

RISK



Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.

~ T.S. Eliot

LIVE BOLDLY, FEARLESSLY, WITH COURAGE.

Life is full of risks. Every day we have the opportunity to step outside of our comfort zone and learn or experience something exciting and new. Isn't life more rewarding when we challenge ourselves and the status quo?

At Common Ground we believe that it is our responsibility to create opportunities for our clients to challenge the status quo; embrace innovation; and take risks that move the organization (and sometimes individuals) closer to achieving strategic goals.

We're not about blind risk-taking. In fact, we recommend that all organizations conduct a thorough risk assessment at least

once every two years so that you can incubate and implement new ideas and bold strategies

without fear that you will jeopardize the overall well-being of your agency.



There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.

~ M. Scott Peck

Wikipedia defines risk as the potential harm that may arise from some present process or from some future event. Risk is also a necessary ingredient of change. It forces us to do our homework by asking tough questions and making often difficult, but necessary, choices.

According to Ben McClure of Investopedi.com, in 2003, Johnson & Johnson, a *Fortune* 100 company, "reported spending about 10 cents per sales dollar on research

and development (R&D), [while] drug company Pfizer spent 15% of expected sales; software giant Microsoft spent 16%; and network-equipment maker Cisco Systems spent 18%. For smaller, early-stage software and biotech companies the number can easily stretch as high as 80%."

In our social profit sector, it is rare to find a program that is investing in its future by actually spending money to develop its staff or cultivate new ideas. It isn't because agencies don't value this approach, but resources are always tight. We can help you develop an entrepreneurial approach to your agency's work by helping you develop new revenue streams, particularly from individual investors, and leveraging those resources to take calculated risks designed at improving your organization's effectiveness.

LIFE HAPPENS ON THE EDGE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Do something everyday to make those little hairs on your arms stand straight up.



Life is trying things to see if they work.

~ Ray Bradbury

One of the hallmarks of our work at Common Ground is asking and pushing our clients to step outside of their comfort zones and embrace the sense of awe, excitement, and opportunity that comes with facing one's fears—organizational or individual. We work systematically to create safe spaces where questions are encouraged, differences are celebrated, and conflict is viewed as a natural and requisite component of any change process.

In order to understand how the comfort zone concept is integrated into our consulting practice, we use the metaphor of the bubble, which surrounds and moves with us, protects and shields us, and keeps us feeling safe. The fluidity of the bubble allows us to move through our day interacting with people and situations

through the safety of our comfort zone. As we navigate our often stressful lives, this approach helps us to be productive, feel connected to those we care about, and maintain our personal status quo.

Usually, when a client comes to us for consulting services, it is because the status quo is no longer working or “the bubble” has become too limiting. Sometimes we become so comfortable that our organizations stop innovating—stop growing. Even worse, maybe they have begun to wither. Perhaps your staff or board members approach their work with less passion, or it has become more difficult for you to remain competitive with your colleague organizations.

In these moments, we will work with you to address the systemic issues; and then, perhaps more importantly, we will begin to push. We will create a space for you to have difficult conversations; address the issues that are creating organizational blocks; and uncover and discover hidden skills, talents, and other organizational assets. We will help you to create strategies for risk-taking that allow your comfort zone bubble to expand and adapt to changing conditions. We will help you to increase your organizational fluidity and become more competitive and more efficient. We will help you to understand your work in new ways and explore new strategies.

Often in the non-profit sector, our personal and professional lives can become blurred. This is normal and can be expected when people with a passion for making a difference in the world manage to find an organization that can help them do it. In this case, too, we will work with each client to determine the best ways to help the individuals connected with your organization to expand their own comfort zones, making them better able to deal with conflict, differences, and all of the other day-to-day events which can create anxiety and weaken your mission-critical activities.

QUICK TIP SERIES

Published monthly by Common Ground Consulting LLC, this brief is part of a series designed to support and enhance the critical work of social profit organizations.

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Quick Tip 1: Manage Risk

As the executive director of three social profit organizations over the past 16 years, one of my favorite resources has been the Non-Profit Risk Management Center. With the mission of “helping non-profits deal with uncertainty,” I have found their technical assistance invaluable. Check them out on the web at: <http://nonprofitrisk.org/about/about.htm>

Quick Tip 2: Buy Insurance

Purchase inexpensive directors' & officers' (D&O) liability insurance to provide coverage against acts which might include actual or alleged errors, omissions, misleading statements, and neglect or breach of duty on the part of your board and other insured entities. Some policies cover volunteers and HR practices. Check with your carrier.

Quick Tip 3: Trust Yourself

Did you know that the number one risk for most social profit organizations is the chance of someone getting hurt? It is your job to do everything reasonable to protect people from harm. Most of the claims which face social profits occur due to negligence. If you are worried about safety in your program, it is likely you have reason to be concerned.