



What is the one thing every organization needs to STOP doing?

On September 16, 2011, innovators and disruptors gathered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to develop new ideas and approaches for how organizations can engage individuals to solve social problems. Participants included marketing and advertising professionals, corporate representatives, nonprofit leaders, students and university researchers.

To frame the conversation, summit organizers challenged the participants to answer two questions in the days leading up to the event. Here is the first of two questions we posed and the answers participants provided:

What is the one thing every organization needs to STOP doing?

Rachel Alexander, Boston University School of Mgmt

Allowing short-term resource stress to undermine their long-term mission and strategy.

Adam Archer, Vitruve, Inc.

Settling for less than exceptional perfect fit employees. I see this hurting organizations time and time again.

Sloane Berrent, Lippe Taylor

I think both the brand and the nonprofit side need to stop taking short cuts and really spend the time to make sure partnerships are the right fit for both sides. I think the partnership people need to more clearly define what and whom their targets are.

Peter Biro, Naked Pizza - Boston

Taking their key advocates and/or customers for granted in pursuit of their goals, whatever they might be.

Margot Bloomstein, Appropriate, Inc.

Just jumping into social media without a plan and assuming it will be a cure-all amid non-profit constraints.

Casey Brennan, VolunteerMatch

Starting with external or on-pack communication of a cause effort before communicating within the organization.

Betsy Carlton-Gysan, BU Sustainable Cities Initiative

Hewing to accepted paradigms. Following the latest "new big thing."

Becca Colbaugh, JESS3

Assuming that average consumers, targeted audiences, key stakeholders or funders are an expert or even has a basic understanding of social media, along with other standard digital campaign practices and methods.

Lucia Cordon, Changing Our World

Seeking funding before building awareness.

Whitney Dailey, Cone

Organizations need to stop thinking of cause and CR programs as a marketing tactic. Companies that integrate cause and CR into short- and long-term strategy can make profound social change, but ill-conceived, inauthentic efforts undermine the good work many are trying to do. Leverage existing assets and core competencies, engage partners and stakeholders and change the world, one business decision at a time.

Sonal Dhingra, Boston University

Organizations need to stop creating random programs to run after grant money, they should instead focus on communicating with foundations, etc., to mutually agree on measures for existing programs.

Eric Ding, Harvard Medical School / Campaign for Cancer Prevention

They need to stop doing conventional direct mail donation solicitations.

Jessica Estes, Mullen

They can stop cherry-picking deserving causes that will bring attention and press, only to abandon them after the campaign has run its course. It's time for brands to forge ongoing commitments to generate real, lasting change.

Stephen Franson, Bonfire Health, Inc.

Organizations need to stop driving their teams into the ground. The demands of today's 24 / 7 work culture is breeding a generation of chronically exhausted, over-stressed and under-satisfied workers. Exhaustion stifles creativity, hinders productivity and leads to chronic disease. Every organization should be thought of as a living organ and its people are the cells.

Henry Frechette, 3BL Media / Justmeans

Organizations need to stop having reactive CR/Sustainability policies.

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Luke Garro, Antler

Organizations need to stop building short-term relationships with the beneficiaries of their cause marketing programs for quick media exposure.

Glenn Gaudet, GaggleAMP

Stop sitting on the social media sidelines.

Susan Gilchrist, Ad Council of Rochester

For nonprofits, they need to stop doing too many things that overstretch their resources and capacity. Too often the desire to help whoever is asking for it causes a nonprofit to create services that are not part of their core mission which leads to ineffective or unsatisfactory outcomes among the population(s) they're serving. Should be "depth" of impact versus "breadth" of services.

Jennifer Gresham, Zoo New England

Forgoing accountability.

Uwe Hook, BatesHook

Stop treating employees like human resources and start regarding them as stakeholders. Stop with the talk about employee engagement/employees are our only assets and start putting that sweet talk to work.

Steven Howard, Emcien, Gabacus

Leaders, Board Members, Trustees, and Officers of cause-related and education-related organizations should remember that we are there to identify and obtain the resources that enable the missions of our groups. As stewards, we need to abandon personal agendas of self-importance, of prestige and personal PR, of the exercise of power, and instead focus on the responsibilities of service and assisting others.

Sree Kastury, Student Boston College

Organizations need to stop ignoring their impacts on the environment and people around them.

Albert Liao, Technology Exchange Lab

Generating hype/making promises that aren't or are poorly fulfilled.

Terry Lozoff, Antler

Assuming that above the line advertising (TV, Radio, Print) is the best way to spend marketing dollars.

Ted McEnroe, NECN

Don't get caught up in finding the 'next big thing' or 'must have partner' to drive eyeballs, followers or any other simple measure of your campaigns' ROI.

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Andrea McGrath, Connecting Capital

The one thing that organizations need to stop doing is thinking or waiting for things to “turn around” - i.e. implying that we somehow need to get back to the things we know/the world we know. We need to (all) be embracing this “new normal” world that we’re living in and think about how we build, create, innovate in this time now and moving forward.

Alison Mehlsak, Cone

Simply promoting a cause, rather than investing in it. Organizations should devote the necessary time and resources to fully developing their program's impact goals, and then make sure to measure progress toward those goals. Doing so gives a company both meaningful information to speak to in external and internal communications, as well as critical insights for evolving and improving the program.

Michelle Morgan-Nelsen, FSG

Organizations should stop creating isolated impact- an approach oriented toward finding and funding a solution embodied within a single organization, combined with the hope that the most effective organizations will grow or replicate to extend their impact more widely. Nearly 1.4 million nonprofits try to invent independent solutions to major social problems, often working at odds with each other and exponentially increasing the perceived resources required to make meaningful progress. - adapted from "Collective Impact" SSIR Winter 2011

Lily Pai, Boston University

Organizations need to stop trying to do it all themselves and work with others to complete their goals.

David Poole, Pure Branding

Stop treating social impact as an afterthought or obligation. Organizations must make it integral to the business to realize the benefit of delivering value to ALL stakeholders.

Brian Reich, Edelman

Stop (over)using social media. The focus needs to be on acting in a more social way - connecting and collaborating, sharing, listening, learning. That is platform agnostic, doesn't even rely on technology at all. The focus on technology, and specific social tools, too often distracts from the needed attention to deep engagement and conversation that comes with being social.

Stacey Resnikoff, Freelance Writer/CD

Stop thinking of CM as Cause Marketing. Tools exist today for sincere Change-Making.

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Mike Robert, Booz Allen Hamilton

Decision by committee.

Katelin Ryan, Ad Council of Rochester

I think organizations need to stop making excuses for why things aren't being done better or differently. We run into so many organizations that say, "But this is how it's always been done," and therefore, they are reluctant or unwilling even to make any type of change that's necessary for forward movement. I think if leaders were able to entertain the idea of doing things different than they've been done in the past, it would open up a whole new door for further collaboration and progress.

Richard Santiago, Mullen

Being afraid of failure. The fear of failure is the one thing holding us back from tackling the big questions, the big problems, the things that can change the way we look at the world. Fail faster, fail harder, and be determined to learn and iterate.

Mike Schneider, allen & gerritsen

Stop giving money.

Amy Schoenberger, DeVries Public Relations

Organizations need to stop thinking they have all the answers. In order to be successful, they have to be flexible and open to growing, evolving and learning as their industries and consumer technologies change.

Walter Somol, Microsoft

Less schwag and tchotchke.

Harry Stevens, 3BL Media / Justmeans

Prioritizing marketing/communications over innovation.

Annie Sullivan, Ad Council of Rochester

Organizations need to stop wasting time doing things that aren't working.

Robbie Vitrano, Naked Pizza

Too many fundraising events are orchestrated habitually. Assess the effectiveness of fundraising events in terms of the ROI as well as the congruence with mission.

Joe Waters, Selfishgiving.com

Stop thinking your too small, too local, too busy, too dysfunctional to make a difference and bring about real, meaningful change.

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Kathy Whalen, Cauzoom.com

Small and regional businesses need to stop thinking of cause marketing as an esoteric concept reserved for large brands. We are part of a technology shift which empowers the consumer in unprecedented ways, and it is becoming a new source of marketing power for local businesses. We call it community cause marketing and it's catching on!

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