

How Your Team Can Reframe Challenges as Opportunities

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Have you ever sensed that your nonprofit team adopts a negative frame when you're talking about a challenge or downside risk? Reframing a challenge as an opportunity could help your team break out of frustration mode, get curious, and form new ideas. Here are some ways to do so.

Don't reframe things that shouldn't be reframed. Reframing some things to see only positives, like a death or a layoff, would qualify as [toxic positivity](#). But a single perplexing problem could be a good candidate for reframing. So could a lingering and limiting belief—like “there aren't enough good candidates for our jobs”—if your organization has truly explored and analyzed the issue.

Name setbacks and the emotions you and your team members feel. Identify setbacks and emotional reactions to them as normal and healthy. If emotions get recognized and validated, people will feel less need to dwell on them.

Treat failure as temporary. This will keep your team moving forward and focus them on what they can do to address the situation in the short term.

Focus on what your team can learn from the experience. Once the immediate setback has passed, give team members a chance to reflect on what happened and how you could handle things differently in the future.

Question your question. Are the questions you're asking about the situation limiting your team? If you ask, “How can we make sure our emails reach clients?” you've automatically assumed email is the best way to reach them. Change your question to “How might we engage our clients wherever they are?” and you might find different ideas and solutions.

Seek bad ideas. If a challenge has your team stuck, ask team members for ideas that wouldn't work to solve it. This can help your group go beyond obvious solutions and think more creatively.

Break the rules. What things does your organization, or even your whole sector, take for granted? Challenge those assumptions. What would happen if you did the opposite of what you believe to be “the way it's done”?

Show how your team connects to the big picture. When your team experiences a setback, use it to illustrate how tied to the mission their work is and how the team's work impacts your nonprofit.

Try to find some “quick wins.” After a setback, look for a couple of small victories your team can pursue to rebuild confidence. If you achieve them, celebrate!

Resources

- [Three Ways to Reframe a Problem to Find an Innovative Solution – Fast Company](#)
- [How to Help Your Team Recover after a Setback – Atlassian](#)
- [Turn Setbacks into Opportunities in Three Easy Steps – TED](#)
- [Managers: How to Deal with Setbacks as a Team – Hired](#)

- [Make Your Team Stronger By Acknowledging and Celebrating Setbacks – Martina Kuhlmeier](#)