Institute of Fundraising

think
CONSULTING SOLUTIONS

FROM RESPONSE TO RECOVERY

Fundraising strategy and Covid-19

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FOREWORD

I have never been so impressed or inspired by our wonderful fundraising community than I have over the last three months as charities have responded to the impact of Covid-19. In the face of huge difficulty caused by the postponement or cancellation of iconic mass participation events and thousands of local community events; face to face fundraising being put on hold and charity shops closed, fundraisers have stepped up to the plate and delivered. And they've done so in the face of both personal and professional challenges, from furloughing to working from home, all alongside the anxieties and stress that everyone has felt with the continuing impact of the pandemic.

The responses I've seen across the sector have been full of creativity and innovation; of a 'can-do' approach which puts the supporter at the heart of communications and embeds the fundamentals of excellent, authentic, inspiring fundraising.

As we move towards the gradual reopening of areas of society, I hope we will begin to enter a new phase of fundraising, moving from the initial response towards building back better. Towards not just next week's fundraising appeal, but towards how all of our organisations can contribute more impactfully to create the fairer and more sustainable society we all crave.

While no-one can predict the future, we can develop scenarios and ask ourselves the right questions to put in place plans and ways of working that help us be in the best position to get through the challenges that inevitably will come our way.

I'm delighted that we have been able to work with THINK Consulting Solutions on this resource to help organisations move from emergency response to creating the new future.

Peter Lewis
Chief Executive
Chartered Institute of Fundraising

FOREWORD

These are undoubtedly testing times for charities and their fundraising teams across the sector, regardless of size, cause or organisational heritage. The speed and agility of change and action has been, and remains, breath taking. Now as we start to look ahead, both the reality and opportunities of the world beyond Covid-19 are coming into sharp focus.

The uniqueness of the sector has always been its ability to think and behave differently, to be brave and to offer alternative solutions to solving societal problems. It is these core attitudes which I believe will enable the sector to grasp this moment to recalibrate and emerge stronger and more single minded about delivering their missions.

My team and I at THINK are continually inspired by the charities and individuals we are privileged to support and work with. I am especially grateful to Beccy Murrell, Jindy Pal, Matt Smith and Simon Dickson for working with me on the content for this resource. We hope you find the contents thought provoking and inspiring as you navigate your way to clearer blue water.

Michelle Chambers
Managing Director
THINK Consulting Solutions

STRATEGIC PLANNING: WHERE NEXT?

1

The best laid plans...

Whatever point your organisation and your fundraising is at in its strategic cycle – at the start of a new strategy, halfway through an existing strategic period, or about to undertake strategy development for a new period – the impact of the coronavirus pandemic demands we take a fresh look at plans. For the time being 'business as usual' is off the table, with some predicting that it will never return as it was. Fundraisers across the world are being asked to provide the expert view on what future fundraising techniques and methods will look like and what voluntary income can be raised for the remainder of 2020, into the next financial year and beyond.

> **The challenge facing us at the moment is one of balancing the short term management of an extremely challenging situation with planning for the longer term, including reimagining what a 'new normal' might be for fundraising in a completely changed external landscape. All this while having to adopt completely new ways of working remotely while protecting the wellbeing of ourselves and our teams.**
>
> **— Linda Allen, Director of Fundraising, Motor Neurone Disease Association**

We are in unchartered territory, and we cannot predict the future, but that does not mean that fundraisers and charities should just sit back and wait for things to resolve one way or the other. Planning and strategy are still the fundamental building blocks for every charity – and the decisions we take now will determine the future for our organisations.

The starting point for this thinking has to be what your organisation wants to achieve and how it proposes to deliver it in response to the envisaged post Covid-19 world. It is widely thought that many organisations will respond to these unique circumstances by taking a hard look at what should be retained and what should be divested from operations.

Fundraising cannot exist in a vacuum; and so clarity of future direction is needed before recalibrating and recasting fundraising strategy, to take account of fundraising techniques that have emerged and those that have been lost; what the public response tells us about attitudes towards fundraising and volunteering and ultimately what that means for fundraised income.

There are many short-term uncertainties

We know that the UK is heading into recession, however, no one can say with any degree of confidence how long lasting that might be and how fundraising might perform. There is limited previous experience to draw on because recession alongside social distancing is a new phenomenon. Organisations may well consider treating the next financial year as a pause from an existing or new fundraising strategy as they plan and forecast a one-year operating plan for 2021/22, exploring a variety of scenarios which combine different social and economic effects.

These scenarios should consider what we know right now (as much as we can) as well as what the best estimates, ideas, and forecasts are for the year ahead. This includes considering whether to pause or stop fundraising activities that are not cost effective, to make space for 'test and learn' of new ideas and focused delivery of existing strong performers. However, while it is right in many cases to pause or divest some activities, fundraising as a whole should remain an active area of investment within organisations.

> **We are looking at how we can be more agile, and adapt the way we work. It's about thinking 'outside the box' and being bold – a lot of the fundraising we have all always done will never be quite the same again and we have to embrace the opportunities a new situation brings as well as remaining focused on the income streams that will hold steady during these uncertain times.**
>
> **— Tracey Hancock, Director of Fundraising, Rennie Grove Hospice Care**

Time and again, research shows that the best performing organisations are the ones that invest in people, skills, and fundraising activity. But of course what this looks like will be different for each organisation, and as certainties increase, scenarios should be revisited and honed. Communication will be key to this process so that all stakeholders understand what the range of potential fundraised income is and how/when it is being reassessed.

> **A crisis can create a surge of energy and focus. I've also recognised that by putting in place an agile team culture, opportunities arise. We have adapted at pace to support our families and colleagues. We have been creative, bolder and braver. At this time we have the opportunity to permanently build a better future. The response from the community to help 'in kind' has been overwhelming but we must not step back and see Covid-19 supporters as a 'moment in time'. Their commitment to act, respond and give despite their own challenges (whether individually and/or as a business) must be recognised. The challenge as we look forward is how do we convert these new supporters into long-term donors and provide effective personalised stewardship, whilst maintaining exceptional communication which demonstrates impact. This will be key to staying relevant.**
>
> **— Louise McCathie, Director of Fundraising, Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust**

95%

OF CHARITIES EXPECTED TO RECEIVE LESS INCOME THAN THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY FORECASTED OVER THE NEXT SIX MONTHS

The longer term view

Once Q1 of the next financial year has been completed and there is more clarity on the economic and social situation, attention can be turned to a full-scale review of the fundraising strategy. This may result in slight tweaks or major adjustments – and many charities will have a range of forecasts (worse case/best case) rather than definitive budgets or targets.

It may be that with 2020 and 2021 set aside, you can move back to your broad original strategic trajectory for income growth. But that is not a given – some organisations will decide it's right to start completely afresh rather than tweak previous plans. Whichever it is, you should be seeking to make decisions based on research, learning and insights – and factor in the collection of that data into your ongoing operating plans.

Questions to consider for your strategic planning

- What is the impact of coronavirus on your organisational vision and strategic direction?
- How many scenarios should be modelled for planning purposes? Can a set of scenarios be developed which are used across the organisation?
- How will colleagues and Board members be engaged in up and down and side to side planning?
- What are the measures against which the assessment of fundraising activities to retain, invest in, or divest should be made? What might need to be considered beyond the purely financial?
- As fundraising activity resumes, in some forms, in line with social guidelines, what risk assessments and plans have you got in place to ensure a safe return for fundraising activity?
- What steps can be taken to ensure preparedness for future 'emergencies' of this kind, including further 'waves' of cases, or the reintroduction of lockdown?

INSIGHT

48%

OF CHARITIES ARE REPORTING A PROJECTED LOSS TO THEIR VOLUNTARY INCOME

- **A 2019 report by Blackbaud and the Chartered Institute of Fundraising shows that charities which successfully increased their income had clear fundraising strategies and enough people with the right skills.[1]**
- **Pro Bono Economics reported that 95% of charities expected to receive less income than they had previously forecasted over the next six months as a result of Covid-19, and 90% said they expected Covid-19 to have a negative impact on their ability to meet their charity objectives over the next six months.[2]**
- **Research from the Chartered Institute of Fundraising, NCVO and Charity Finance Group, supported by PwC released in March 2020 found that charities are reporting a projected loss of 48% to their voluntary income, and a third wiped off from their total income.[3]**
- **Small Charities Coalition published the results of a survey which found eight of ten small charities (80%) have had to alter or drop services.[4]**

1 https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/library/the-status-of-uk-fundraising-2019-benchmark-report/
2 https://www.probonoeconomics.com/sites/default/files/files/05%20May%2019-20%20results_1.pdf
3 https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/library/impact-of-covid-19-on-the-charity-sector-briefing-from-the/
4 https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/coronavirus-just-one-five-small-charities-able-provide-normal-services/management/article/1677409

BACK TO BRILLIANT FUNDRAISING BASICS

2

Reviewing what works

Just like the private and public sectors, our sector has had to react and respond in an agile and lightning speed manner. This has been crucial in the ability for organisations to continue to fund and deliver their missions, whatever the cause may be. And we have seen an approach – that commonly exists within humanitarian response organisations when a disaster occurs, where the galvanising of people and breaking down of silos allows fundraising to operate at its best – being played out across the UK within all types of organisations. Income generation teams working across and with other functions, with a single-minded focus, has been impressive and praiseworthy.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced us to review our income generation approach through different lenses that we possibly wouldn't normally use, from the way we proposition our organisation's need for funds in a compelling and urgent manner, to how we execute that ask and via what channels. We've seen innovation and new channels being tested for the first time, as budgets move from one team to another, and where appetite for risk was nominal, measured risks have been successfully embraced and undertaken.

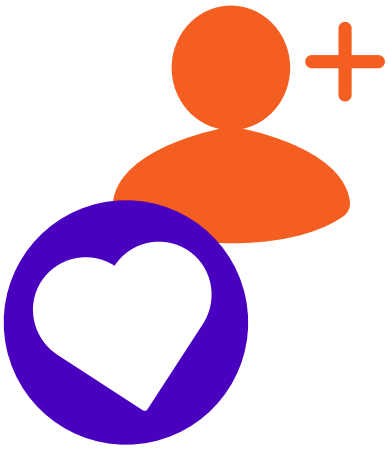
TOP TIP

Income generation must continue to be respected and supported, whether that's testing new approaches or diversifying the marketing mix and portfolio.

Current, relevant and engaging

So, what is key to the safeguarding of income generation? A focus on brilliant basics is the starting point. Ensure your case for support and fundraising proposition is current, relevant and engaging. It should continue to be absolutely aligned to your mission and engaging for both existing and new supporters. We've also seen fundraising communications responding to the fact that people are more likely to be at home, and could be anxious, stressed, affected directly by Covid-19, or impacted financially. Putting people at the heart of fundraising – offering support, signposting to resources (homeschooling activities, opportunities to take part in online communities), having a conversation on the phone, and connecting people who may feel isolated has shown, again, that excellent fundraising is so much more than just asking for money.

Your supporters are your key partner in delivering your mission and expect to hear from you, whether you're updating on vital work or indeed asking for a gift. Speak to them and gather insights and knowledge to help shape 'their' future journey. The more you know about your key partners and supporters, the more you can tailor and design your communications to be relevant to them and steward those relationships appropriately and effectively.



Remove processes that inhibit creativity and only serve to create obstacles. Whether the process is for a piece of procurement, or multi-function sign off for a piece of copy on a webpage, continue to look through a lens of urgency and focus on the mission. Create and support a culture of innovation by providing some innovation funds to explore new opportunities, which aren't necessarily new to our sector, but perhaps new for your organisation.

Re-investing donors' pounds for the sustainability of delivering your mission must of course be economically effective and efficient. But don't be over-reliant on using only 'best performers' in terms of channels. As we've seen, significant areas of fundraising have completely stopped, so failing to embed a testing culture and approach can only harm your organisation further down the line.

Questions to consider

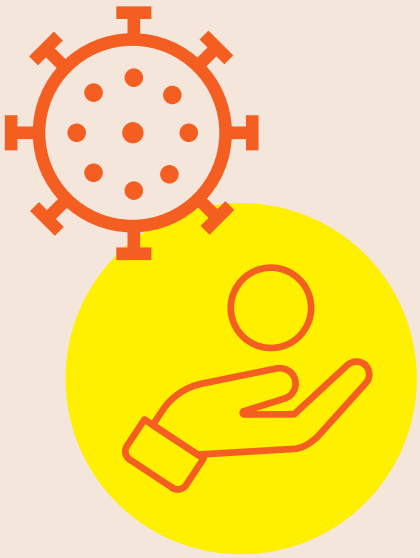
- Is your case for support/fundraising proposition still relevant and engaging or does it need a refresh? Who will you need to engage in that process?
- Do you know enough about your supporters and their interest in your organisation – why they are continuing to support you, or indeed, why they've stopped? How can you gather this information? Are you responding to the developing situation and mindful of the full experience of your supporters?
- Do you have processes that are no longer fit for purpose and are more an obstacle than an enabler? What needs to happen to change these?
- Do you have some budget ring-fenced or allocated specifically for testing new ideas and innovation? If not, how can you make a case for this?
- Is your current channel mix too heavily reliant, in terms of volume and income, on one or two channels? What do you need to test over the coming months to diversify?

INSIGHT

33%

OF PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT CORONAVIRUS IS THE HARDEST CHALLENGE THEY HAVE EVER FACED

- **Research from Manifesto, Kivo and We are Massive (2019) found that 87% of respondents agreed that 'supporter expectations will change significantly over the next 10 years'.[5]**
- **1 in 3 people (33%) believe that coronavirus is the hardest challenge they have ever had to face according to About Loyalty who also found that older supporters are less likely to change their support as a result of coronavirus.[6] Younger supporters are more likely than older to donate to a new charity as a result of coronavirus.**



- **Rapidata's direct debit tracker showed that after an initial jump in cancellations in March, cancellation rates returned to normal levels in April.[7]**
- **Woods Valldata show that the results of emergency appeals had broadly performed better than expected, both for charities responding specifically to Covid-19 as well as those those with non-medical causes.[8]**

5 https://pages.manifesto.co.uk/futurecharity-thankyou?submissionGuid=78d35eab-df58-48f4-8405-0faa1ef1576e
6 https://www.about-loyalty.com/post/covid-19-sentiment-tracker
7 https://rapidataservices.com/direct-debit/direct-debit-charity-donations-cancellations-increase-due-to-covid-19/
8 https://www.woodsvalldata.co.uk/get-real-time-campaign-performance-reports-for-your-fundraising-campaigns-and-appeals/

DIGITAL

3

Digital fundraising

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, we have seen a mass adoption of new digital fundraising tools, with a focus on livestreaming and gaming platforms, and a huge spike in interactions on charities' websites and across social media. These shifts in new technology and increased engagement will bring multiple benefits for charities but will not be without barriers for organisations to overcome.

The livestreaming and video gaming industries have recently come to the fore, with new platforms such as Twitch and Tiltify helping charities raise significant income. Face-to-face programmes have moved from the street and shopping centre on to digital platforms, with social media-driven regular giving journeys proving successful for a number of organisations.

Additionally, faster and more supporter-friendly platforms have provided organisations with multiple new income streams – most notably the suite of Facebook Fundraising Tools and new payment methods such as Apple Pay, Google Pay and Stripe. The new option of paying via an online banking app to JustGiving's donation methods is a welcome move towards a faster, smoother and more secure donor experience.

> **Now more than ever, I'm reminded that going back to basics for Fundraising is what's going to drive our income over the long-term. This was flagged to me during the Financial Crisis of 2008 by a leading marketer. Digital is a means and for us, it's about creating the magic for our supporters and bringing them closer to our cause.**
>
> **— Virginie Kan, Director of Fundraising and Marketing, World Animal Protection UK**

Disappearance of cash

One of the major consequences of the public health crisis will be the decline of physical currency. As cash is slowly replaced in the marketplace by card payments, via contactless card and smartphone transactions, we will see charity adoption of this new technology surge. As an example of this rise in popularity, the Royal British Legion's 2019 Poppy Appeal raised £780,000 from over 146,000 donations. Alongside the return of better QR codes and improved near-field communication technology, charities will need to select from a range of technological solutions to adapt to the impending disappearance of cash.

> **The biggest challenge, or opportunity, is to have something fresh and relevant to say in a world shaped by the shared experience of Covid-19. Repeating previous propositions risks looking outdated to a public facing new work, shopping and leisure experiences everyday. This experience has demonstrate how quickly fundraisers can adapt when the shackles of complex process and over control are stripped away.**
>
> — **Paul Farthing, Director of Income Generation & Communications, The Children's Trust**

Virtual events

140k

ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH RAISED £140K FROM A LIVESTREAMED PUB QUIZ HOSTED BY STEPHEN FRY

Alongside these shifts, we have seen charities offer new ways for event participants to support their causes. There has been an explosion of virtual events, supported by the latest route mapping and online tracking tools, with organisations blurring the virtual and physical by offering online training sessions, both physical and virtual medals and other motivational incentives.

Additionally, more social activities such as tea parties and quizzes have moved successfully to online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Houseparty. In May 2020, Alzheimer's Research raised £140,000 from a livestreamed pub quiz hosted by Stephen Fry, something unthinkable just a few months prior.

However, these new platforms and virtual products do come with challenges. Average income per supporter may well be lower for a virtual participant compared to a physical one. It will also be harder to build a long-lasting and meaningful connection with virtual participants. It is therefore crucial during this period of limited physical interaction to modify your supporter journeys to reflect these changes. More regular and lighter touch contact will be required across digital channels, with event-specific Facebook and WhatsApp groups becoming standard stewardship practice across the sector.

Questions to consider

- How has your organisation responded to the digital re-education of the general public? Has your charity fully embraced the new tools (particularly in gaming and livestreaming) and access to audiences now available?
- Have you thought about the multitude of channels your supporters will interact with you on? Are you providing a coherent and effective digital supporter experience?
- How will your organisation develop a meaningful connection with virtual event participants? What new stewardship elements can you introduce to bridge the gap between the physical and the digital?
- Does your fundraising leadership team have the requisite digital know-how and experience to lead from the front?

INSIGHT

59%

OF CHARITIES WERE CONFIDENT THEY WERE MAKING THE BEST USE OF DIGITAL PRIOR TO COVID-19

75%

OF CHARITIES BELIEVED CONTACTLESS PAYMENTS WOULD HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE ABILITY OF CHARITIES TO RAISE MONEY

- **The comms channels which charities are using the most during this period of isolation and remote working are emails (86%), Facebook (85%), website (82%) and Twitter (76%) according a report from Media Trust and Charity Comms.[9]**
- **Nearly one in five charities (18%) report that they see the ongoing pandemic as an opportunity to modernise and accelerate efforts to shift some of their fundraising online.[10]**
- **Research from NPC, conducted shortly before the coronavirus pandemic, highlighted that 89% of charities believed that utilising digital technology is important for achieving their mission.[11]**
- **59% of charities were confident that they were making the best use of digital prior to Covid-19, with 41% expressing a lack of confidence in their use of digital technology. This is considerably lower than in 2017.[12]**
- **75% believed contactless payments would have a positive impact on the ability of charities to raise money.[13]**

9 https://www.charitycomms.org.uk/about/charity-communicator-coronavirus-resources
10 https://www.cafonline.org/about-us/research/coronavirus-and-charitable-giving
11 https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/state-of-the-sector-2020/
12 https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/stots2020/
13 https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/library/the-status-of-uk-fundraising-2019-benchmark-report/

PEOPLE

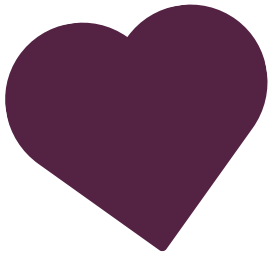
4

There's an old saying: 'No foot, no horse' and for many charities, the same could be said of their people.

Staff and volunteers are literally the lifeblood of organisations and so looking after their wellbeing and ensuring they are properly supported during a time of crisis, are of paramount importance.

Staff and volunteers are individual human beings, and each will respond differently to uncertainty, some displaying their best attributes and some their worst. But there are steps organisations can take to help steady the roller coaster of emotions experienced by their people during a global pandemic.

Staff



A good starting point for organisations is the provision of regular, clear and transparent communication for staff, advising them on what action is being taken and how it may impact them, explaining the decision-making process and signposting to further information about the situation. The ability to take and act on feedback from staff is also a critical part of effective communication, helping to dispel myths and deliver key messaging.

It's potentially a very challenging time for furloughed staff – much may have changed during their absence, other members of the team may have been covering their work, and the members of the team who weren't furloughed will have a shared experience of working together under great pressure and also perhaps a sense of shared success and achievement – the battle spirit of having worked through the lockdown. This is also the case of course for fundraisers and colleagues who work at fundraising agencies or partner organisations.

When planning for a physical return to work, consideration should be given to key issues that will impact staff, such as social distancing measures required in the workplace, best practice for meeting colleagues and supporters, travelling by public transport and dealing with ongoing work-life balance issues such as childcare.

TOP TIP

Clear and transparent communication for staff on action and decision-making is key.

With staff teams fully back in place, make sure you take time to celebrate success during the period of the pandemic and give people space and time to adapt to new working practices.

In the short term, organisations will have prioritised objectives and developed action plans to respond to and manage a rapidly changing situation, but in the medium to longer term, planning will turn to how the business needs to change and adapt to be fit for purpose and ready for the ‘new normal’.

Well-being of your fundraisers and colleagues

The impact on well-being and mental health should be at the forefront of your mind as you support your teams and people through this hugely challenging time. People will have had to deal with difficult and often stressful situations, juggling working from home, homeschooling and childcare, as well as their own health and potentially financial difficulties.

> **As we start to come out of lockdown we need to remain focused on our staff's mental health, and reflect on the different experiences each person will have had during lockdown. Each member of staff will have varying levels of coping skills and resilience in dealing with those experiences. Having an open mind about how we work together in the future will be important.**
>
> **— Sarah Tite, Director of Fundraising and Communications, Mental Health Foundation**

While putting in place new activities, plans, and strategies can offer exciting opportunities, consider how your people may respond to this – some will be running on empty – and what for some might feel like a great new challenge, for others could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Be mindful of setting targets, deadlines, and new ways of working sensitively and appropriately. It is likely that we will all be working in different ways, and constantly adapting for many months to come, as a result burnout is a real possibility and you will need to support your fundraisers through this time, however long it lasts.

Volunteers

As with staff, effective two-way communication with volunteers is imperative. Volunteers need to understand what action the organisation is taking and how it impacts them, how highly their volunteering is valued by the organisation and how they can undertake their volunteering safely. Many organisations' volunteer workforce will comprise of older and potentially more vulnerable people who may be shielding from the virus.

Effective stewardship of volunteers is essential to keep them engaged with the organisation's mission, as well as an opportunity to deepen the relationship, to retain their long-term support. In addition to regular catch ups and check ins with individual volunteers, consider initiatives such as digital conferences to give volunteers an audience with senior leadership, or local digital networking meetings, for volunteers to connect with each other to share ideas and plan. Many will have been involved in other local volunteering efforts such as delivering food to the vulnerable and there is a real opportunity to harness this renewed and vigorous community spirit.

The pandemic may also provide time for some training and upskilling of volunteers, especially in the digital arena. Consider what tools and resources volunteers may need to undertake their roles differently, and involve volunteers in this conversation, so they are part of the solutions. People across the generations have become adept at using digital communication tools such as Skype and Zoom and using such platforms to deliver volunteer training will help your organisation hit the ground running, post lock-down.

Questions to consider

- Is there a comprehensive set of FAQs for staff and volunteers and are these regularly updated?
- How will you support your fundraisers and colleagues who are returning from furlough?
- What mechanisms are in place to gather and respond to feedback from staff and volunteers?
- How will you support good mental health and wellbeing of fundraisers?
- What strategy, structure and skills will the business need in the medium to long-term?
- What guidance, training and resources will volunteers need to undertake their roles?

INSIGHT

74%

OF CHARITY CEOS ARE WORRIED ABOUT IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF STAFF

68%

OF CHARITY CEOS STATED THAT THEIR STAFF ARE HIGHLY ANXIOUS DUE TO LACK OF JOB SECURITY

- **Research from CO3 found that charity CEOs are deeply concerned about the impact of Covid-19 on the health and well-being of staff with, 74% worried about the poor mental health of staff, 68% stating that their staff are highly anxious due to a lack of job security and 54% highly anxious due to increased demand for services.[14]**
- **Nfp Synergy interviewed charity staff and found that income was the overriding concern for every participant. This was causing high levels of stress and anxiety in workforces.[15]**
- **In the above study, charity leaders were praised for their communication style and many respondents indicated that they had been well supported by their leadership teams in the crisis.**

14 https://www.co3.bz/news/ni-charity-sector-faces-imminent-collapse-new-findings-show-representative-body-calls-executive

15 https://nfpsynergy.net/free-report/covid-19-charity-sector-response-report

CULTURE, INNOVATION, AND BEHAVIOURS

5

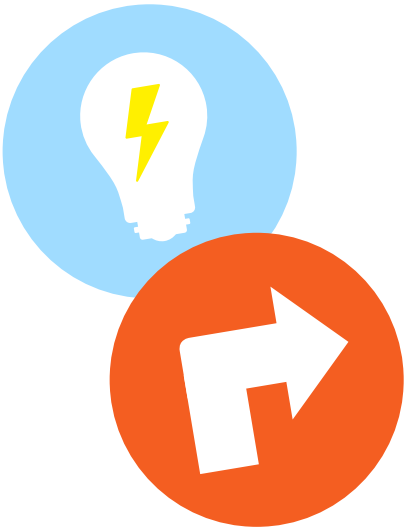
Definition of culture: 'The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time.'

Much focus has been given to organisational culture over the last few years and significant investment of both time and money has been made by organisations in exploring what staff, volunteers and external stakeholders think about culture, what needs to change and how that change can be brought about. Stories abound of how difficult it is to effect cultural change… and then there was coronavirus. Overnight, organisations saw new ways of working taking effect, teams working quickly and with agility, log jammed projects being delivered at lighting speed and new and innovative ways of fundraising being activated.

> **I have seen more innovation in the last month than in my entire time in the sector.**
>
> **—Kate Lee, Chief Executive Alzheimer's Society**

And perhaps most importantly, the pandemic has put fundraising centre stage and for some organisations, has kick started the emergence of a culture that is more supportive, and understanding of the pressures placed on, income generating activities.

For many organisations this has led to increased response rates, and levels of income generated through emergency appeals that could previously only be dreamt of. And while this has not plugged the shortfall in income for many organisations, fundraising success has certainly helped in the shift towards a fundraising-friendly culture.



So now the question is, how do organisations make this new culture stick? How can the slide back towards less integrated and collaborative working, slowed down by cumbersome process, be avoided? How can individuals retain the sense of empowerment and ownership many have experienced? And importantly, what new shared beliefs have emerged?

It's important to understand that much of the cultural change witnessed during the last few months has been driven by fight or flight response, a physiological reaction that occurs in animals and human beings in the face of perceived threat. That's impossible to sustain over the long term as it is a state that takes an emotional and physical toll. However, what individuals and teams can do now is stand back and look objectively at what the factors were which enabled things to happen differently and consider how these can be engineered into business as usual operations.

An example might be that an emergency appeal was implemented quickly as layers of approval were not required. So the team might consider what the consequences were of reduced approval and how a case can be made for a permanent change to the process. Another example might be of coronavirus creating a shared focus on priority activity. How might that shared focus be perpetuated through integrated planning and shared objectives across teams?

As well as every individual charity planning to work out their next steps for their causes, there are also cross-sector initiatives taking place, some of which are now in sharper focus due to Covid-19. Equality, diversity and inclusion across the charity sector is a perennial issue with the impact on BAME-led organisations particularly acute. The climate crisis may be off the front pages, but should still be front of mind for how we will be working in the future and the decisions we make, and initiatives such as #BuildBackBetter remind us that we have clear opportunities to challenge traditions, and think critically and creatively about the role we all have in the sector to make a positive difference for our causes, communities, and society more widely.

There is a strong sense that charities face a period of ongoing change and making sure the culture is both conducive to change and supportive of individuals working through it will be vital for both thriving and surviving.

Questions to consider

- What role can individuals play in 'cementing in' a new cultural norm?
- What new ways of working have been implemented during the pandemic? What elements of these should be retained and how can that be achieved?
- How can fundraising be kept centre stage? Who has become an advocate of fundraising across the organisation and how can they be encouraged to remain a fundraising champion?
- How have leaders operated differently during the pandemic? How can you highlight to leaders what has worked well? As a leader, how can you continue with those practices?
- What role and action will you take in cross-sector initiatives to change the status quo for the better?
- What lessons around prioritising can be learnt and applied?

About the Chartered Institute of Fundraising

The Chartered Institute of Fundraising is the professional membership body for UK fundraising. We support fundraisers through leadership and representation; best practice and compliance; education and networking; and we champion and promote fundraising as a career choice. We have over 600 organisational members who raise more than £10 billion in income for good causes every year, and over 6,000 individual members.

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About THINK Consulting Solutions

THINK Consulting Solutions has been working with charities and not for profits in the UK and across the world for almost twenty years. THINK offers a unique portfolio of services – consultancy, research and insight, interim management and specialist forums – all tailored to meet the distinctive requirements of each client.

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