



# MULTIPLY 417

Passion: The Bridge between People and Purpose

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## Weekly Tip June 24, pdf Stay Relevant with These 8 Pointers

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With so many changes in our lives, culture, technology, etc., etc., etc. it is critical that we work at staying relevant. Maybe this seems like no big deal, but as a general rule we tend to be averse to change. Our patterns, our methods, our way, our style, what we do and don't know are just that...all ours!

I'm not suggesting anything crazy, but feeding ourselves mentally, emotionally, and spiritually is critical. Even including being willing to hear new ideas, thoughts, and opinions, not to mention the absolute need to be continually learning. If we don't, we suffer and everyone around us suffers in some way as well.

This includes our partners and potential partners. Organizations often find that potential partners become less satisfied with the communications and options they've been offered over the years, and the risk of being "old news" can suddenly threaten your brand and ministry. Without an effort to learn and adapt your strategy as the times change, your current efforts can miss the mark and go to waste.

To stay relevant, create an action plan to keep learning what's going on in the development arena. Below are some ideas on how you can continue to connect in meaningful ways with your partners in an ever-changing landscape.

### **1. Read, Read, and Read some more**

C. S. Lewis said: We read to know we are not alone...

Reading is fundamental to learning. In order to expand your horizons, understand the times you live in, and discover the possibilities that currently (and will soon) surround you, you should regularly set aside time to catch up on fresh, quality reading material that educates you and your staff on how to stay relevant in all aspects of your operations. The explosive growth of blogging and content marketing has enabled organizations to subscribe to tons of industry blogs, making it easy to keep a pulse on new fundraising and marketing strategies, leadership and management best practices, and current trends in the space. But don't forget the occasional book. If you haven't read "Spirituality of Fundraising" by Nouwen, "The Third Conversion" by Rodin and "The Sower" by Rodin & Hoag, stop and go buy or borrow them right now and catch up.

### **2. Get a Coach**

Even at their highest level of abilities, Olympic level and professional athletes still engage a coach. Reading might teach you how to stay relevant, but if you want to implement something new, a seasoned coach can help walk you through the steps or at least continue to keep you focused. Coaches don't have all the answers, but they can help you find the answers you need to

continue to grow and improve. I have both ATD and ICF coaching certifications or certificates and would love to talk with you about a coaching plan.

### **3. Participate in Networks & Networking events**

In the same vein as getting direct experience, you should attend local networking events and groups to connect with others in your space. Consider joining your local Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) chapter. These opportunities can help you meet and build connections with people who are tackling similar problems, as well as discover the different approaches or technologies they might be using.

You can also make networking a regular part of your day by staying active in LinkedIn groups. Connect with like-minded professionals, start conversations, and gain access to helpful resources, all online.

### **4. Attend a Conference, Workshop, or Webinar**

Networking groups might limit you to local resources and colleagues, but conferences far broaden the scope of these benefits. Social impact conferences, social innovators, and problem solvers gather from all over the world for a one-of-a-kind experience. They provide a space to dialogue about your current approach, share solutions, and spark new ideas. You can also learn directly from incredible speakers and panelists on how to make a greater impact in your space.

Or here's a different thought, sign up for a webinar series or online classes where a Cohort approach is part of the formula. That way you learn from the leader, but also participate in peer-to-peer learning which is a key fundamental in adult learning theory practice.

### **5. Start Lunch and Learns**

On top of seeking learning opportunities outside of the office, you can also find them right within its walls. A fun way for your entire team to learn how to share knowledge and stay relevant is by hosting "lunch and learns" or "brain food Fridays" at the office. Once a month, over a team-wide lunch, different team members can give presentations relevant to your mission and sector to the entire staff. The point of these mini-brainstorms is to hear new ideas, to encourage people to think outside the box. Topics might include;

- Modern fundraising models
- Trending campaigns in the space
- New social media apps
- Industry news
- Why and how certain organizations adapted to the times

This fun exercise allows you to take advantage of the diverse perspectives, experiences, and interests found among your staff—including younger employees. You can give them a platform to share their ideas, as well as their take on available tools and opportunities today.

### **6. Follow a list of Influencers**

I'm not too keen anymore on X and such, but that's just me. However, I do have a regular list of blogs, webinars and such I watch or read. Yes, some certainly need to be focused on spiritual matters, but per your degree of wisdom, some secular "brains" are also not bad, try experts and thought leaders on social media.

Pro Tip: Don't be afraid to reach out in a professional way to those inside and outside of your organization. Strike up a conversation with those you admire. Let them know how their work has influenced your own and ask if they'd be willing to chat with you.

### **7. Leverage Modern Tools and Technologies**

In order to stay relevant to your partners, you need to connect with them in the ways that they expect. Our now youngest adult population, Millennials, especially, grew up with smartphones, social media, and the Internet, so they

call for engagement through this evolving technology. They want to be able to use digital platforms to take action and share the causes they care about with each other.

Modern nonprofits are able to leverage new fundraising models that make this possible. Peer-to-peer fundraising for instance, has become an increasingly prevalent model because it allows a partner to share their personal story and passion for a cause with their friends and family. At the same time, this type of online fundraising empowers you to increase donations and reach, as well as track partner interactions with your organization and cultivate relationships more effectively.

### **8. Lock in an Accountability Partner**

This might be a slight overlap with #2 above, but not really. It's common to have a spurt of inspiration that eventually fizzles out, so you should come up with a plan that keeps learning and application top of mind throughout the year.

A good way to do this is to find an accountability partner. You can ask a colleague from a different department to meet up with you every two weeks or once a month, and you both can share something new about your work or what you've learned over that time. Or if you set a certain goal—whether it's to reach out to an influencer, organization, or volunteer, or attend a networking event—your partner can check in on how you're pacing toward it. As technologies and tools evolve, what it means to "be relevant" will naturally change over time. But any step you take to understand and fulfill your donors' needs today will position your brand for better engagement and recognition tomorrow. Be willing to learn, experiment, and discover what tools surround you and your space.

Passionately,

Rev. Rick J. Fritzeimer

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