

STRATEGIC VISION

Five Principles of Transformation

How to transform your organization to achieve lasting impact on our world.

By Richard Tollefson

How do people and organizations transform themselves? How do they achieve the most positive and lasting impact on our world? There are thousands of leaders who have waxed eloquent on the idea of transformational change. For me, the answer lies in five principles: vision, planning, risk-taking, leadership, and hard work.

Vision | Most nonprofit organizations were founded on a transformative vision. Somewhere in the day-to-day of serving constituents and raising money, however, that focus on the future is sometimes lost. While vision is not something you may contemplate day-to-day, it is something that must be inside your heart and your head at the end of the day.

Planning | Talk to anyone who knows me, I am a consummate planner. What I have learned over the years is that planning is not about the minutia. Planning is about the major strategies that allow you and your organization to move progressively forward to achieve the goals you have set – and to achieve your transformative vision.

Risk-Taking | Unabashed risk-taking has no place in organizations that exist to serve the public good. But calculated risk-taking is a vital part of every nonprofit organization's destiny. If we are not open to risks – exploring new ways of doing things, seizing new opportunities, or thinking of new directions in which to take our organizations, our institutions will stagnate, or even worse, start moving backward.

Leadership | Leadership may be collective or individual, bold or methodical, inspirational or practical. Whatever form leadership takes, a fundamental truth remains: someone's got to lead. Someone's got to make the hard decisions, to risk failure – and to risk success.

Hard Work | We often talk about “full-time” and “Phoenix Philanthropy-time.” The truth is, our team is dedicated to our clients and to making the world a better place. In our own lives and with our clients, we really get into rolling up our sleeves and attacking each issue with commitment, energy, passion, and a lot of hard work. Because hard work is, ultimately, how transformation takes place.

So, how can you and your organization transform yourselves and achieve lasting impact on our world? Follow these five principles: focus on the vision, do the planning, take calculated risks, show real leadership, and above all, work hard.

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