

## Why Use a Consultant?

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- ✓ **Are you ready to turn your same old ordinary work into extraordinary results?**
- ✓ **Do you need timely, specific expertise and advice to help guide you through a period of change, through a project or initiative, or to build your capacity to better meet your mission?**
- ✓ **Have you ever wondered if a consultant might be able to help you, but didn't know for sure what a consultant might bring to the table?**

Consultants can lend valuable expertise and a more objective opinion to almost any situation, from assessing and improving the day-to-day operations to laying the groundwork for once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

We can provide valuable, targeted, and timely advice at moments of organizational change such as:

- Needing a major increase in funding to accomplish a goal.
- Conducting or implementing a strategic plan or developing strategies to reach a vision.
- Significantly altering the mission or key programs.
- Dealing with a long-term impact of budget cuts through different funding approaches.

Consultants can be a cost-effective way to get short-term assistance while you and your organization benefit from a high level of expertise and experience.

Here are just a few of advantages that the consultants at Paul J. Strawhecker, Inc. can bring to your organization.

### **Experience**

The consultants at Paul J. Strawhecker, Inc. possess a wide range of professional experience that can help inform the unique culture and circumstances at your organization.

We've worked with all types of nonprofits, in urban and rural settings, throughout a multi-state region in the Midwest and beyond. We've dealt with all aspects of nonprofit management and fundraising from broad initiatives to specific assessments of key and targeted fundraising activities.

In short, we've been there, done that. We can bring an experienced approach to whatever you are facing.

### **Here are a few questions to consider:**

- Are there specific skills or targeted expertise that would help your organization accomplish its goals?

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- Do you wish you had a greater breadth of knowledge or a few more specific skills on staff? Is your staff open to learning?
- Is specialized expertise required on an as-needed basis?
- Would a coach be useful to help develop a knowledge base of principles as well as techniques?

### Increased Options

While there are general fundraising principles that hold true, fundraising is not always a mechanical, by-the-book practice. We pride ourselves on bringing creative ideas to the table for each and every client, informed by our extensive portfolio of experience. With many decades of combined experience plus a well-informed regional perspective on fundraising and nonprofit management, Paul J. Strawhecker, Inc. has a broad range of experience through working with numerous clients in a variety of situations.

A big pile of cash may or may not be behind that door you are knocking on. And, if it's not, we can help you develop creative options that can get you closer to your ultimate goal with the resources that are available.

#### Here are a few questions to consider:

- Would your organization benefit from a regional perspective on how other nonprofits are approaching similar issues or opportunities?
- Would you like to temporarily expand the staff dedicated toward a specific project until it achieves its objective?
- Would it be more efficient or effective to temporarily enhance your staff expertise with consultants to tackle a problem or reach a goal?

### Independent Authority

A consultant is refreshingly free from organizational dynamics, internal politics, and personal concerns that might be hampering vision and strategy. And, to be honest, in our 17 years of consulting business, we've seen all manner of dirty laundry and skeletons in closets. More importantly, we've helped organizations cope with what they've got and move on. An independent authority can help cope with current conditions while creating a strategy that gets you back to your real work of making a difference.

Consultants can be helpful in delivering tough messages and in helping employees, volunteers, board members and others see beyond personal concerns to the bigger picture - the organization, its mission, and its work in the world.

#### Here are a few questions to consider:

- Are organizational dynamics hindering cooperation, creativity, or consensus needed at this point in time?
- Will an independent authority be helpful in uniting diverse perspectives into one panoramic vision?
- Can an unaffiliated expert add a voice and information to discussions that isn't present at the current time?

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## **Informed Objectivity**

Most of your staff and volunteers are emotionally attached to your organization. When change is needed, the emotional attachment can lead to conflicts that may or may not be in line with what is best for your mission or for long-term sustainability. Subjectivity can make it difficult to accurately evaluate situations and make good choices. Some degree of objectivity is necessary for all major decisions, and a consultant can bring that to the table.

Objectivity is important in viewing the organization from the perspective of donors, potential funders, and others. Even more importantly, objectivity helps evaluate their relative importance. Most people can imagine what another opinion might be – we just don't think it's as important as our own. That's why objectivity is so important – especially at times of change.

An informed, objective observer can diagnose problems and assess strengths and weaknesses. But objectivity isn't all about conflict. We often find that organizations undersell their accomplishments more often than they overstate them. Informed objectivity also means that we know what many of the other groups down the block and in the next town over are doing. So we can help you articulate what you are doing with specificity, accuracy, and in ways designed for impact. Many organizations lack the objective perspective to understand how important their work is, and how significant their accomplishments are to their clients or community.

Through our work with other agencies, we've gained a breadth of knowledge about issues that are important to communities throughout Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Missouri. We bring that informed objectivity to you, to help you better articulate both your accomplishments and to better understand and manage the challenges you face.

### **Here are a few questions to consider:**

- Will an independent voice be needed to tactfully say what you are unable to say about yourselves to help you move forward?
- Can you see the forest for the trees? Do you see the big picture, or just get glimpses of what it might look like without these barriers in the way?
- Do you understand how perception is impacting your ability to raise funds, gain partners, collaborate, or achieve greater awareness?

## **Strategic Thinking**

Do you have a Chief Strategist on staff, whose primary role is keeping abreast of the changing landscape, understanding your performance in comparison to industry benchmarks, and plot changes to your approach based upon external and internal forces? If not, then you might consider hiring a consultant from time to time to help you do that.

Most staff are so consumed with meeting the daily demands of their jobs that they rarely have time to consider an overall strategy. It's difficult to remain focused on long-term objectives while completing this week's to-do list. One of the principal values of a consultant is to assist in the development of well-considered plans for specific projects with clear tasks, responsibilities and timelines.

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Here are a few questions to consider:

- Do you understand how what you are doing today relates to where you would like to see your fundraising and sources of income in five years?
- Do you have a coordinated, connected plan for funding that meets your current needs and connects you to your future goals?
- Can you afford to continue to operate in an increasingly competitive environment without a coordinated plan and clear strategy to drive you to your goals?

## Accountability

You get what you pay for, and when Boards of Directors and staff commit some of their hard-earned funds to pay for consulting services, they are often more invested in the outcomes. When onsite meetings are scheduled with a consultant, staff and volunteers usually are conscientious about completing assignments. A consultant keeps an organization focused on goals and the actions needed to achieve those goals. Plus, we all know what free advice can be worth – usually what you’ve paid for it.

Here are a few questions to consider:

- Have you been talking about a project or initiative for some time, but can’t seem to get anyone to take it seriously or make it a priority?
- Do you know where you want to go, but aren’t sure of the best ways to bring the various constituencies to the table for productive conversations?
- Have you tried advancing plans internally, only to have them fall by the wayside when people get busy and other short-term priorities distract from long term vision?
- Have you been around long enough to no longer be excited by the phrase “free advice”?

## More Hands on Deck

You’ve heard the adage “many hands make light work”.

That’s a great thing about consulting. We can lend a hand when the going is tough and when the work load is more than your staff can reasonably be expected to handle. But we don’t become a permanent line item on your operating budget.

## Ingredients for Success

You’ve also heard the phrase “too many cooks in the kitchen”.

In this era of greater accountability and transparency coming from every direction, sometimes another cook in the kitchen, or even a professional chef, is exactly what you need. Especially one who has developed recipes for success, understands the ingredients of change, and can creatively adopt what you have to bring a full meal to the table.

## Do you know you need something, but you’re not sure what it is?

Paul J. Strawhecker Inc. is always willing to provide free initial consultations until you know what you want, and until we know that we can provide it for you. We’re here because you are here. Thanks for the work that you do!