

Resolve to be Resolute

Resource Type: Risk eNews

Topic: General

Eat healthy, exercise more, save money—sound resolutions, all. How many of us will still be at it after January? Surveys suggest that somewhere on the order of 80 percent of resolutions fail. This may explain why *30-day challenges have become popular, and in many cases have replaced the yearlong commitment of a New Year's resolution.*

A quick online search turns up dozens of articles for nonprofits and New Year's resolutions. Most give sound perennial advice: a) resolve to personally thank your donors this year; b) review your bylaws; c) update your website and archives with new material. We couldn't agree more. We also stand by our own year-end [Sensible Risk Resolutions](#).

How does one make a sensible resolution regarding risk? Resolution implies resolve, but also something to be completed. Risk, on the other hand, is *a measure of the possibility that the future may be surprisingly different from what we expect*. Change is built into the process of strategic risk management. Each of these surprising events will hold threats of loss and opportunities for gain that are inherent in a less than predictable, and therefore risky, world. How to reconcile that fact with being resolute?

Follow Up, Pull Focus, and Adjust

Resolution can also mean bringing something into focus, as in cinema photography. The term “pull focus” is a camera technique in which the focus is changed during a shot. Usually this means adjusting or shifting focus from one subject to another. Most nonprofits report that they are constantly seeking and evaluating new opportunities to positively change the lives of their clients or the health and welfare of a community. This constant state of adjustment by the nonprofit necessitates a continuing review of strategic risk management strategies to make certain they remain viable and appropriate given the new circumstances facing the organization.

It's possible we have too much engagement with our shortcomings, not enough reflection on what is already in place. It may not be necessary to change with the New Year, but to redouble your efforts, take stock, recalibrate. In other words, resolve to stay the course.

- *Abandon techniques that have proven futile in the past year*, or have cost the nonprofit more than the expected, or that are simply no longer appropriate given the new environment.
- *Consider changes, adjustments and revisions* anytime the technique serving an important purpose is not as effective as it might be.
- *Learn from missteps*. In addition to looking at everything that went right during the past year, look for potential lessons in what—if anything—went wrong.
- *Revise the crisis plan*: Whatever glitches you've discovered this past year in handling a crisis need to be remedied and incorporated into your crisis management plan.
- *As you survey the top risks facing your nonprofit, consider the view from another vantage point*, such as the board members, funders, or frontline staff and volunteers working in field offices or in remote locations, or those whose formal duties include following, but not developing policies.
- *Say thank you to those whose efforts and support your organization depends*: the nonprofit's board,

whose dedication and vision energize its efforts; the employees, volunteers, and independent contractors; the service recipients, whose improved well-being is the reason for the nonprofit's existence; major donors of money, property, or resources.

What will keep you prolific in the coming year? As you formulate your list of risk management goals for the organization you will serve, don't hesitate to reach out to our team at the Nonprofit Risk Management Center for assistance. We can help in a number of ways, from drafting or revising [risk management policies to designing custom training programs](#). We also offer free technical assistance and resources, as well as affordable and easy to use online tools such as an independent [Risk Assessment](#) and [enlightened risk taking](#).

What will be the greatest lessons learned at your organization in 2019? Share them with us in the year ahead. We look forward to hearing from you.