Common Fears About Planning (And Tips to Overcome Them)

Created by Evolve Giving Group

Common Fears About Planning
(And Tips to Overcome Them)

FEAR #1

What if I put too much into the plan and I'm not able to accomplish it all?

THE REALITY

The beauty of planning is that you can see everything you're agreeing to do ahead of time. Seeing it all in front of you in one cohesive list makes it easier to determine what you can realistically accomplish and what you can't. This allows us to make conscious decisions up front about what we're going to do and what we're going to hold off on for now. That said, there may be a situation where you put too much into the plan or where your circumstances change and you're not able to accomplish it all.

Idea #1	Set time on your calendar at the beginning of each month to calendar out what needs to be worked on that month. This will help you stay on track to achieve the items in your plan and will help make sure you don't fall behind.
Idea #2	Schedule time with an accountability partner bi-monthly or quarterly to talk through your progress on the plan. It can feel rewarding to share all that you've accomplished. You won't want to show up without anything done so it will also make you kick into gear!
Idea #3	If you really do put too much into your plan and even with accountability you can't get to it all, that's ok. Be truthful about what you can and can't accomplish. Offer yourself some self-love and forgiveness and use this as a learning opportunity. Reflect on why you couldn't accomplish everything so that you can set a more realistic plan the following year.

Common Fears About Planning
(And Tips to Overcome Them)

FEAR #2

Other things will come up and I won't be able to complete everything in the plan.

THE REALITY

Sometimes this happens! The good news is that our plan helps us prioritize. It becomes our marching orders for the year.

Idea #1	Remind yourself of your priorities (per your plan). I often remind myself that it's easy to get caught up in the nitty gritty or the grind but that this is what I'm being measured on and so this is where I need to prioritize and focus my time.
Idea #2	Keep a post-it on your computer to motivate you to work on your fundraising plan. Mine used to say, "Your fundraising plan is your best friend".
Idea #3	Schedule time in your calendar once a week to look at the plan and add relevant items to your task list for the week so that you can make sure you are moving the plan forward.

Common Fears About Planning
(And Tips to Overcome Them)

FEAR #3

Do I really want to put all of this down on paper and be accountable for it?

THE REALITY

It can be scary for sure. It can also be motivating.

Idea #1	Be honest with your supervisor when creating the plan about the fact that you're creating a plan for the first time, you think this is realistic to accomplish and you'd like to be able to check in on the items along the way and adjust if needed.

Common Fears About Planning
(And Tips to Overcome Them)

FEAR #4

What if a board member comes up with a great idea that isn't in my plan? How can I talk to the board member about this? What kind of rifts might that cause?

THE REALITY

While some of the ideas your board members come up with - are great and you want to jump on them right away, many are not. I found that having a fundraising plan actually made it easier for me to tactfully talk with a board member about our plans for the year and why I might not be able to accomplish that item. The plan helped me jump off the hamster wheel, avoid shiny object syndrome and keep my eye on the prize (and the plan!).

Idea #1	If you think the idea is a good one and would want to implement it if time allowed, be honest about that with your board member. Remind the board member that you have a fundraising plan and let them know you don't have the bandwidth to implement this idea this year. Ask if you can keep the item in mind for next year. I usually say something like "I think this is a great idea. Thanks for bringing it to my attention. I'm not sure if you remember or not but we set a fundraising plan at the beginning of the year for the year. If we're going to implement something like this, I would want to make sure we can do it in the right way and I'm not sure our team has the bandwidth to give it the attention it deserves this year. Would you mind if I add this to our list for next year so that we can add it into the plan and make sure we have the resources to make it happen?"
Idea #2	If you don't think the idea is a great one, thank the board member for sharing the idea. Let the board member know that your development plan is set for the year based on your team's bandwidth and that you'll make a note of the idea to consider it for future years.
Idea #3	If you really like the idea and want to find a way to make it happen, you have the freedom to do this. I would initially let the board member know that you have a very full development plan for this year and you'd like to revisit the plan and your team's bandwidth and see if there is a way to make this happen.

Common Fears About Planning
(And Tips to Overcome Them)

FEAR #5

What if I read about a cool new strategy online that I want to implement? Will I have the freedom to do this?

THE REALITY

A plan is just that. It's a document to guide you, to center you, and to help you prioritize. It is not set in stone. You have the ability to make changes or additions if you really want to.

Idea #1	Revisit the plan and determine if this new item needs to happen in addition to everything else in the plan. Sometimes the new item is similar to something else in your plan and you can change a technique or a strategy without adding more to your plate.
Idea #2	Talk with your supervisor. Let them know that you have this idea and would like to add it. Discuss what else may need to shift to make it happen and why you think that's the right move to make.

Common Fears About Planning
(And Tips to Overcome Them)

FEAR #6

What if someone on my team leaves and that impacts progress on the plan?

THE REALITY

Unfortunately, for fundraising professionals the average tenure is a mere 18 months. This means it's likely someone on your team will leave every other year and you'll be faced with this fear.

Idea #1	When you hear someone is leaving, sit down with them and discuss the items they are responsible for in the plan. Make sure you are up to date on the status of each item. Discuss what the individual might be able to finish before departing. Note the items that won't be complete so that you can talk with your team about reassigning responsibility.
Idea #2	Once you have the info from your employee, talk with your supervisor about how this departure will impact the progress on your fundraising plan. Determine together which items you want to put on hold given the smaller bandwidth of your team. Note the decisions in your fundraising plan so that you both have a record of what was agreed to.