



FOR CHARLESTON-AREA NONPROFITS

FIVE CHALLENGES I SEE MOST — AND HOW I HELP

Most of the organizations I work with don't have a bad mission — they have no permanent staff to run it. A handful of volunteers, with widely different skills and time to give, end up carrying everything between them, and the mission slows down whenever those few people are stretched too thin. Below are the five issues I see most often, and how I help. Every engagement follows the same order: Listen, Clarify, Build, Deliver — in that order, always.

01 THE SAME FEW PEOPLE CARRY EVERYTHING

With no paid staff, the work defaults to whichever two or three volunteers are most reliable, regardless of whether marketing is actually their skill — and those same people burn out first. I'm not another volunteer who needs recruiting and training; I'm outside capacity that shows up and gets a specific deliverable done on schedule, so your most committed people aren't the only ones getting it done. I start with a short listening meeting with whoever is carrying the most weight right now, before I suggest a single change.

02 GOOD IDEAS RARELY BECOME FINISHED WORK

Boards and committees generate plenty of good ideas — a newsletter redesign, a membership drive, a sponsor packet — but with everyone's attention split across their own volunteer job, ideas stall before they ship. My role is to keep the mission focused on finishing what's already been decided: one deliverable, done well, on a date someone can count on. That starts with a short listening meeting to hear which half-finished projects matter most before I pick any of them up.

03 DONORS GIVE ONCE, THEN DISAPPEAR

Many organizations are good at winning a first gift and have no consistent plan for renewing it, so the effort of acquiring a donor never compounds. I build a simple stewardship path — welcome, mid-year touchpoint, renewal ask — sized to what a volunteer-run office can actually keep up, not a system that quietly stops running the day I'm not there. Before I design that path, I ask for a short listening session to hear the donor history and what's already been tried.

04 THE MESSAGE CHANGES DEPENDING ON WHO'S POSTING

When the website, the Facebook page, and the printed program are each kept up by a different volunteer with a different sense of the mission, donors and grant reviewers notice the drift before the board does. I audit every channel and build one message platform and a one-page style guide simple enough for whoever's turn it is to post this month. That audit always opens with a short listening meeting, so nothing gets "fixed" before I understand why it was written that way.

05 THE WEBSITE ISN'T DOING ITS JOB

A site nobody has the time or the skill to keep current won't turn a visitor into a subscriber, a donor, or a ticket buyer, no matter how strong the programming is behind it. I restyle and rebuild around clear calls to action — join, give, attend — on the platform you already have, so upkeep doesn't fall back on a volunteer who didn't sign up to be a webmaster. As always, I begin with a short listening meeting to understand what the site needs to do before any page gets touched.

STEP ONE, ALWAYS

LET'S START WITH A LISTENING MEETING

No pitch, no proposal, no cost. Just a short conversation with whoever is carrying the most weight at your organization right now, so I understand it before I suggest anything for it.

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