DeWitt & Associates, Inc.
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"Maintaining Your Foundation While Building for the Future"

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It was a busy fall. Every fall is busy in the nonprofit world. When I joined my first nonprofit, I remember a colleague saying: "Things usually are slow in the summer." I think that was, and is, a myth. It seems that for nonprofit businesses, life does not slow down in any season.

The holidays come and go, and the work of the nonprofit goes on. There are always new clients serve, new projects to start, and new relationships to be nurtured. The newness brings excitement and anticipation of new successes.

But, let's not forget what got us here! Those things we have done well in the past should not be ignored:

DONORS:

1. The care and nurturing of our donors from the previous year is most important. Keeping our current donors is much easier and cheaper than acquiring new donors.
    - Both the Board of Directors and the staff should be dedicating themselves to appropriate acknowledgement of donor support. Each person should be assigned specific donors to contact and thank.
    - The Board and staff should be aware of the strategy related to each major donor for the coming year. This is the first "Move" for the new year.
    - Each major donor contact should be recorded in the "Moves Management" system.

2. The nonprofit business' strategy for Communication should be established and understood by each board member.
    - Each Board member should have a list of the '"Moves" for which he or she is responsible in the next quarter.
    - Staff members should be ready to assist the Board member; they support, and to assist in accomplishing the individual "Moves" assigned.
    - The Board member and supporting staff member should critically evaluate and report the results of each "Move."

BOARD RENEWAL:

1. The Board's Leadership Team with the Senior Staff Person should set educational goals to the operating year.

- Schedule the two day Retreat for the year.
- Create a detailed list of subjects that for Board Education – one or two brief presentations should be set for each meeting to expand the base knowledge of the Board regarding the operation and history of the nonprofit business.
- With the input of the Senior Staff Member, evaluate the committee and other assignments of each board member and ask; "How well are the board members functioning?"

2. For most nonprofit businesses, the Nominating Process for the next cycle is just starting, or approaching the "half way mark."
   - The Board Assessment Document needs to be reviewed by each board member.
   - The Board Talent Grid should be reviewed in conjunction with the Board Assessment.
   - Each board member should have an assignment to cultivate potential members identified by the nominating process. Every member must understand their responsibility of perpetuating the success of the organization through adding new talent to the Board.

ANNUAL DOCUMENT REVIEW:

1. Mission and Vision Statements need the Board's and Staff's review, at least annually. The Questions are:
   a) If the nonprofit did not exist, would someone create it?
   b) Is the nonprofit doing what is says it is organized to do?
   c) Have we had Mission creep? Are we conducting programs that are beyond our stated Mission?
   d) Is some other organization in the environment doing what we are doing? Is that organization doing a better job?

2. The Conflict of Interest Statements for each Board Member should be completed. Normally, this is accomplished at the first meeting when new directors are seated. It is the responsibility of the Board Chair and the Senior Staff Person review these declarations and be prepared to handle any conflicts that may arise during the year.

3. The nonprofit business' governing documents should be reviewed annually. Often, boards and staffs agree to new operating policies and programs, but do not change the Bylaws and, sometimes, the Incorporation Charter to insure functions are reflected in the governance. This can cause serious complications the legal arena.

4. In many cases. the Senior Staff Person is charged with the establishment of policy statements and operating procedures. This mode of operation enables the nonprofit business to be agile and flexible in meeting environmental changes. However, there are some documents, such the personnel manual, the IRS form 990, the audit documents and others, that require oversight by the Board of Directors. These actions should be scheduled and placed on appropriate agendas to assure compliance and timely execution.

We must maintain the foundation of our solid operation while building new programs and services that directly support our Mission and Vision.