

Nonprofits Must Adapt to Survive

By: Hardy Smith

Our family's first experience with cold weather after moving to usually warm Florida presented an emotional challenge for our son who was a young elementary school student at the time.

Being advised by his Mom that a drop in temperature would require a departure from his normal school day wardrobe of t-shirt and shorts produced an immediate reaction.

"No, I can't wear long pants! Please don't make me wear the long pants!" he cried.

Facing the possibility of being the only kid in school wearing long pants triggered an extreme fear that did not subside until the next day when he saw everyone else dressed just like him. Making a change from his customary and comfortable attire was then acceptable.

It is human nature to resist change. Even though there may be a legitimate need for altering our current behavior, a different routine can sometimes throw us a curve that is difficult to deal with.

Organizations typically find long-standing traditions and current ways of doing business are often not easily modified. Opposition to a new direction can be strong despite a clear need or obvious benefit.

Charles Darwin said, "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

Nonprofits are now being challenged by change that is both rapid and radical.

There seems to be an ever increasing number of pressure points that seriously influence organizations and their ability to deliver on the promise of their mission statement.

Because the nonprofit species is being threatened, recognition of the need to adapt is a must. Taking action to make necessary adjustments is critical.

Ask yourself two important strategic questions:

- Based on present trends and new challenges what are the consequences if we maintain our current course?
- What will we have to do differently to make certain our organization's success is continued?

Despite a long history of service, many nonprofits are now facing questions of survival. Discussion to determine what actions are needed for a continued existence may be more productive if you focus not on what the organization has been but rather on what it can become.

The possibility of impending change impacting the business of doing good is a certainty.

Is your organization prepared for a switch to "the long pants"?

(As a nonprofit consultant and speaker, author Hardy Smith helps organizations achieve results-oriented high performance success. Learn more about Hardy by visiting: www.hardysmith.com)