**Nonprofit (New Years) Resolutions - The Best Kind of Resolution of All!**

Need to exercise?  Manage your schedule better?  Sleep more? Yes, it’s that time of year when we ask ourselves what we might like to do differently to improve our lives.

The last thing you want to think about are rules, but deciding to seriously improve your non-profit’s policies, procedures and best practices in 2019 may be the greatest gift you can give yourself, and your organization.

Did I just hear you groan?  Yes, rules are unpopular topics.  Change requires research, introspection, and discussion.  It’s a lot of very hard work. How could I be a pennant-waving fan of such a painful thing?

Many of you may know me.  I’ve been a Cedar Valley volunteer for decades.  I’ve studied nonprofits as a UNI doctoral student, worked as a Graduate Assistant in the UNI Office of Community Engagement, and supported the strategic planning process of a nonprofit as a practicum project this year.

In all of these functions, I have observed first-hand the *incredible value in defined policies, procedures and practices for non-profit organizations.*Adopting policies and procedures provides a common operating manual for your board, executives, employees, and volunteers.  These prescriptions remind everyone how your organization intends to meet its objectives, and provides guidance as to what to do or what not to do with organization assets like human resources and funds.  Donor and community expectations regarding the professional standards by which nonprofits should be managed have increased dramatically, and will continue to do so. Well-defined practices, policies and procedures help you, your volunteers and your employees to navigate through this complexity with less stress.

You don’t have to do it alone.  There are many resources available to guide organizations through this process.  The University of Northern Iowa’s Institute of Decision Making (IDM) does a great job providing organizations with strategic consulting.  The Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center at the University of Iowa provides trainings, guidance and online resources. Many national organizations have developed their own or are in the process of developing templates for local affiliates to use, as have nonprofit professional associations.  These resources are ready and able to explain the components of review or development processes.

The hardest part is getting started.   Take a BIG piece of paper, write “2019 Policy Review – Yahoo!” on it, and post it on your office wall.  Consult available resources such as this, [*How to Write a Policies and Procedures Manual for a Non-Profit Organization*](https://bizfluent.com/how-4422449-write-manual-non-profit-organization.html)(Seidel & Leonard, 2018).  Make a plan and follow it. Trust the process.   The policies that emerge will change your life.

Happy New Year!

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