Starting a Nonprofit: A guide for social entrepreneurship

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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Abstract

In the nonprofit world, the purposes of most are to live out their passion of helping people. The potential to help others is better realized within an organization that has resources and others to partner with. Many want to start their own nonprofit organization to make change in the world. Although these individuals have the passion to fight for some cause, many do not have the business knowledge and skills to start an organization and make it successful. This guide seeks to bring knowledge and resources to these individuals to become successful social entrepreneurs.
Acknowledgements

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I would also like to thank Ray R., Rebecca H., and Karen H. for their advice in the different stages of my thesis development.
Author's Statement

As I began thinking about a topic for my Honors thesis, I wanted the work I did for the thesis to be meaningful. My end goal was not just the credit or the grade or even for my own learning experience, but I wanted my project to be beneficial to others. If I was going to put many hours into researching some topic and creating something out of that research, it seemed logical to me that it would serve some sort of purpose outside of fulfilling requirements. I believe that my gifts, resources, and education have been given to me in order that I may bless other people. This was the frame of mind I had when exploring thesis possibilities.

So in order to create something that could be useful, I sought to find people who could benefit from my thesis. At the time of my idea development, I was volunteering at Muncie Mission in Muncie, Indiana as part of an Honors course. There, I asked if I could do something for my project that would benefit the mission. Currently, the mission focuses most of its effort on homeless men in the community. However, they have a vision to help women and families too as well as provide more resources to the community as a whole. The mission hopes to open a facility that would cater to the needs of women and families and so I was asked to research the need for different offerings the facility could have, the way other missions help women and families, and then write a project justification report for the community and potential donors. This idea intrigued me because it incorporated business knowledge and community development which are two of my passions. So I decided to make this project my thesis.

As I met with advisors, I heeded their advice and narrowed my focus. First I would research the family services Muncie has currently. Then, I would research 3 communities with
similarities to Muncie and study how they serve families in their communities. I would then use this information to make a recommendation to Muncie Mission and the community on ways in which we could better serve families in Muncie. This made the project more achievable and gave greater clarity to an end result for the project.

As I began researching family services in the Muncie community, I realized that Muncie has a great number of organizations that serve families. I was unaware that most of these organizations existed. Not only was there a plethora of organizations, the types of services these organizations offered varied including financial, spiritual, medical, family planning, and housing assistance. I was overwhelmed by the amount of information. So I put myself in the shoes of a family who needed assistance. It would be very difficult sorting through all these organizations to determine which one best suited my family. So I decided that compiling a list of services, categorizing, and describing them would be a beneficial tool for the community.

After speaking with someone at the United Way, I discovered that this resource already existed. Remembering back to my goal in this project, I decided that duplicating this resource would not be a good idea for my project. As I was speaking with this person, I began to ask her about the needs of the nonprofit community. I asked her about the efficiency and effectiveness of nonprofits and whether she thought that many nonprofit professional had the business know-how and skills to run an effective organization. She thought that there was a need for nonprofit professionals, especially those just starting out, to have more knowledge and assistance in the operations of their organization. So after meeting with her, I decided to write a guide for those wishing to start a nonprofit. This became the project that follows. I wanted to
give nonprofit professionals resources and knowledge that they could apply to starting and operating a nonprofit.

I created this guide in order that individuals would be able to objectively view their proposed organization and make plans in order to be successful. I was able to research books and online resources and compile that information in a guide that would help nonprofit professionals with the business aspect of their organization where they may not have had much experience. This guide is not intended to be the only resource someone uses when starting a nonprofit. However, it is to be a starting point that helps someone become familiarized with aspects of starting a nonprofit that they may not have considered and then resource these individuals so that they can become knowledgeable and create a successful organization.

This has been a rewarding experience to be able to create something that I can share with people who may need this resource. I am passionate about helping people and business. This project allowed me to pursue both of these passions. My thesis project has been a beneficial experience for me and I hope that this guide is beneficial to the nonprofit world.
STARTING A NONPROFIT

A GUIDE FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BY TYLER PICKETT
Introduction

The world is filled with countless problems and issues that seem like they are inevitable to exist. There continues to be inequality and room for improvement in many different areas of our world. There are some who see these problems and issues and decide they cannot stand by and do nothing. These people seek to use their time, efforts, and resources to work for a cause greater than themselves.

Many of these altruistic people use nonprofits as a means to make a difference in the lives of their fellow man. A nonprofit institution, as its name reveals, does not exist for the purpose of making profit as does a for-profit institution. Rather it exists for some greater goal and uses its profits to further those goals.

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS), there were 1,574,674 tax-exempt organizations in the United States as of August 2011 and in 2009, their share of the Gross Domestic Product was 5.4%. Nonprofits are an important part not only in helping people but also in the economy. The NCCS reports that 9% of all wages and salaries in the US were paid by nonprofits (National Center for Charitable Statistics).

As seen from these statistics, nonprofits are vital to the United States' economy. The survival and thriving of these institutions benefit the US and the world in so many different ways including economically and through the betterment of society. Because these organizations are deemed 'nonprofits,' many do not see them as businesses. However, functionally, they operate like businesses in terms of the need to generate revenue and pay expenses. Business knowledge and experience is crucial to the survival of a nonprofit. Much of this knowledge and experience is lacking by the philanthropic individuals who start nonprofits. This guide is intended for those who have the passion of helping others and the responsibility of starting or running a nonprofit. From the characteristics of an entrepreneur to legal requirements to fi-
nancing, this guide will help inform and resource those individuals starting a nonprofit organization. Nonprofit professionals not only need to see themselves as philanthropists, but also entrepreneurs.

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Note: This guide can be found online at:

What's your purpose and motivation?

As stated earlier, nonprofits exist for some other purpose than making profits. So the first step in seeking to start a nonprofit is defining your passion.

Some questions you should ask yourself are:

What problems out there trouble you?

How strong is your passion for this problem to be resolved?

How would you solve the problem if money wasn’t an issue?

Is there anyone out there already tackling this problem?

These questions will help to understand the purpose of your organization. There must be a clear and defined problem in order for there to be action taken against it. Also you must have the passion to fight against this problem in the midst of adversity.

After discovering what the problem is, you should ask yourself what kind of meaning or difference you want your organization to make. Guy Kawaskai in his book, *The Art of the Start*, calls this “making mantra” (Kawasaki). Instead of a long, wordy mission statement, he suggests writing something short and powerful that packs emotion in just a short phrase. This is used by you and your employees as a reminder of what you do. This phrase will remind those in the organization of the mission.

Analyzing the Individual

After discovering the problem, you need to do a self-analysis to see if you have what it takes to start an organization to tackle that problem. Starting an organization takes a lot of effort, know-how, and perseverance. There are character traits that are essential to be successful as an entrepreneur.
John Kao compiled a list of common characteristics that entrepreneurs have. The 11 characteristics he found were (Kuratko and Hornsby):

- Total commitment, determination, and perseverance
- Drive to achieve and grow
- Opportunity and goal orientation
- Taking initiative and personal responsibility
- Persistent problem solving
- Realism and a sense of humor
- Seeking and using feedback
- Internal locus of control
- Calculated risk taking and risk seeking
- Low need for status and power
- Integrity and reliability

In addition to examining this list to determine if your individual characteristics match the common characteristics of an entrepreneur, the Small Business Administration has an online Small Business Readiness Assessment Tool designed to help individuals understand their readiness for starting a small business. The tool will give you an assessment as to your readiness to start a business, suggested next steps, and key training and counseling resources. This assessment can be found on the SBA’s website (http://archive.sba.gov/assessmenttool/index.html).

So prior to starting an organization, this type of assessment must be done. You must know if you will be the type of person who can persevere, become successful, and continue being successful as the organization continues to have its ups and downs.
Starting

There is much preparation and planning that must take place before you begin making a difference in the world. Preparing well can set you up for success and is crucial in the long-run. Creating a model that will be successful and long-lasting is one of the most important things in starting the organization.

In Wilford Welch’s The Tactics of Hope, the author gives a list of characteristics that help to analyze your potential nonprofit model (Welch):

- **Replicability**
  - Can this model be replicated by me or another entrepreneur in another location?

- **Scalability**
  - Can this initiative be extended beyond its original local scope to help more people?

- **Ease of Entry**
  - Will it be easy to get running? Is there a lot of red tape to overcome?

- **Immediacy of Results**
  - How long will it realistically take to see results?

- **Long-term Financial Sustainability**
  - How will the organization be funded? Will it depend on raised funds or internal revenues?

- **Startup Requirements**
  - Is a large amount of capital needed to start the organization?

After considering these things and having a basic understanding of the model of the organization, you should consider the legal form that it will take. The three typical forms that nonprofits take on are: the corporation, the trust, and the unincorporated association.
The Corporation

A corporation is a separate legal entity and thus those who manage it do not have liability (other than money personally invested). Also there are laws and standards that will help in forming the governance of the organization. Almost every state has a nonprofit corporation act. Another advantage to incorporation is that most people and institutions know what a corporation is and are comfortable with it.

The Trust

Other than charitable entities or private foundations, very few nonprofits are formed as trusts. The laws written for trusts aren't as flexible as those written for corporations. The personal liability protection in a corporation is not available in a trust.

The Unincorporated Association

This type of organization seems similar to a corporation. However, unincorporated associations do not have the personal liability protection that corporations offer.

The majority of the time, nonprofit organizations should be formed as corporations as the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. A lawyer should be consulted for the incorporation and writing the articles of incorporation (See Chapter 2 of Bruce Hopkins Starting and Managing a Nonprofit Organization for more information on the legal forms of nonprofits)

Writing a Business Plan

Having a business plan is very important in the process of starting an organization. A business plan is considered a roadmap for where the organization is going. There are many benefits to writing a business plan. First of all, it is beneficial for you. Writing a business plan helps the you to clarify the problem and mission, analyze all aspects of the organization, un-
derstand the potential opportunities and risks, and how to deal with those opportunities and risks. Secondly, it is beneficial for those who will be joining in your efforts. They can understand how the organization will operate and can give good input to the process. Thirdly, it is helpful in securing financing for your organization at the start. Even if your organization is for a good cause, people lending or giving money want to be assured that their money will be well spent. Financers want to know that you can take their money and use it for real and sustainable change. So for multiple reasons, a business plan is crucial to starting an organization. But it is important to remember that a well-made business plan does not guarantee success. Rather it prepares you better for success than if you had not made one.

Now that the reason for creating a business plan has been established, the following will explain in more depth how to create a business plan. (A format template can be found at: http://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/starting-managing-business/starting-business/how-write-business-plan/e) The following components are taken from the SBA website mentioned above, an entrepreneurship textbook called New Venture Management, The Entrepreneur's Roadmap by D.F. Kuratko and J.S. Hornsby, and from a nonprofit guide called Starting and Managing a Nonprofit Organization: A Legal Guide by Bruce Hopkins. These three sources provided three different viewpoints to approaching a business plan. The SBA template comes from a small business and practical approach. The textbook gives a more formal definition and conceptual approach to writing a business plan. Finally the nonprofit guide approaches the business plan with a focus on nonprofits and the legal requirements of the nonprofit professional. I have included elements from these three sources that I believe would be most helpful in starting the process of creating a nonprofit. Please refer to these resources for more in depth information about each of the different perspectives.
The components of a business plan are:

Executive Summary

The executive summary is the snapshot of the business plan and is considered the most important part of the plan. It will determine whether or not people read the rest of the plan and so much time should be spent refining it. Though it is the first section that will be read, it should be the last written.

A mission statement should be included. This should explain the problem and how your organization will fight that problem. Also, a description of your business model is necessary in the executive summary. The unique characteristics of your business should be highlighted. The entrepreneur needs to convince the reader that his or her experience and background qualify him or her to start and run the organization. Also it should be demonstrated that analysis of the problem and others fighting this problem has been done and that the entrepreneur can succeed fighting the problem. The executive summary should be 1-2 pages in length.

Market Analysis

The next section to be considered is the market analysis section. Although this section will be different than it would be for a for-profit entity, market analysis is still critical in the success of a nonprofit organization.

First, the specific nonprofit sector that you will be entering should be analyzed. The types of people who will utilize your services should be studied. Questions that should be asked about these people include: What are their needs? Are they being met in any way now? What are the demographics of these people? Next, the organizations currently fighting this problem or similar problems should be assessed. Their strengths and weaknesses, resources, ability to partner with others, and overall success in fighting the problem are characteristics that must
be considered. In addition, the impact of laws and other requirements should be understood and discussed in this section of the business plan.

Company Description

This section gives a high-level overview of the different aspects of your organization. Included in this section should be a description of what your organization is like and the specific problems you are trying to solve, how your services will solve those problems, the people who will use your services, and the unique way that your organization is trying to solve this problem.

Organization & Management

Next, the organizational structure and management team should be addressed in the plan. In order to discuss the organizational structure, an organizational chart would be helpful in the description. Then a description of who does what shows that you are considering all aspects and responsibilities that will be involved in running your organization. In addition, salaries and benefits, incentives, promotions, and the type of organizational culture should be listed in this section of the business plan. A detailed description of each person in management that you are bringing into your business including:

- Name
- Position
- Primary responsibilities and authority
- Education
- Unique experience and skills
- Prior employment
- Special skills
- Past track record
Industry recognition
Community involvement
Compensation basis and levels

The reader will want to know who is in charge and how they will operate in the organization. Also the legal form, as discussed earlier in the guide, should be described. How it is formed, taxed, controlled, owner's equity, and how this form will evolve over time are all elements to be considered in this section.

The Board of Directors ought to be described here. This advisory board can be very helpful not only in the success of your organization, but also in convincing lenders and donors. If many qualified and well-known business experts serve on your board, it will give these lenders and donors assurance since other prominent people believe in your organization. Information about the board of directors to be included:

Names
Positions on the board
Extent of involvement with company
Background
How they will contribute to company's success

Marketing

Marketing is the promoting and selling (or in many nonprofits giving) of products or services. The first part of this section should describe your marketing strategy. Things to include are: who are your customers, where are they, how will you reach them, and how will you gain more. Having a sound marketing strategy is vital to the success of your organization. Even if
you have the best service in the world that will help many people, you may not succeed if people do not know about it, it is being marketed to the wrong people, or if you are ineffective in convincing them of your services.

Service

This section will further describe the service(s) that you offer. First a description of the service should be addressed including: specific benefits to customers, ability of service to meet needs, and what your service does that is not being done by someone else. Secondly, information about where this service is in its life cycle (is it new, are there many established organizations doing the same thing, etc.) needs to be talked about. Next, any copyrights or patent filings existing or anticipated should be listed. Finally, any research and development that is occurring or will occur in your organization should be cited. Also, research and development in the field that the organization operates in needs to be addressed, including scientific and sociological research pertinent to the organization.

Funding Request

Under the funding request section, the entrepreneur should explain the plan the organization has for funding. The key in asking for funding is requesting a specific amount, in specific time periods, for a specific purpose. First, the current funding requirement should be listed and then any requirements that will be used over the next five years. Next, how the funding will specifically be used should be explained. Then the type of funding you are requesting should be outlined (funding will be discussed further in a later section in the guide).

Financial Projections

Creditors and donors will want to know how your organization will be doing financially in the next 5 years. For each of the five years, forecasted income statements (shows net income as
A result of various expenses deducted from revenue), balance sheets (a snapshot of financial condition including assets, liabilities, and equity), cash flow statements (changes in cash over a period), and capital expenditure budgets (tells how much will be spent on assets that will bring benefit to the organization for more than one year) should be included. The first year should be broken down quarterly and for the remaining years, projections can be shown biannually or annually. Also these projections should correlate with the funding requests. The funding request should be supported by the projections and ratios in this section. Trends and financial ratios can be used to analyze and support your financial projections.

Appendix

This section is for documents and information that is not needed by everyone who reads your business plan. You may have creditors or government officials who need to see certain documents such as a credit history or a license to make their decisions. This section should not be included unless needed but kept on hand for those who may require additional information.

Other Business Plan Advice

Remember, as stated before, that a good business plan does not guarantee success, though this process will help you and your organization as well as help convince others to join your organization in terms of financing and support. And even the best plans change and adapt so be prepared for those changes. Seek advice from consultants, lawyers, businessmen, and other nonprofit professionals. You may not have the knowledge or ability to do each part well in the business plan. Don’t be afraid to ask for help; ask not only from those stated above but also from friends and family members. In addition, educational resources can be utilized in your business plan development. There is a list of resources at the end of this guide that will be helpful. Also practice pitching your plan. You should know the contents of your plan more
than anyone and should be able to concisely communicate it to others. Conciseness is key because many do not want to take time to read the whole plan. Also, many prefer to make a decision not only on the information but on how you carry yourself and your confidence in the pitch. So when writing your business plan, keep in mind it is for your own benefit first and then it is used for getting others to support your organization.

Fundraising

Fundraising is an essential aspect of operating a nonprofit. A nonprofit professional must be able to effectively raise and continue to raise funds in order to sustain and grow their organization.

Internal Revenue

Most nonprofits have a significant portion of their funds through donations and grants (22% according to the NCCS). Though this is the case, you should consider how your organization can generate internal revenue. This will allow you to not be so dependent upon fluctuating donations and debt financing. Generating internal cash flow is much more difficult than in the for-profit arena. It takes creativity to find ways to internally fund your operations. One example is Muncie Mission in Muncie, Indiana. They own second hand stores called The Attic Window which help generate funds for their organization. People donate items, and then the mission is able to sell them at a low cost and make a profit from the sale of those items. Not only does this generate internal funding but it also aligns with their organization because the second hand store is providing affordable clothing and household goods to impoverished people. Whatever your organization does to create this revenue, it should be fall under the organization's overall goal. You must keep in mind that not all operations of a nonprofit are tax-deductible. These profit generating opportunities may be taxed. Although taxing may occur,
there are many advantages to diversifying your funding and lessening financial risk by generating internal revenues.

Charitable Giving

Charitable giving will most likely be a large portion of your funding. Both individuals and corporate donors can deduct their donations to charitable organizations on their federal tax return. The different forms of charitable giving are: impulse giving, interest giving, and integrated giving (Hopkins).

Impulse Giving

Impulse giving is made in response to a plea for donations to the organization. These gifts many times are cash and for smaller amounts. These people usually do not intend to become more involved in the organization and may not give any more funds in the future. Although the contributions can be helpful to your organization, they are less important than the other types of charitable giving because of the small amounts that are donated.

Interest Giving

This type of giving results from people who have some sort of ongoing involvement or interest in the organization. Many times these donations are given on a periodic basis and are usually higher than an impulse gift. Not only do cash gifts constitute this type of giving but gifts of property may be given also.

Integrated Giving

Integrated giving is part of the donor's financial plan and/or the donor's estate. This type of giving involves large gifts usually from those who have had a relationship with the organization. The tax deduction is a large reason for this type of giving. It usually involves utilizing
trusts, wills, or contracts. These gifts can be made in the lifetime of the donor or at his or her death through their estate.

In the fundraising process, your goal should be to progress donors from impulse to interest to integrated giving. These donations are not only advantageous for the donor's taxes but also for the organization's. Many nonprofits do not take advantage of integrated giving, with many not knowing about it or confused by its complexity. While impulse and interest giving are vital to the organization, you should not neglect integrated giving. This will create future profit to the nonprofit and will allow for greater gifts. Setting up a program for planned giving would be a good start. Identifying the types of gifts accepted is the minimum included in the plan. As your organization grows, the more aggressive your efforts in obtaining planned gifts should become. Having someone with experience in fundraising in your organization or advising you will be a huge help in obtaining funds. This is critical because in order to implement your programs and to start making a difference, funding is needed.

Fundraising Events and Campaigns

Special fundraising events and campaigns can be very important in obtaining funds and gaining momentum. Get creative in the types of fundraising events you host. The Fundraising Authority has 5 unique fundraising ideas that can be beneficial when added to normal fundraising efforts. These ideas are (Fundraising Authority):

The Low-End Event

Instead of hosting a fancy and expensive fundraising event, hold a cheaper event while still charging what you would charge for a formal event.

The Reverse Raffle

Give everyone a raffle ticket on the way into an event. The winning prize is undesir-
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able and so you give the attendees the chance to sell back the ticket as a donation.

Direct Action Fundraising

Ask for donations for specific actions your organization will take with the funds.

Pay to Work

This works as a "reverse salary." People pay to volunteer for your organization.

Certified Mailing

Send an email to top donors indicating that you have some important news (when you actually do have important news) and to await a letter. Then send them a letter by certified mail telling them why you need money urgently and include a return envelope.

From internal revenue to the different types of charitable contributions to campaigns and events, you should be pursuing multiple avenues of fundraising. Raising funds will help the organization become successful in its goals and help to continue its success.

Tips and Resources

This guide has been far from exhaustive. There are many details and understanding of the nonprofit world that are not included that need to be understood to be successful. This next section will provide you with more helpful information and resources to find information needed for implementation and success.

Tips

Do not underestimate the importance of legal, accounting, and fundraising consulting.

Seek out individuals who have expertise and experience dealing with nonprofits.

Make sure you understand the tax-exemption status and what types of donations and in-
come are tax-deductible.

Compensate yourself and those who work for you fairly.

Continue to learn about the laws that apply to nonprofits. Nonprofits have extensive financial reporting and many laws to follow.

Seek ways in which you can partner with: other nonprofits, businesses, and the government. You may not always have all the resources or knowledge to be successful in an area. Utilizing the strengths of others can be advantageous to you.

Avoid personal liability within your organization.

Brand your organization. Do not underestimate the importance of marketing. Make the marketing of your organization contagious.

Find out if there are any other organizations doing the same thing already. Partnering with other larger organizations is beneficial.

Resources

Books

Starting and Managing a Nonprofit Organization By Bruce R. Hopkins

Information on the legal aspects of nonprofit organizations and tips on successful management practices.

The Art of the Start By Guy Kawasaki

Gives tips and advice for starting organizations.

The Tactics of Hope: How Social Entrepreneurs Are Changing Our World By Wilford Welch

Examples of innovative social entrepreneurs and their ventures.

Strategic Management in Public and Nonprofit Organizations By Jack Koteen

Management strategies and practices for nonprofits
Strategic Tools for Social Entrepreneurs: Enhancing the Performance of Your Enterprising Nonprofit By Dees, Emerson, & Economy

Guide for social entrepreneurs that gives tools and techniques and teaches how to apply them.

Enterprising Nonprofits: A Toolkit for Social Entrepreneurs By Dees, Emerson, & Economy

Contains core concepts of social entrepreneurship and helps social entrepreneurs to become more effective.

Entrepreneurship in the Social Sector By Wei-Skillern, Austin, Leonard, & Stevenson

Contains comprehensive case studies of nonprofits.

- How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas
  By David Bornstein

Inspirational stories of social entrepreneurs and outlines patterns of problem solving in their organizations.

New Venture Management: The Entrepreneur's Roadmap By Kuratko & Hornsby

A concise entrepreneurship textbook

Entrepreneurial Finance: Finance and Business Strategies for the Serious Entrepreneur

By Steven Rogers

Methods on keeping financial control and tips on avoiding financial barriers

Online

The U.S. Small Business Administration (sba.gov)

Fintel: helps with the financial issues of business plan (fintel.us)

Market Research.com: nonprofit research (marketresearch.com)

American FactFinder: demographic information (factfinder2.census.gov)
Entrepreneur: articles and resources for entrepreneurs (entrepreneur.com)

Nonprofit Resource Network: training opportunities and resources for nonprofits
(nonprofitresourcenetwork.org)

The Fundraising Authority: fundraising resources and advice (thefundraisingauthority.com)

Net Impact: social network and resources for social entrepreneurs (netimpact.org)

Conclusion

This guide’s goal has been to make the nonprofit professional realize their role as not only a philanthropist but also as an entrepreneur. The content of this guide will help those starting a nonprofit organization become aware of problems and opportunities they may not have realized. All of this information may seem overwhelming and starting a nonprofit may sound a little more daunting of a task. However, do not let the planning and managing aspects of the process dwindle your passion for helping others. The most important aspect of the process is the mission you have to solve a problem. This passion will fuel you even in the midst of hardship. Follow your passion, bring others alongside you, plan well, and make an impact in the world.
Works Cited


