alike?

Performance – Does your organization work efficiently so maximum effort and resources go to your mission? Do you have the right data to make effective decisions? Can your organization flex to meet fiscal challenges?

Impact – Are you fulfilling your mission? Can you show that your programs are worth the investment? Do you measure outcomes to continually improve programs?

Along with fundamental strategic, management and technology solutions, significant professional resources are also available to help with particular needs in fundraising, marketing and grant writing.