

Mark Your Calendar!



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For many of us, the holiday season is a time to re-connect with friends and family with whom we've been out of touch. When I was a child, we always received at least one "Christmas Letter," containing one family's story of the prior year. Typical Christmas Letters were full of glad tidings... such as a teen's early acceptance to an Ivy League university or the parent's receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize! The Christmas Letters of my childhood were, in some respects, like today's funding proposal. In my family we often joked about sending a Christmas Letter filled with imaginary tales of woe—such as a relative's recent imprisonment or a child's failing grades.

Somehow we resisted the urge to spoof the Christmas Letter tradition and continued to send a more traditional card offering holiday wishes.

In addition to providing a time to boast about the year that has nearly passed or sigh with relief that a difficult period will soon be history, the end of the year—and the short break from our regular work schedule—should be more than just a time to come up for air. It's an ideal time to reflect on the important partnerships that sustain our nonprofit organizations. One example is the relationship with your insurance agent or broker. The Center's point of view is that a nonprofit's insurance professional—typically an agent or broker— should be a *valued partner* in mission fulfillment. The work performed by your insurance partner should be key to helping your nonprofit pursue programs and services that *deliver your mission* to the community. An effective insurance advisor provides sage counsel about the risks you face, candid feedback on your insurance needs, and helpful referrals to practical loss prevention tools and resources.

Consider the following criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of your insurance partner:

- Responsiveness
- Timeliness
- Credibility
- Commitment
- Claims Handling
- Accuracy
- Results

One approach to evaluating your broker is to assign 0-10 points in each of the categories above. After assigning scores in each of these categories, schedule a meeting (in early 2009!) to discuss your assessment. Invite your agent or broker to outline the services and support they are able to provide in the year ahead. Describe your

concerns about areas where performance has fallen below “good” (perhaps 8 points, using the 0-10) scale.

Like any relationship, your partnership with an insurance professional is a two-way street. It requires equal measures of *candor* and a *shared understanding* of the goals and respective responsibilities of the parties. It’s a great time of year to give thanks for the blessings of support and participation of the year that will soon be history. It’s also a great time to take a closer look at the relationships that make your mission possible.

We’re counting our blessings at the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. We are grateful to the nearly 10,000 subscribers to our *enews* and *Risk Management Essentials* newsletter, and to every leader who attended one of our training programs or purchased a web product or book in 2008. We’re also deeply thankful to the nonprofit leaders who engaged the Center to help address specific risk management challenges. We look forward to serving you in the months and years ahead.

As always, don’t hesitate to call us at 703.777.3504. or contact me via [email](#) if we can be of service.