Guide to Nonprofit Development Assessments

The first step to unleashing your fundraising potential.

GKollaborative

Creative Strategies for Nonprofits

We are strategic partners to nonprofits, social entrepreneurs, and companies. We enable our clients to identify opportunities and incubate the ideas and processes that lead to change, innovation, and growth in the social sector.

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Introduction to Development Assessments

Nonprofit organizations of all stripes rely on philanthropy to achieve their missions. For some, it is an incidental part of their entire revenue stream. But for many others, it is the lifeblood of the organization.

Larger organizations, such as hospital systems, colleges, and universities, have sophisticated fundraising operations. But many organizations typically rely on a handful of tried and true strategies: a gala or a golf tournament. They may send a year-ended direct mail solicitation, and perhaps one in the spring. Some organizations are participating in community-wide giving days and crowd funding. And some have engaged in the periodic capital campaign.

How is it all working for your organization? Are all of the components of your development program effective and efficient? Are you maximizing the revenue potential of everything you do? Are you putting a lot of time and energy into events that offer little return?

Do you know how well you are retaining donors? How much risk there is in your donor pool? The ROI on your efforts?

A comprehensive assessment, conducted by objective external professionals, is a diagnostic tool that can answer all of those questions, and many more.

What is an Assessment?

An assessment is a diagnostic tool, an objective, external review of your entire development program, and your readiness to grow your philanthropic revenue. We look at a number of broad areas, depending on the needs of the client:

- Your past and current fundraising initiatives
- Governing board structure, governance, policies and procedures, and back office functions as they relate to fundraising
- Branding and communications as they relate to fundraising
- Your culture of philanthropy

We leave no stone unturned. We will evaluate:

- Donor relations and stewardship
- Your annual development plan
- Alumni relations (for education clients)
- Annual giving programs
- Special events
- Major gifts and planned giving program
- Corporate engagement
- Foundation relations
- Back office functions including technology
- Management reporting
- Board involvement in development
- Policies and procedures that impact fundraising
- Staffing

We will look at your strengths and weaknesses, and make specific, actionable, short- and long-term suggestions that can unleash your fundraising potential.

Timing is Everything.

We recommend an assessment when your organization:

- ✓ Has a change in management or senior development staff
- ✓ Has undergone a merger or acquisition of another organization
- ✓ Is planning to embark on a capital or endowment campaign
- ✓ Has completed a strategic plan and needs to align its fundraising to achieve the plan's goals
- ✓ Is not able to take advantage of all the fundraising opportunities open to it
- ✓ Would like to increase board participation in its development efforts
- ✓ Wants a good barometer by which to measure its development program and an independent view of how the program could be more effective

Assessment Leadership

Many individuals in the organization are involved in the assessment process, but none more important than the CEO/Executive Director. We always consider that person to be our client. Together, we will finalize the scope of the assessment, identify particular areas the CEO wants explored, and determine the interview participants.

It is through the CEO that we communicate any issues, updates, memos, and the draft and final reports.

Our process takes approximately three months to complete, depending on the availability of data and interviewees.

Preparation & Data Collection
Our process begins with a welcome memo for staff and volunteers outlining your goals for the assessment and asking for their active participation in the process. It also includes a start-up conference call with those compiling data. We will provide you with a comprehensive list of materials and reports that are part of our review. In addition, you will receive a data collection Excel workbook that should be distributed to appropriate members of the staff to complete. Within the notebook are charts that will give us a five-year snapshot of your fundraising activities.

Evaluation
We will do a deep dive into all of the materials and data you give us, and begin to compile our initial analysis about the program.

Personal Interviews
We will spend time at your location, meeting face-to-face with senior leadership, including the CEO/Executive Director, Chief Development Officer, and Chief Marketing Officer, We will interview the board chair, chair of your development committee, and other board members you deem important. And lastly, we'll interview every members of your development department staff. This gives us a first-hand perspective on unique perspectives each person brings.

Interim Verbal Report
After completing the interviews and evaluating all of the materials and data submitted to us, we provide an interim verbal report to the CEO. This offers us the opportunity to discuss some of the key issues that have arisen during the assessment process and decide if additional stakeholders should be interviewed.

Preparation of First Draft of the Assessment Report
A preliminary, confidential draft report will be prepared for the CEO's review.

Final Report and Presentation
After feedback is received on the draft, a final report will be prepared and delivered to the CEO. We will then present our findings to senior staff, development team, and the board.

The Report

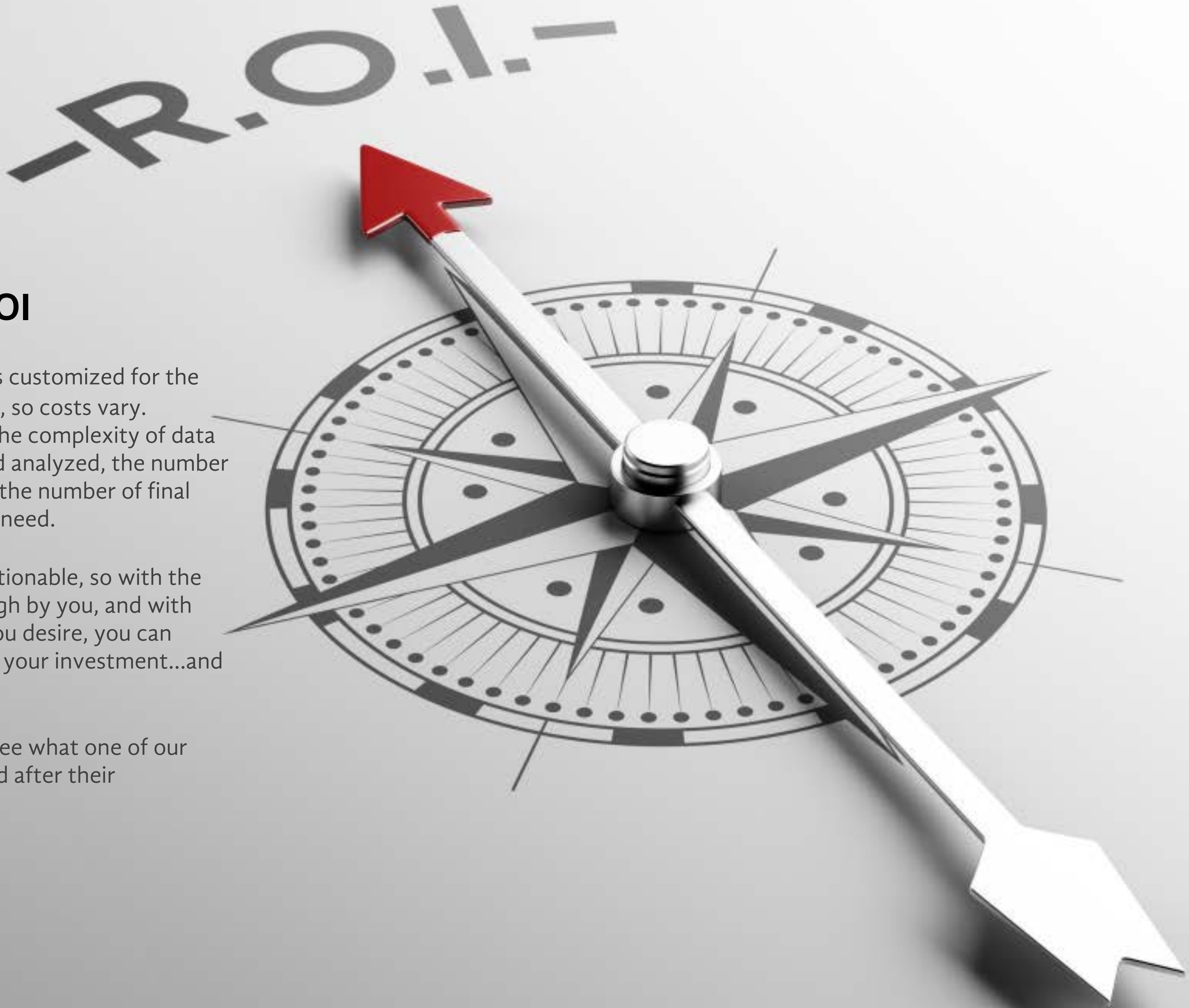
Our reports are comprehensive and contain:

- Cover letter
- Definitions of key words & explanation of methodology
- Executive summary with key assessment takeaways and recommendations
- General fundraising overview findings and recommendations
- Findings and recommendations for:

    - ✓ Stewardship and donor relations
    - ✓ Annual giving
    - ✓ Major and planned giving
    - ✓ Special events
    - ✓ Corporate engagement
    - ✓ Foundation relations
    - ✓ Board leadership in fundraising
    - ✓ Back office functions & technology

- Staffing recommendations
- Analysis of – and recommendations for – policies related to fundraising
- Appendices with useful information

Our reports are delivered in narrative form with charts and graphs, as well as into presentation format.



Cost and ROI

Each assessment is customized for the needs of the client, so costs vary. Variables include the complexity of data to be gathered and analyzed, the number of interviews, and the number of final presentations you need.

Our reports are actionable, so with the right follow-through by you, and with our assistance if you desire, you can recoup the cost of your investment…and a whole lot more.

Turn the page to see what one of our clients experienced after their assessment.

How One Client Found Her ROI

We were engaged by the newly-installed chancellor of a multi-unit community college district. The district's two colleges had their own foundations. Our charge from the chancellor: tell me what these foundations are doing in their fundraising and if I have the best structure.

The assessment revealed many things, including the fact that one foundation had a gala that entertained primarily faculty and staff and, at best, broke event. The other foundation's gala netted less than $50,000 – before the cost of staff time was calculated.

Through continued engagement with us, we eventually consolidated the two foundations, and designed a new fundraising, alumni and community engagement program. During the process, the two galas – the sacred cows of fundraising – were put out to pasture.

During the assessment, we identified that there were many people in the community who could become involved, if only they were approached.

We replaced the galas with a middle donor program, designed to attract donors who would give between $1,200 and $10,000 annually.

In the first five months after launch, we welcomed 59 donors, many of them new to the organization. We raised more than $100,000, with a cash investment of just $2,500 for the design and printing of collateral.

That far exceeded their investment in the assessment. And it was just one of a number of new initiatives we created.

Don’t take our word for it. Here’s what some of our clients have said.

“He was the infusion of fresh air we needed.”
JENNIE Z. MEEHAN, VICE CHAIR | SAN JOSÉ-EVERGREEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT FOUNDATION

“Glenn is an insightful, talented development expert who was of invaluable help to Care Dimensions when we wanted to formulate a new strategic focus and grow our philanthropy program.“
DIANE T. STRINGER, CEO | CARE DIMENSIONS

“I hired Glenn to take a comprehensive, objective look at what our two foundations were doing, and to come up with a plan to dramatically increase philanthropic revenue. Thanks to his study – and his ongoing involvement with us – we completed an important, state-wide challenge campaign for student scholarships; revitalized our board, and eliminated underperforming events. Today, five years later, thanks to the foundation that Glenn helped us create, we’ve embarked on a $15 million dollar scholarship campaign.”
CINDY MILES, CHANCELLOR | GROSSMONT-CUYAMACA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

“When I was first approached to work with Glenn, I have to admit I was skeptical to work with a consultant. After all, I am a veteran in the development field. The data Glenn asked of me was, at times, a painful process. Looking back, I wish I had this opportunity a decade ago. Glenn had me look at numbers in a different way. I am challenging myself and the team to break traditional fundraising trends and look outside of the box. With his insight, our future will not be a static one, it will be a deliberate modification to stay ahead and be trend setters for the future.”
LORI IGEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | HOSPICE OF DAYTON FOUNDATION

“Glenn has an innate ability to create. He can take a new idea — or an old idea that needs refreshing — and bring it to life effectively, efficiently, and vibrantly. He rallies people around an idea and helps them make it their own.”
MICHELLE J. ANDERSON, PRESIDENT | BROOKLYN COLLEGE

How can we help you grow your philanthropy?

Let’s talk.

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