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DCO Visioning and Strategic Planning Update

After two very successful and well-attended sessions, the Board, staff and membership of Distress Centres Ontario is moving to complete the process to guide us through our next three years.

In May, we reviewed our Mission and Values as well as established some Critical Success Factors that will play an important role in determining our organization's success and its ability to achieve the priorities it sets for itself. The four most critical success factors included:

1. Effective collaboration within the DCO Network;
2. Adequate funding;
3. Public awareness of our mandate, services and the work we do;
4. Common standards, best practices and bench-marking.

At the September sessions, the membership reviewed its work from the May session and approved the placement of the various DCO programs and strategic priorities within the context of the success factors. They also considered the key aspects of DCO's supporting role within the DC network and several model of ideal decision-making within the association. While there were numerous suggestions, several key factors and take-aways that emerged from all the models and focused on commitment, participation, effective communication, and nimbleness of decision-making.

The Governance Committee of the DCO Board hopes to complete its review of all the information and suggestion by early 2012 and set the stage for the next governance format for our association.

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Four Destructive Myths Many Organizations Still Believe In

by Tony Schwartz

Myth #1: Multitasking is critical in a world of infinite demand

This myth is based on the assumption that human beings are capable of doing two cognitive tasks at the same time. We're not. Instead, we learn to move rapidly between tasks. When we're doing one, we're actually not even aware of the other.

If you're on a conference call, for example, and you turn your attention to an incoming email, you're missing what's happening on the call as long as you're checking your email. Equally important, you're incurring something called "switching time." That's the time it takes to shift from one cognitive activity to another.

On average, according to researcher, David Meyer, switching time increases the amount of time it takes to finish the primary task you were working on by an average of 25 percent. In short, juggling activities is incredibly inefficient. Difficult as it is to focus in the face of the endless distractions we all now face, it's far and away the most effective way to get work done. The worst thing you can do is to constantly check your email.

Myth #2: A little bit of anxiety helps us perform better
Think for a moment about how you feel when you're performing at your best. What adjectives come to mind? Almost invariably they're positive ones. Anxiety may be a source of energy, and even motivation, but it comes with significant costs.

The more anxious we feel, the less clearly and imaginatively we think, and the more reactive and impulsive we become - that's not good for you, and it has huge implications if you're in a supervisory role.

Put bluntly, any time your behavior increases someone's anxiety - or prompts any negative emotions, for that matter - they're less likely to perform effectively. The more positive your energy is, the more positive the energy of the people around you is likely to be, and the better the likely outcome.

Myth #3: Creativity is genetically inherited, and it's impossible to teach
In a global economy characterized by unprecedented competitiveness and constant change, nearly every CEO hungers for ways to drive more innovation. Unfortunately, most CEOs don't think of themselves as creative, and they share with the rest of us a deeply ingrained belief that creativity is mostly inborn and magical.

Ironically, researchers have developed a surprising degree of consensus about the stages of creativity and how to approach them. Our educational system and most company cultures favor reward the rational, analytic, deductive left hemisphere thinking. We pay scant attention to intentionally cultivating the more visual, intuitive, big picture capacities of the right hemisphere.

As it turns out, the creative process moves back and forth between left and right hemisphere dominance. Creativity is actually about using the whole brain more flexibly. This process unfolds in a far more systematic - and teachable - way than we ordinarily imagine. People can quickly learn to access the hemisphere of the brain that serves them best at each stage of the creative process - and to generate truly original ideas.

Myth #4: The best way to get more work done is to work longer hours
No single myth is more destructive to employers and employees than this one. The reason is that we're not designed to operate like computers - at high speeds, continuously, for long periods of time.

Instead, human beings are designed to pulse intermittently between spending and renewing energy. Great performers - and enlightened leaders - recognize that it's not the number of hours people work that determines the value they create, but rather the energy they bring to whatever hours they work.

Rather than systematically burning down our reservoir of energy as the day wears on, as most of us do, intermittent renewal makes it possible to keep our energy steady all day long. Strategically alternating periods of intense focus with intermittent renewal, at least every 90 minutes, makes it possible to get more done, in less time, more sustainably.

Want to test the assumption? Choose the most challenging task on your agenda before you go to sleep each night over the next week. Set aside 60 to 90 minutes at the start of the following day to focus on the activity you've chosen. Choose a designated start and stop time, and do your best to allow no interruptions. (It helps to turn off your email.) Succeed and it will almost surely be your most productive period of the day. When you're done, reward yourself by taking a true renewal break.

This article can be found on the Harvard Business Review website.

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1800suicideOntario

by Asha Croggon

The 1800suicideONTARIO Steering Committee and supportive working groups are engaged and working on critical areas of implementation. The working groups include Readiness Criteria, looking at the translation of the BC Network Criteria process into an Ontario-specific model, the training group is looking at developing standard training components that integrate DCO's training models, and the technology group is reviewing different technical needs and solutions to support the 1800suicide network.

Other working groups will be engaged as needed as we move towards developing the tools needed to support the implementation, and the 1800suicide Steering Committee is meeting monthly to guide and support the Working Group process and flow recommendations to the DCO Board.

Overall, the approach is one of collaboration, candid discussion, and genuine commitment to a greater goal - qualities critical to a solid implementation and successful provision of a provincial network.

The collaboration between BC and Ontario is highlighting areas of strength for Ontario including the investment in SIOM and online training opportunities. One of the learnings from BC's experience is the critical value in having every centre represented in a working group to support a more complete discussion and commitment to the project.

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Facebook Pages Best Practices

After a very successful DCO Learning Forums Lunch & Learn session about social media, we thought that the following best practice tips from Charity Village might be helpful. These tips effectively illustrate that the use of Facebook in one's personal life doesn't mean that you should use it the same way within the professional scope of your organization.

1. Find your Facebook voice
Ninety percent of the power of a Facebook page is in the status updates. As the admin of your nonprofit's page, your number one priority should be to find out what kind of content from your nonprofit your fans want to read and engage with. You'll be able to gage this by receiving comments and thumbs ups ("likes") on your status updates. It may take a few months of trial and error, but just start experimenting.

2. Always share a link, photo, or video in status updates
Never waste an opportunity to drive traffic from Facebook to your website, blog, YouTube Channel, or somewhere else. Sharing links, photos, or videos in a status update will make your status updates richer and more visibly appealing.

Share breaking news related to your organization's mission, trending posts from the blogosphere, popular videos from YouTube, or striking photos from Flickr. Most important, make sure that the link, photo, or video does indeed attach a thumbnail to your status update. Otherwise, people will tend to ignore it.

3. Post no more than one or two status updates per day (or less!)
Small to medium-size nonprofits should err on the side of caution when it comes to status updates - less is more here. One status update per day is fine, but four to six per week is better. The law of diminishing returns starts to kick in if you post multiple status updates every day. People start to tune you out, or, even worse, they "hide" you from their news feed or unlike your page altogether.

4. Do not automate content and sync Facebook with other social networking sites
There are plenty of tools available that will allow you to post the same content to multiple social networking communities with one click, but don't be tempted by them. It's very important for you to understand that each online community is unique, with its own ebb and flow of content. It's better to work one community correctly than to do many poorly.

Remember, community-building comes first and marketing second. Every single status update that you send out should be the result of a couple of minutes of thought, preparation, and personality.

5. Send "updates" at least once or twice a month
Admins can send group messages known as updates to those who like their page by going to "Edit Page > Marketing > Send an Update." These updates then arrive in your fans' "Messages > Other."

Keep your updates brief and always attach a link where you can. In terms of content, engage your fans in updates with success stories, urgent calls to action, and the occasional fundraising pitch.

6. Encourage staff members and volunteers to be active on your page
To help maximize the exposure of your status updates and their news feed potential, encourage staff members and volunteers to post comments and give thumbs ups regularly. A reasonable goal to begin with is to earn at least one comment and three "likes" on each status update for every 1,000 fans.

The activity by staff members and volunteers is also likely to spark additional comments and thumbs ups from your fans, thus increasing your news feed(s) exposure. Not only that, but the more comments your nonprofit receives, the faster your page will grow in fans because comments also show up in users' activity streams.

7. Have more than one administrator for your page
It's wise to prepare for the worst-case scenario. Sometimes staff members or volunteers will leave your nonprofit abruptly without notice. To prevent them from taking your Facebook Page with them, make sure that your nonprofit's Facebook Page has at least two admins.

To add an admin to your page, you must first become a Facebook friend of the new admin, then go to "Edit Page > Manage Admins" to search for and add admin rights. After you have added a new admin, don't feel bad if you "unfriend" her - especially if the new admin is your boss. There is nothing improper in terms of etiquette in wanting to separate your personal and professional lives on Facebook. People need to respect that decision.

8. Use the "Favourites" functionality
If your nonprofit is national or international and has many chapters, then favourite the Facebook pages of your chapters on your nonprofit's primary Facebook page so that it can serve as a hub for your nonprofit's presence on Facebook.

Using the favourites functionality is a subtle form of partnership building and appreciation. Odds are that they will return the favor and add you to their favourites (or mention you in a status update, a tweet, or somewhere else). To add a page to your favourites, simply go to the page you want to favourite and on the left side select "Add to My Page's Favourites."

Do your funders have Facebook Pages? Do you work in partnership with other nonprofits? Add them to your favourites too. The trick is to let them know that you have added them to your favourites by either posting on their wall or tagging them in a status update.

9. "Tag" other pages to build partnerships
Facebook's tagging functionality enables admins to post status updates on other Facebook Pages' walls. The tagging functionality is most beneficial in terms of increasing your nonprofit's generosity score. Like promoting other pages in your

favourites, promoting other pages via tagging also reflects well upon your nonprofit and helps build partnerships within the Facebook community. The more you selflessly and generously promote others, the more it eventually comes back to benefit your nonprofit.

To tag another page, such as that of a funder or a partner, admins must first "like" the page. Then, when writing a status update on your own page, type "@" and the first few letters of the page you want to tag. The page will then appear in a pop-down menu. Select it, and the page name will appear in your status update as a link. Finish writing your status update and then share.

10. Integrate your Facebook page into your website, e-newsletter, blog, print materials, and thank you landing pages and emails

Many nonprofits struggle with increasing their fan base on Facebook. You need to heavily promote your Facebook page and integrate it into your website, your e-newsletters, your blog, and your print materials for your fan base to grow. During the initial launch of your Facebook page, you will need to give your Facebook community a jump start by announcing your page in your e-newsletter.

After that, to sustain a steady growth of your fan base, you will need to integrate your Facebook page into your web and print promotional materials by adding:

- A Facebook icon on your website's home page and blog;
- A Facebook icon in every edition of your e-newsletter;
- A Facebook link in your email signature. It helps tremendously if you can implement this organization-wide;
- A Facebook pitch in print promotional materials, such as postcards, fundraising appeals, newsletters, and annual reports;
- A Facebook pitch on your "Thanks for Your Donation!" landing page and emails.

11. Integrate your Facebook Page into your mobile campaigns

Facebook has a full-featured mobile website at m.facebook.com. If your nonprofit has a mobile website or a smartphone app, make sure to link to the mobile version of your Facebook Page on your mobile website and in your smartphone app(s); otherwise, your status updates will be very difficult to read on mobile browsers.

To read full Facebook tips by Heather Mansfield, click here.

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DCO December Lunch & Learn

DCO is excited to announce our upcoming Lunch & Learn web cast, featuring a session on *Accessibility Standards* *for Customer Service* in preparation for the January 1, 2012 deadline of Ontario Regulation 429/07. You will be provided with links to information and resources for training personnel on providing services to people with disabilities. Those of you who are proceeding with accreditation will be provided with useful information for compliance with the CARF Standards for Accessibility.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity! Register here by December 9 and mark your calendars for the session on December 12, 2011. We are looking forward to having you join us at this Lunch and Learn!

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