

Encore

A Spotlight on Philanthropy in the
Performing Arts

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

First Things *First*



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www.fundraisingcounsel.com



from the home office of
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Help, I've Fallen into Zoom and Can't Get Out...

Plenty has been written about the impact of the pandemic on our work lives. One positive surprise has been the success with which our development teams have adapted to remote working, particularly using videoconference tools (Zoom, FaceTime, Teams, GoToMeeting, etc.) to connect with prospects and donors. Many have worked through this medium well, very well in fact. From direct solicitation to special events, several clients and former clients have reported record fundraising years for 2020.

One of our senior partners was an earlier adapter of this technology; his enthusiasm began with Skype long before COVID 19. Perhaps it had to do with reducing travel to some extent. I never shared his passion for this channel—I found it tiring and uncomfortable—but it was easy to avoid back then when others were not as familiar with communicating in this fashion. After a year of zooming he now reports he's finding repeated videoconferencing tiring as well. Further, he reports that he was on a call recently where one of the participants, who displayed a still picture instead of using his camera, fell asleep. The others could hear him snoring. Anecdotal evidence from fellow colleagues and clients alike indicates a similar disdain for working exclusively via videoconferencing. A recent peer-reviewed article in the American Psychological Association's *Technology Mind and Behavioral Journal* articulates why many of us are finding the technology exhausting, and how to mitigate its effects. Here are some take-aways from his article which help to explain our reaction (via the *Washington Post*).

We're not used to so much eye contact.

Constant eye-contact is problematic for our brains as this isn't a normal occurrence in our pre-technology brain. Videoconferencing gives us much more than our recommended daily allowance of intense and up-close facial contact. Without realizing it, we are absorbing and continuously analyzing all the non-verbal feedback that this high definition medium offers. Fatigue, anxiety, and a desire to escape are natural responses to the overstimulation. Limiting the number of hours of

videoconferencing per day, setting meetings for 50 minutes or less (instead of an hour), eliminating evening sessions to provide downtime, are ways to counteract its impact. There's nothing wrong with asking before scheduling each call, "Do we have to see each other and share screens, or would an audio call suffice?"

We're not used to constant self-evaluation.

In our previous pre-pandemic meetings, we might have briefly checked in a mirror before entering a room to ensure our appearance was satisfactory. Now, we're confronted continuously with our own face as part of the video meeting. Except for those among us who have narcissistic tendencies, it's stressful and uncomfortable to judge our appearance unceasingly. And, just as when shown a group photo, your eyes will immediately go to your own face, a videoconference that includes your face, will draw your attention to your image, where you will evaluate and re-evaluate your appearance, facial expressions, clothing, gestures and even background setting. If you are highly critical of your own appearance, this can be detrimental to your self-confidence as well as your ability to pay attention to meeting content. Turning off your own face, using the "hide myself" feature can allow others to see you, but eliminates your face from your screen.

We're stuck in one spot.

The efficiency of videoconferencing is that we can have back-to-back meetings with zero commute times—one can be in eight locations in one day without ever leaving the living room. It's been said that sitting is the new smoking when it comes to unhealthy habits. This technology encourages couch-potato tendencies. I recently guest lectured for a college course, where two of the attendees were seated in their beds. Any accommodation which gets you moving is a healthier option. Just before the pandemic, walking meetings had become popular. When possible, one of my colleagues schedules his daily walk with audio calls, a good strategy to move more during the workday.

We're not used to so much mental effort.

As our brains are wired for in-person meetings, the computer version has a heavier cognitive impact. Remembering to mute, un-mute, to limit gestures, to avoid reacting to distractions in the workspace (animals, children, lawn service activity, etc.) takes a toll on the mental load. There's less in-meeting downtime, where one might have talked about the weather or social activities. The intensity has increased. Again, anything which limits the time connected to others in this fashion can reduce the brain-strain.

Hopefully, the new normal post-pandemic world will help us achieve a better balance between in-person meetings and audio/video connections, making us effective and efficient without sacrificing a healthy lifestyle.

News You Should Know

Arts Funders Support of 'Solidarity Economy'

A report from *Grantmakers in the Arts* highlights how arts and culture grantmakers can engage in systems-change work to address the root causes of cultural inequity and advance a more just economy, or "Solidarity Economy." The report addresses how grantmakers can help strengthen such an ecosystem by supporting Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) arts workers and culture-bearers.

Key Highlights

The cultural sector as currently configured reinforces systemic racism, with **60% of philanthropic funding concentrated among just 2% of cultural institutions.**

Grantmakers and culture-bearers interviewed for the study called for rejecting pre-pandemic models and **strengthening efforts already under way** by interested parties, including nonprofits, focused on strengthening movements for racial and economic justice.

Arts and culture grantmakers are well positioned to advance the Solidarity Economy, the report argues, because "philanthropy excels at building and supporting infrastructure and institutions;...funders are seeking to learn about ways to support cooperative business structures; and...artists and culture-bearers are leading this work."

The authors of the report call on funders to **embrace systems change** and conduct a "power analysis"; commit to **supporting long-term work with multiyear grants**, loans, and equity investments; **support collaboration**, leadership development, and study groups; and advocate for **policies that support Solidarity Economy infrastructure.**

Download the report, *Solidarity Not Charity: Arts & Culture Grantmaking in the Solidarity Economy*, [here](#). PND, 3-24

5 Economic Indicators Point to a Brighter Year for Nonprofits.

Experts say five key indicators can help nonprofits forecast their fiscal health this year on both the revenue and spending side of the ledger. And those indicators generally point to an improved outlook after a very tough year for nonprofits.

Here are the key points

1. **The GDP grew** by 4.3% in the fourth quarter of 2020, many economists expect it to easily eclipse that mark this year. This broad measure of economic output is considered by many economists to be the most important measurement of the health of the economy, and it's looking good.
2. For many small nonprofits, **regional indicators may be more important than national measures.** Regional indicators in the South and Midwest suggest donors are more confident about the economy than donors in other parts. These areas have been more resistant to shutting down businesses amid the pandemic, so donors in those regions may feel more confident about the economy than donors in other parts of the country.
3. **The stock market has been relatively unscathed** by the pandemic, and the S&P 500 Index has been near an all-time high, at 3,971. The stock-market performance is particularly important in predicting giving by private foundations, individuals, and corporations.
4. **Government stimulus packages have benefits for nonprofits.** The new stimulus law includes expanded eligibility for forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans, a program that has been crucial for keeping many nonprofits afloat. And Congress may not be done yet. Some prominent Democratic lawmakers are pushing a bill that would provide an additional \$50 billion to help nonprofits boost hiring and weather increased demand for services.
5. **Unemployment rates are declining.** February's jobless rate was 6.2%, well down from its pandemic-era peak of nearly 15%. High demand for services had been stretching budgets of many nonprofits.

You should read it all for yourself [here](#). COP, 3-30

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*free time

News You Should Know

Nonprofits' Online Revenue Jumped 32% in 2020

Online fundraising revenue rose a record 32% in 2020 — up from a 10% increase in 2019 — while the number of online gifts rose 28%, based on data from a new study.

Key Findings

- Nonprofits dedicated to alleviating hunger and poverty were the biggest beneficiaries of the surge, rising 173% year-over-year increase.
- Wildlife/animal welfare rose 56 %, health rose 38%, civil/human rights rose 34%, and disaster relief/international aid rose 29%.
- Online revenue for large organizations grew 38%, while midsize and small organizations saw increases of 29% and 30%.
- Nonprofits engaged in COVID-19 relief efforts, either directly or through advocacy, saw a 40% increase in online revenue, compared with 22% for those that were not.

The study also found that nonprofit spending on digital ads jumped 33% in 2020 — with 31% of that spending concentrated in December, environmental groups cutting spending by -14%. Those increasing ad spending: health 88%, hunger/poverty 79%, and wildlife/animal welfare 46%. According to the report, nonprofits grew their mobile messaging audience by 26% in 2020 and saw click-through rates of 6.3% for fundraising messages and 10% for advocacy messages. Survey report [here](#). *PND, 4-23*

Performing Arts Tid Bits

The **Los Angeles Opera** received a \$5 million gift from **Terri and Jerry Kohl**. The gift will support the 62 members and additional players of the orchestra who were sidelined due to COVID-19 closures. With the gift, the couple will become the sole underwriters of the orchestra. *PND, 4-21*

The **Henry L. Hillman Foundation** awarded grants totaling \$7 million in support of Pittsburgh-area arts and cultural organizations impacted by COVID-19. Recipients include, among others: **August Wilson African American Cultural Center** (\$125,000), the **Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council** (\$60,000), **Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre** (\$250,000), the **Pittsburgh Trust for Cultural Resources** (\$500,000), **Pittsburgh Youth Chorus** (\$20,000), and **SLB Radio Productions, Inc.** (\$20,000). *Pittsburgh*

Business Times, 4-14

The **Conrad Prebys Foundation** awarded \$15 million to the **San Diego Symphony** — \$12.5 million to complete *The Shell*, a new outdoor concert venue on San Diego Bay, and \$2.5 million for the venue's operating costs. *PND, 3-24*

We'd Like You To Know

Transforming *Institutions*

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[Read all about them!](#)



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