

NFP

**Cost-Effective Strategies for
Greening Your Organization**

**Charitable Giving Hits
Record \$306 Billion**

Working with Outside Consultants

At various points in its development, your organization may benefit from the expertise and insight that only an external consultant can provide. But without the right selection process and procedures in place for working with a consultant, bringing in an outside advisor can prove a waste of time and money.

Here are some tips for hiring and making the most of outside consultants:

Define exactly what advice and/or services you require. When your organization needs help with a specific project or fundraising campaign, identifying the reasons why a consultant's services are required is not difficult. But what if the needs of your organization are less clearly defined? Bringing in a consultant to "improve efficiency" is far too broad an objective. Before beginning the recruitment process, attempt to identify the weaknesses in your organization that should be addressed and the specific goals you want assistance in achieving.

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Cost-Effective Strategies for Greening Your Organization

Motivated by the desire to make the world a better place, operating in harmony with green principles should come naturally to not-for-profit groups. But, like all consumers of energy and materials, even well-intentioned nonprofits can find reducing their carbon footprint and avoiding pollution to be a challenge. Fortunately, there are many simple steps your organization can take to improve its environmental practices—and save money at the same time.

A good place to start is in the office. Computers, mobile phones, faxes, and printers can eat up considerable amounts of electricity, and some electronics contain particularly harmful substances that can pollute the environment and damage health. The Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (www.epeat.net), a project of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Green Electronics Council, can help you assess the energy consumption of the equipment your organization is currently using, as well as the impact on the environment of manufacturing and disposing the devices.

If you discover that some of your organization's office computers or printers are wasteful or potentially harmful, trading them in immediately may not be the solution, as throwing away these devices has its own negative environmental consequences. Instead, consider strategies for minimizing the use of equipment, such as reminding staff to turn off computers when they leave their desks for longer periods of time and setting all equipment to switch automatically into sleep mode when not in use.

When the time comes to replace equipment, look for devices that are energy-efficient and manufactured with a minimum of toxic materials. Rather than disposing of equipment, look for opportunities to donate devices that are still functional. If IT equipment can no longer be used, send the devices to a recycler capable of disassembling the equipment responsibly. Your organization can also conserve funds, as well as protect the environment, by purchasing refurbished equipment.

While a completely paperless office may not be a possibility, your organization may be able to reduce the amount of paper it currently consumes. Ask several employees to meet and dis-

cuss how paper is used in the office. They may, for example, conclude that certain tasks that currently involve paper can be performed electronically. Send a report summarizing the group's findings to all staff members and volunteers via email, reminding them to think before printing.

Nonprofits should also be aware of the types of paper they use and how paper products are disposed. If your office does not have one already, implement a recycling system for paper and other office products, especially those that contain toxic substances. Local suppliers should be able to provide your organization with high-quality recycled paper, both for daily use and for printed marketing and informational materials. A wide variety of green office products, such as toner and adhesives, are now available from many suppliers at increasingly low prices.

Heating and cooling also consume considerable amounts of energy in most offices. Employees should be encouraged to control the temperature by closing doors and turning down the thermostat at night. Shades, fans, and natural ventilation can go a long way toward cooling indoor spaces.

There are many other ways to conserve electricity. Install motion sensors instead of turning on all lights every morning, and rely whenever possible on natural light. Switch from incandescent to fluorescent lighting where appropriate, but make sure that all fluorescent bulbs are disposed of safely.

Driving and other forms of travel produce carbon dioxide emissions that may be contributing to climate change. If possible, allow some of your employees to telecommute at least part of the time or to work a four-day week. Some organizations have created incentives to encourage employees to take public transit, carpool, cycle, or walk to work. Look at ways to reduce the number of long-distance trips your staff takes, especially when flying is required.

Ask employees and volunteers for their ideas on how the organization can improve its environmental practices, and integrate some of their suggestions into management's efforts to create a more eco-friendly workplace. As changes are implemented, ask staff for feedback on how well the program is working and what additional steps might be taken to accelerate the greening process. ✧

WORKING WITH OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS

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Determine what type of consultant is right for you. While most nonprofits will select consultants who have experience in working with not-for-profit organizations with missions similar to their own, your organization may wish to consider hiring a consultant with a more varied background. In some cases, for example, consultants whose primary experience is in working with business clients can provide a fresh perspective and more effective advice than a consultant who specializes in the nonprofit sector.

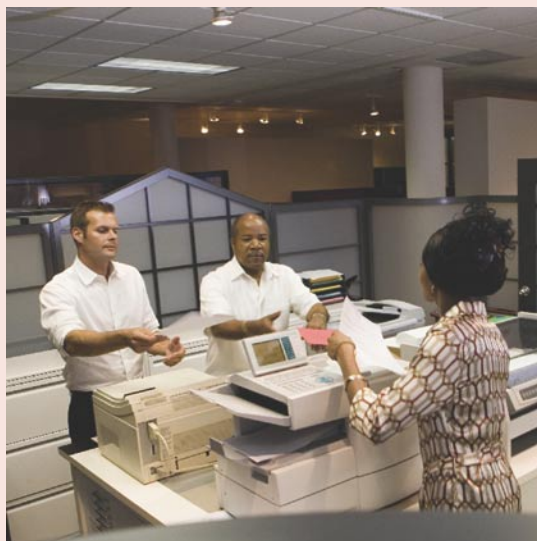
Ask around. If you are uncertain about how to find a consultant who meets your organization's needs, contact professional associations or other nonprofit organizations for recommendations. Take advantage of opportunities to interview representatives of these groups about their experiences with individual consultants or with consulting firms. These contacts may also be able to offer advice on consulting fees or even on how to access some consulting services on a pro bono basis. You should, however, avoid selecting a consultant simply because he or she is a friend or family member of an employee or manager in your organization.

Prepare an RFP and collect proposals and bids. Once your organization has determined what it hopes to accomplish by hiring a consultant, include these requirements in a "request for proposal" (RFP) to be distributed to potential candidates. Ask each interested party to submit a proposal and to bid on the fees and reimbursable expenses. Examine each proposal carefully, asking additional questions or interviewing candidates where appropriate. Eliminate any proposals that are not presented professionally or that fail to include the information you have requested.

Draw up a contract. After a candidate has been selected, prepare a legal agreement that outlines the services that the consultant is expected to deliver, dates for completion, and a

schedule of payment. Have the consultant sign the contract before beginning the work.

Cooperate as fully as possible with the consultant. Keep in mind that even the most qualified consultant cannot be of assistance without input and cooperation from members of your organization. Before the consultant arrives to do the job, make sure that the appropriate people in your organization have made time in their schedules to meet with the consultant and provide him or her with the necessary information. Prepare any background materials on your organization the consultant might find useful in advance.



Remember, too, that consultants should not be made responsible for doing the work of management or of regular employees. Instead, consultants should be seen as a source of expert advice on how staff members can perform their duties more effectively, even after the consultant's work is finished.

Put the consultant's proposals into practice. Even after spending considerable amounts of money to have a consultant address an issue or solve a problem, many organizations fail to take seriously the consultant's advice or to translate his or her recommendations into action. Your organization should weigh carefully each of the consultant's findings and make clear decisions about whether, and how, the organization will put these suggestions into practice.

Evaluate the consultant's performance. After the consultant's ideas have been implemented and enough time has passed for the results to become apparent, analyze the impact of the actions taken, and ask members of your organization to assess the usefulness of the consultant's work. This can help you determine whether your organization's original goals in hiring the consultant were met and provide you with insight into how your organization can make effective use of consultancy services moving forward. ♦

Charitable Giving Hits Record \$306 Billion

Amounting to an estimated \$306.39 billion in 2007, charitable giving in the United States exceeded \$300 billion for the first time in history, according to a report prepared by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University for the Giving USA Foundation.

The study found that giving rose an estimated 3.9% in 2007, with every type of public charity seeing an increase in donations. At the same time, however, the study found that private foundations, which are not technically public charities, experienced declines in giving.

Researchers attributed the increase in donations to public charities in 2007 to the performance of the stock market in the first half of the year, overall growth in the economy measured by gross domestic product, and increases in corporate and personal income as reported at the end of the year.

Commenting on the study's findings, Giving Institute chair George C. Ruotolo, Jr. observed

that a strong start to the economy at the start of the year helped lift giving in 2007, "despite worries at year's end from gasoline prices or the housing and mortgage crises."

The report also included results from a survey that asked 366 charities about their fundraising practices, as well as the impact they believe national events had on giving in 2007 and will have in 2008.

"Charities we surveyed have concerns about 2008 for the economy and the stock market and the impact they will have on giving," said Del Martin, chair of Giving USA Foundation.

However, Martin added, this year's survey "showed that a clear majority of charities in the public-society benefit arena are not worried about the impact the presidential campaign will have on their fundraising." ♦

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