Just Do It

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This week I've been among the enthusiastic attendees at the American Camp Association's 2013 National Conference in Dallas. This terrific event offers the most diverse array of topics I've ever seen on a single conference agenda, from *more than a dozen workshops* on risk-related topics to sessions with wonderfully compelling descriptions or titles, such as "teambuilding with giant pipe cleaners," "Kitchen Conundrum" and "Kids Do Dumb Stuff."

During the two sessions I attended yesterday, remarks by two different speakers melded into a theme that is worth repeating: *just do it*. During her keynote address psychologist Madeline Levine reminded her audience that "self esteem is born out of doing things." She explained that kids who are allowed to "do things" develop confidence and competence, the two essential ingredients to self esteem. Using humor and a personal story about a parenting misstep, Dr. Levine's comments on self-esteem brought to mind a common weakness in risk management programs. Many nonprofit leaders are dissuaded from updating their risk management programs because they're not quite sure what "success" looks like. Others are paralyzed by the fear that simply admitting to having inadequate risk management policies or practices will expose the organization to liability. My advice? Get past the paralysis and *just do it*. Take a close look at your risks, evaluate your risk-savvy and know-how, reflect on your readiness to respond to downside risks you don't control, and resolve to fill the gaps. Do it with an internal team or engage outside help to facilitate your efforts. But don't wait and just do it.

During her workshop on "Crisis Response," consultant Ann McCollum reminded attendees about the importance of documenting "close calls" as well as actual incidents, accidents and crisis events. McCollum explained that while it is virtually impossible to predict the details of a crisis that has yet to occur, it's not only possible but essential to take action before a crisis unfolds. Whether it's severe weather, death or serious injury, allegations of fraud, an act of violence or even a crisis arising from who you know or do business with, every organization can and should make a plan before it is needed. Don't obsess about creating an award-winning crisis plan that envisions every possible disaster you could face. Get started without delay by creating a practical go-to plan. The ultimate goal is to make sure your team is clear about what you will do, who you will notify, what you will say, and how you will manage key programs and services while coping with a crisis that threatens the survival of your mission. Don't wait. Just do it.

Melanie Lockwood Herman is Executive Director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. She welcomes your ideas about any risk management topic, suggestions for best-in-class risk management, and questions about

the Center's resources at Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org or 703.777.3504. The Center provides risk management tools and resources at www.https://nonprofitrisk.org/ and offers consulting assistance to organizations unwilling to leave their missions to chance.