

## Defy Hunkerdownism

### *Strategic Leadership for Uncertain Times*

By Matt Lehrman & John Little

Self-preservation being the essence of human nature, your nonprofit organization's instinctive defensiveness to the disruption of COVID-19 was entirely understandable.

Remaining hunkered down in the face of on-going uncertainty is insupportable.

There is no future for any entity that fails to adapt to changing circumstances. Neither the noblest mission, proudest history, nor most abundant cash reserves can assure a nonprofit's viability in a profoundly transforming world.

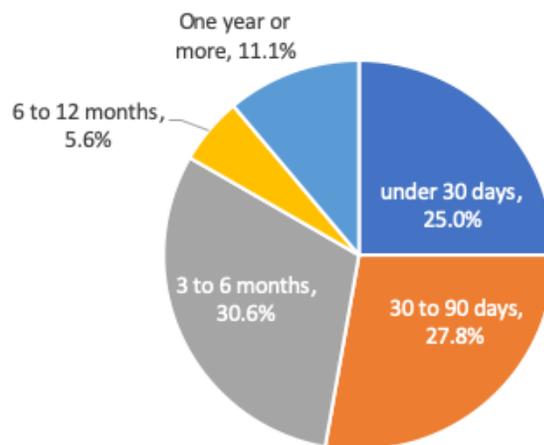
Neither will dogged persistence. The adage that it's not how many times you fall but how many times you get back up is incomplete. Until you learn to proceed differently, you'll keep stumbling.

#### Strategic Plan Inadequacy

While conventional strategic planning can be a powerful way to articulate, prioritize, and gather support around a nonprofit's greatest long-term objectives – it's a tool designed for pursuing goals amidst the luxury of time.

It's the wrong tool for blasting through fear, interruption, and adversity, such as evidenced by our recent national survey of 1,000 nonprofit leaders which revealed that

#### Confidence in Forward Planning



*Given so much uncertainty these days, how far into the future do you feel confident making plans on behalf of the organization for which you work?*

83.4% lack confidence to make organizational plans beyond a mere 6 months.

And in statistical confirmation, only the 11.1% of respondents confident in planning more than a year ahead answered a separate question to say that their current strategic plan is "extremely" or "very" relevant to their organizations' immediate challenges.

(Side note: 19.4% of respondents answered, "We don't have a strategic plan" - a concerning finding we'll address separately.)

The beauty of strategic planning is its capacity to dream big and rally support over time, **but today's priority is for measured advancements that restore purposefulness and generate momentum right now.**

## Pivot to Imperative Planning™

If you were leading an Arctic expedition and became trapped in a blinding storm, you might initially hunker down.

But how long would it take for you to recognize that stopping is a jeopardous solution – that your group will freeze or starve if it doesn't resume its purposeful march forward? (We suspect not long.)

Yet nonprofits can easily succumb to the malaise of *hunkerdownism* as even capable and well-intentioned stakeholders, donors, finance committees, Boards of Directors, team members, and leaders prioritize budget cuts and rein in organizational ambitions.

**Imperative planning** is the cure to *hunkerdownism*. In the face of adversity, it focuses nonprofit organizations on the task of making *necessary progress*.

Importantly, this isn't a time for reckless, risky, or roguish leadership, but rather advancement that's secured in purposefulness, accountability and collaboration – albeit in expedited ways – among a nonprofits' key constituencies.

## An Ongoing Challenge

Navigating the COVID pandemic is unlike recovering from the tragedy of 9/11 or enduring the Great Recession of 2008. To survive, nonprofits (like everyone around the world) must learn to reinvent and persevere in an inescapably perilous environment – which makes **Imperative Planning** an indispensable discipline for nonprofit management today.

Take this 10-question quiz to measure your organization's Imperative Strength:

[www.Hunkerdownism.com](http://www.Hunkerdownism.com)

## Let us help

In response to today's unprecedented challenges, we've joined our years of experience facilitating courageous conversations with a collection of evaluation, learning, threat-assessment, scenario modeling, and agile decision-making tools to directly help nonprofit leaders define and gather support around making necessary progress.

Until long-term strategic planning is restored, let **Imperative Planning** guide your nonprofit's priorities.



*Matt Lehrman and John Little are co-founders of Social Prosperity Partners, a firm that works nationally to help nonprofit organizations sustain donor engagement and secure community relevance.*

## Contact us

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We help people

understand  
think  
decide  
plan  
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together.