

This is NOT the New Normal

Here are 3 Tactics for Navigating the RAW NORMAL

By Matt Lehrman & John Little

If this was the “new normal” you’d feel confident to operate in the now, organize for the soon, and plan for the future.

You would draw inspiration from your organization’s vision statement. You would define purpose from its mission statement. And you’d achieve consensus around organizational priorities via a clear description of key objectives.

If this was the “new normal” you would feel confident plotting the course from your organization’s current situation to where it aspires to be in 3-5 years, or even longer.

There’s an old Yiddish adage, “*Mann Tracht, Un Gott Lacht*” meaning “**Man Plans, and God Laughs.**” In the midst of disruption and uncertainty, it surely rings true.

So, how will you recognize the start of the “new normal”?

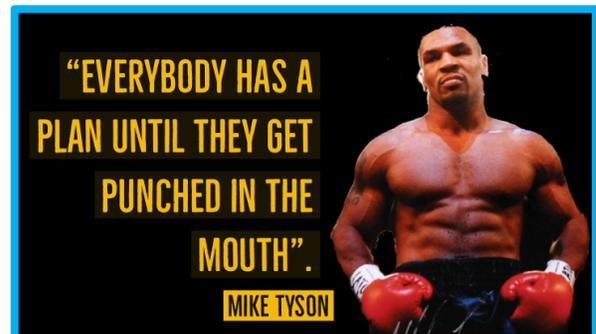
It arrives at the precise point that you and your Board of Directors feel stable in your situation and confident enough to update your organization’s strategic plan.

And we hope that’s not any time soon.

Planning, not Plans

That’s not to say that you and your organization’s Board of Directors shouldn’t be deeply engaged in planning. You absolutely should!

The question is, “What are you planning for?” At this moment, it’s likely that your



organization would be better served by a vigorous focus on the options and opportunities of the next 3 to 6 months rather than the hopes of the next 3 to 5 years.

Appropriate to the gut punch that so many organizations have endured in the past year, Mike Tyson’s famous quote speaks viscerally to the inadequacy of all strategic plans, when he observes: “**Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.**”

The RAW Normal

What do you plan for if you’re not in a position of stability, confidence and strategy?

That’s what we call the **raw normal** – a time of uncertainty – which should be approached with 3 essential objectives:

- **Understand** – Charge your whole team (board, staff, stakeholders, etc.) with the responsibility to pay attention to all that’s changing. Just like the FBI following an incident,

create a mechanism for your team to submit “tips” about all that they’re observing. There’s incredible wealth in your ability to gather, organize, and ultimately interpret the ramifications of all that input.

- **Adjust** – Like a surfer riding a wave, navigating the raw normal is about rapidly making small adjustments. Sure, your strategic plan might tell you it’s time to replace your surfboard, but that’s an irrelevant option when you’re already out on the water. Focus on making the adjustments that you can. Over time, many small, smart, and even fearless adjustments can result in a magnitude of change.
- **Collaborate** – Under pressure it’s hard to rise above one’s own situation and see a greater picture. Likewise, it’s way too easy to commiserate with others about the challenges being faced. In the raw normal, perhaps your greatest opportunity is to seek out others who are problem solving in new and creative ways – and join them in the effort. Learn from their successes. Avoid their mistakes. Join forces where you can minimize risk. And raise a toast to moments of optimism and accomplishment.

We Can Help

In this era of unprecedented challenges and prolonged uncertainty, Matt Lehrman and John Little work together as **Social Prosperity Partners** to help all sorts of community, nonprofit, and business leaders to gather information, explore possibilities, conduct courageous conversations, and make the strategic decisions necessary to sustain and advance their organizations.

We offer a no-cost initial consultation to explore your priorities and how our approach to collaborative planning, problem solving, and community building could be of value.



*Matt Lehrman and John Little are co-founders of **Social Prosperity Partners**, an Arizona-based firm that works nationally in service to municipalities, nonprofits, and companies providing services in strategic planning, group facilitation, and community engagement.*

For more information and to schedule an initial consultation:

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