

## A NOTE ABOUT PLANNING IN THE COVID ERA - FROM YOUR STRATEGIC PLANNING FACILITATOR

The pandemic has placed extraordinary stresses on many small nonprofit organizations and changed many of their planning assumptions about the future. How does this affect your organization's approach to strategic planning?

Consider where you find your organization at this point in time. In my experience, the ways nonprofits have been affected by the pandemic fall into one of three categories: Triage; Trajectory; and Transformation.

Organizations in **Triage** have experienced challenges to their fundamental business model in ways that make stakeholders question the very ability of the organization to survive. Triage is a time when one must make difficult decisions swiftly; and sacrifice what is not core to save what is. Planning is still relevant for these organizations; some would say it is more critical than ever. Organizations in Triage can adopt a more tactical mindset than a strategic one, and may wish to elect a one-year time horizon for their planning. The focus will be more on surviving than rebuilding.

Organizations in **Trajectory** have experienced turbulence, but their fundamental business model is intact, and their survival is not in question. Strategic planning is entirely appropriate for these organizations and serves to extend their successful historic trajectory well into the future. They may elect the standard three-year time horizon for their planning, and embrace the planning process as a way to consolidate and stabilize their success.

Organizations in **Transformation** have experienced rapid acceleration of trends that were already present in their environment, attracting new opportunities once thought to reside further in the future, and presenting possibilities for fundamentally reshaping their business model. New revenue sources are in play; new programs are being offered; new ways of working have become common; perhaps competitors have faltered. These organizations may experience the pressure of the pandemic as a Venturi Effect that accelerates their forward motion. They may also elect the standard three-year time horizon for their planning, but can embrace planning as a way to reinvent themselves.

How would you say your organization has been affected by the pandemic, in terms of the three categories: Triage; Trajectory; and Transformation? What does that suggest about your approach to strategic planning?

Jay W Vogt