

Clean-spiration



By Melanie Lockwood Herman

Executive Director

Resource Type: Risk eNews

Topic: General

March 9, 2016

Since last week's snowfall, the weather in our area has steadily improved. We've already had a few picture-perfect days, although spring is still more than a week away. For many people, the arrival of spring means melting away your worries about slipping on black ice, and the end of winter woes like seasonal affective disorder. For others, spring is a reminder to start spring cleaning! In addition to the literal spring cleaning we do at home, it's a good time for figurative spring cleaning at your nonprofit.

The following are three of my favorite reminders in Lauren Piro's article "[10 Reasons Spring Cleaning Is the Most Wonderful Time of the Year](#)," featured on www.goodhousekeeping.com:

- *Spring is a second chance to make good on your cleaning-related New Year's resolution.* We're just 10 weeks into the New Year, and there is plenty of time to make good on any de-cluttering resolutions.
- *Cleaning your home (or office) from top to bottom totally qualifies as a workout.* Cancel the order for a weight bench!
- *What was lost will be found again.* The joy of finding something you've given up for lost makes your cleaning and sorting efforts worthwhile.

After you've tidied your home, consider three tips to prepare your nonprofit for the bounty of spring.

- **Dust Them Off** – Have you ever held a job where your boss kept adding to your responsibilities? Chances are your direct reports feel the same way. Outdated job descriptions are a disservice to the roles you and your colleagues have evolved into, and they can breed resentment from your valued team members. It's time to pull your nonprofit's long-forgotten position descriptions out of your electronic or physical files and give them another look. Ask each staff member to share their perspective on how their position has changed. Update position descriptions to reflect the needs of your nonprofit and the work your team members actually do.
- **Go in a Group** – According to spring cleaning gurus, cleaning alone leads to a 'long day and sore muscles.' The same is true when it comes to tackling your nonprofit's biggest challenges. Instead of keeping the biggest obstacles to yourself or to the executive team, share them with a wider staff team. A diverse staff group can form teams better suited to problem-solving, and this interaction will encourage staff members to continue teaming up to gain varied perspectives and additional brainpower and muscle.
- **Cut Out Clutter** – Some of us 'clean' by simply shoving all our unused stuff into closets where the mess remains hidden. For some reason, we can't bring ourselves to donate or throw away the dusty clutter we

accumulate over the years. A similar phenomenon occurs in nonprofit workplaces. Leaders hold tight to ill-suited policies, ineffective hiring strategies, and unsustainable programs. As part of your organizational spring cleaning, spend time identifying what isn't working, and resolve to stop doing it—or stop doing it the same way you've always done it.

If you still harbor any doubts about spring cleaning, remember what Hal Borland, an American author and naturalist said: “No winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn.” Say goodbye to winter at your nonprofit, and take advantage of spring before she leaves us again. You can bring the invigorating sensations of sunshine, chirping birds, and mission fulfillment back into your office with a little spring cleaning.

For more clean-spiration, check out the following Center articles:

- For a reminder of risk-themed resolutions for 2016, see “[Sensible Risk Resolutions for 2016](#).”
- For more tidying-up tips, see “[Make Mission Magic by Tidying Up](#).”
- For help identifying programs that need pruning, see “[Managing Mission Creep](#).”

Melanie Lockwood Herman is Executive Director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. She welcomes your feedback on this article and questions about the Center's resources at Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org or 703.777.3504.