

# THE FIRST 90 DAYS: A QUICK GUIDE FOR LEADING THROUGH A CRISIS

COVID-19 is providing many lessons about leading through a crisis. There is little business-as-usual as you strive to prove philanthropy's return on investment, especially during uncertain times. Leaders are challenged to align humanity, reality and productivity to best move forward during major disruptions.

Philanthropy leaders must remain calm and agile as they lead through change. A crisis provides unique opportunities to elevate philanthropy. We learned this during COVID-19, 9/11 and more. Leading your team as the connectors between your organization and your community members can help raise funds needed for the most strategic and urgent priorities.

How can the lessons from the pandemic help us with future challenges?



## *The First 30 Days:* **STABILIZE**

Your charge in the first 30 days of any disruption is internal stabilization. It is often said you must first put on your own oxygen mask before anything else. Start with your team. Ensure they are safe, healthy, supported and encouraged. Ensure leadership agrees with your vision to move your team and your philanthropy mission forward. Some ideas can be found [here](#).

Once internal operations are aligned and secured, it's vital to next engage your constituents. How are they feeling? What are they thinking? Are they affected locally or globally? How can you help? Let them know your organization cares.



## The Next 30 Days: CALIBRATE

Next, prioritize needs, calibrate strategies and communicate your plans. How has your case changed? Will programs be adjusted? Will events be canceled or postponed? How are volunteers impacted? How can community partners help? What unique opportunities are presented with this crisis that encourages community giving? Review current fiscal year and multi-year plans to determine what needs to change immediately, what can wait and what can be discarded completely. Quickly grasping the gravity of disruption on each program allows you to lead with confidence while continuing the vision and mission of your organization.



## The Final 30 Days: IMPLEMENT

You have secured your team, checked on constituents and adjusted plans. It's time to press forward. As COVID-19 has proven, a crisis can be an ideal time to prove the philanthropy team's potential and positive impact, even while working remotely.

How do you move implementation forward over the next 30 days and beyond?

- **Donor Connection:** Communicate your plans, especially those that have changed. Donor engagement must keep humanity and compassion at the forefront of every conversation. Treat calls and connection as collaborative efforts, not interviews. Assign team members proactive calls to donors, volunteers and other important health care partners. Making 50 calls a week, or 10 each business day, is a solid and reachable goal. Ensure all connections are entered into your database.
- **Special Events:** If events are canceled, it's time to implement your strategy that helps to accomplish the same goals without a gathering.

Use your donor relations, marketing and stewardship teams to provide creative digital promotion and recognition.

- **Employee Giving:** [Thank employees](#) for their commitment to the health care organization. Ask senior health executives and grateful community members to support your employee assistance fund.
- **General Giving:** Thank donors for past support and ask for their consideration in helping with current needs through a crisis response fund, employee emergency services, telehealth, mental health or community impact funds.
- **Major Giving:** Reset past major gift conversations with relevant updates and case support for what is impacted by this crisis. Cite examples, such as the lack of elective surgeries, where large charitable gifts can make an immediate, positive impact. Reconnect with prospects to determine their top philanthropic priorities, which may now include supporting your organization through a crisis.
- **Gift Planning:** Implement your new gift planning strategies, just with care. While not the time to lead with gift planning discussions, do include them. Giving during uncertain times can be especially desirable when additional tax relief opportunities are present, as in the CARES Act during the COVID-19 pandemic. Communicate advantages such as this.
- Share productivity, successes and ROI with the foundation board and health care executive leadership to demonstrate the value of the philanthropy team.

Philanthropy has proven to be a viable revenue source, even in crisis. Disruption provides unique opportunities to advance your missions. Recognize them and lead your team through the positive impact your connections and gifts make on the health care organization.

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