



A New Lens On Nonprofits

Challenging the status quo to achieve organizational health

Minnesota is home to over 37,000 nonprofits who work tirelessly on behalf of Minnesotans and beyond. Yet in my 30 years' experience working in and with nonprofits and boards, I've observed a few key challenges which seem to have staying power across the sector. I was curious to learn if seasoned nonprofit executives and board members would identify the same pervasive challenges I did. My mother always said, "If you want to understand something, you have to ask." So...I did.

Here you'll find the key insights resulting from my confidential interviews with 20 nonprofit professionals and board members. What I heard aligns with my observations over 30 years. While not research based, the insights are noteworthy and shed light on **Three Pervasive Mindsets** that have plagued the nonprofit sector for decades.

In commitment to my vision of eliminating status quo thinking, I offer these insights as a step toward change, which in my experience, always begins with insight. If this information intrigues you, go to <https://inspiringsight.com/new-lens> where I dive deeper into the key insights revealed here.

PERVASIVE NONPROFIT MINDSETS



SCARCITY



**MISSION TRUMPS
BUSINESS**



EGO

INSIGHTS

1. SCARCITY MINDSETS ARE EXPENSIVE



Where you find an organization hesitant to invest, you'll often find a culture of scarcity or deficit. Much like having a stop sign on your forehead, a scarcity mindset gives off a message that says, "don't invest here, we are not worth it." Scarcity mindsets also pummel creativity, buy-in and passion--all essential for addressing the multi-faceted challenges of the 21st Century. If you hear phrases like, "We can't afford that, we don't have the money, we've tried that before, we never have enough time....", you are hearing scarcity.

"Trying to do too much with too little (time & resources) leads to burnout and drives away volunteers, donors, and people who may otherwise love to engage"

2. MISSION CAN'T EXIST WITHOUT THE BUSINESS

The majority of interviews were clear, business shouldn't be a dirty word for nonprofits. The lack of foundational business operations is a contributing factor to nonprofit resource issues and affects an organizations' ability to successfully meet their mission." Business processes create efficiency, alignment, and reveal where to leverage some resources for the benefit of your mission. Even running a personal household has elements of business operations in it. Without it, you wouldn't know where you could save, cut, and spend on leisure.



"At the center of every nonprofit organization is a business focused on a mission"

3. EGOS UNDERMINE MISSION



Many of the professionals and board members I interviewed said, "Healthy conflict cultures are essential to success." Yet healthy conflict cultures aren't possible when ego is at the forefront. When board members, executives, employees, and yes, founders, over identify with the organization's mission and purpose, they feel so connected and passionate that they tend to view the organization as if it were their own. The unintended consequence of such passion can cause territorial issues, overidentification and decisions in a way that works best for them vs. the long-term best interest of the organization. One ego player can single-handedly prevent an organization from having safe, candid and risk-taking conversations.

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