



TIFF Fundraising Symposium

On May 18, 2022, TIFF Investment Management hosted the fourth and final session of its Fundraising Symposium. Each session had its own theme and set of presenters, but the purpose of each was the same: to help nonprofits leverage fundraising best practices efficiently and effectively in a post-pandemic landscape.

“Aligning Fundraising Strategy with Organizational Goals” was hosted by **Dr. Robert T. Grimm, Jr.**, the Levenson Family Chair in Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership at the School of Public Policy and Founding Director of the Do Good Institute at the University of Maryland. **Dr. Robert Sheehan, Jr.**, Academic Director of the EMBA Programs at the University of Maryland, led an interactive presentation on developing aspirational goals that lead to transformative levels of fundraising.

TIFF Members can access the recording of the session and presentation materials through the Member portal. A high-level summary of this informative event appears below.

If you have questions or feedback, please email your name, affiliation, and title to memberservices@tiff.org.

TIFF 2022 Fundraising Symposium Session 4 of 4: “Aligning Fundraising Strategy with Organizational Goals”

Host: Dr. Robert (“Bob”) T. Grimm
Director
Do Good Institute, University of Maryland
[DGI | UMD School of Public Policy](#)

Speaker: Dr. Robert (“Rob”) M. Sheehan, Jr.
Academic Director of the EMBA Program
Robert H. School of Business, University of Maryland
[Robert M. Sheehan, Jr. | Maryland Smith \(umd.edu\)](#)

Breakthrough Strategy

First and foremost, effective quality leadership that is ethical, inclusive, authentic, and empowering is essential for successfully utilizing the strategies and techniques discussed here.

The intention of the **Breakthrough Strategy** approach, developed by Dr. Sheehan, is to drive innovation and creativity in an organization to increase its **mission impact**. Despite a sector full of smart and hardworking people, nonprofits typically achieve only incremental change. Shifting our mindset from one of *reasonable* wants to *unreasonable* wants forces the world around us to adapt, unlocking new levels of achievements.

The problems we face cannot be solved using the same patterns of thought that were used to create them. – Albert Einstein

Breakthrough Strategy Development Process

1. Establish your Mission Gap

The **mission gap** is the difference between your organization achieving 100% of its mission and where it is today. Sharing the mission gap and demonstrating what it would take to close the gap can be used to help inspire donors to give at all levels, but it is especially useful in inspiring transformative donations.

2. Adopt an Aspirational Mindset for Creating Vision

What would your organization look like in an ideal world with no resource constraints? This question can be used as a starting point to develop your most aspirational vision. Visions give us something to aspire to, provide meaning to the “day to day,” and inspire others to help make dreams come true. Aspirational visions set the stage for quantum leaps of progress in closing your mission gap.

An example of aspirational vision leading to quantum progress can be found in the Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC). RMHC was contacted by a potential corporate donor with millions of dollars available for donation. RMHC shared their long-term strategic plan that included the impressive goal of having “five-year expansion plans ready to go at any time.” Inspired by the demonstration of dramatic and measurable impact, the donor gave \$100 million to RMHC.

3. Adopt an Aspirational Mindset for Setting Strategic Stretch Goals

Strategic stretch goals direct attention to relevant activities, affect the intensity and persistence of efforts, and should be outcome-based and “SMART.”

The new SMART goals. We are most familiar with the traditional SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time bound. In an aspirational mindset, we replace *attainable* with **almost impossible**. An *almost impossible goal* requires a **growth mindset**, which forces you to reexamine the most fundamental assumptions of your organization and start fresh.

Transform Your Relationship with Failure

Part of adopting a growth mindset includes shifting perspectives on failure. Failure is to fall short of an intended result. However, if that intended result was an aspirational, almost impossible goal, then the failure becomes a **noble failure**. A noble failure is more of a reflection of progress made from a goal’s starting point rather than a reflection of shortcomings from its end point.

A willingness to fail (nobly) provides a helpful framework when setting almost impossible goals. One way to discern the line between willingness and unwillingness is to share the

goal with the most pessimistic person you know, someone who can envision the absolute worst-case scenarios. Your line is somewhere among those scenarios.

4. Discern SWOTs

Traditionally a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) is conducted in the first steps of strategic planning. In an aspirational mindset, first conduct the vision exercises, and *then* apply the SWOT analysis to those dreams. By setting the goals first, the SWOT analysis becomes an analysis of the realistic strengths and weaknesses of your new goals. This framework will give your organization new context for developing and implementing its strategy.

5. Create Strategy Narrative

The purpose of a strategy is to guide an organization toward its desired future, considering its current situation, and designing a set of actions which will catapult it forward.

As noted at the start of this review, leadership has to be onboard in order for a successful strategy, but this could be a challenge. Human beings naturally have different levels of comfort around change. For those that are more risk-averse or change-resistant, there are a few techniques you can do to get them onboard. One technique is to start with yourself. Internalize your ideas for change, and approach people one-on-one to share these ideas, ask for their feedback, or brainstorm further, in a low-key, low-risk environment.

Another tactic is to use the Mission Gap to anchor your inspiration. From there, begin building out the context with your team, starting in an informal manner and gradually becoming more formal as ideas take shape.

Additional Resources

- *Mission Impact: Breakthrough Strategies for Nonprofits*, by Robert M. Sheehan, Jr.
- Download strategy development guides and other articles by Dr. Sheehan: www.SheehanNonprofitConsulting.com

Biographies

Dr. Robert T. Grimm Jr.

Bob Grimm serves as the Levenson Family Chair in Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership in the School of Public Policy (SPP) and the founding Director of the Do Good Institute at the University of Maryland (UMD). Dr. Grimm works with an incredible team that empowers individuals to do good. The University of Maryland Board of Regents awarded Grimm their 2021 Regents Award for Faculty Excellence in Public Service for Do Good's impact. The Network of Schools of Public Policy, Public Affairs, and Public Administration (NASPAA) similarly recognized Do Good with its inaugural Voinovich Public Innovation Prize.

Started with two courses (2010) and a Do Good Challenge prize competition (2012), thousands of students participate annually in Do Good Campus programs and courses today while changing the world for good. For example, Do Good students enable thousands of families to stay safe and avoid hunger during the pandemic, change mental health accessibility and female menstrual product accessibility on campus, recycle

and supply medications to tens of thousands, reduce water pollution, and eliminate over a hundred million pounds of food waste. Grimm served as the Founding Board Chair of the Food Recovery Network, which UMD students built into a national nonprofit and then launched two successful companies, Hungry Harvest and Imperfect Foods. A new building for SPP and the Institute opens in 2022 with a Do Good Hall of Fame and Do Good Plaza that features inspiring UMD efforts.

Grimm's research on philanthropy, volunteering, nonprofits, and civic engagement has been featured in The Washington Post, New York Times, MSNBC, Fast Company, and Bloomberg. Grimm co-authored a widely-cited article on "The New Volunteer Workforce" in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, articles in Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly, and the Journal of Policy Analysis & Management, and a book on American philanthropists. Invited to testify at the first hearing of the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service, the Congressional Commission focused on the Institute's research on the decline of charitable behaviors.

Grimm served as Senior Counselor to the CEO and the Director of Research & Policy Development at AmeriCorps, which annually invests approximately one billion dollars in innovative nonprofits. Grimm received senior appointments from both President Bush and President Obama's administrations and co-lead the creation of President Obama's Social Innovation Fund. Grimm expanded AmeriCorps's annual research funds from \$2 million to \$10.5 million and developed the first social capital and civic data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Grimm earned his Ph.D. from Indiana University. Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy awarded him its 2019 Distinguished Alumni Award. An Iowa native, Bob and wife Laura have one daughter named Astrid.

Dr. Robert M. Sheehan, Jr.

With more than 30 years of executive management experience, including 18 years as the CEO of two different national nonprofits, Rob uniquely blends in-the-trenches experience with extensive academic research. To the non-profit world, he brings a practical perspective on strategy while applying cutting-edge concepts—such as strategic intent and systems thinking—that are used primarily in the corporate world. As Principal of Sheehan Nonprofit Consulting, Rob provides consulting services in strategy development and implementation, leadership and teamwork development, board development, and succession planning for nonprofits and government entities.

He also serves as Academic Director of the Executive MBA program at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland-College Park. He has directed custom-designed executive education programs through the James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership and the Robert H. Smith School of Business, both at the University of Maryland-College Park.

He received his PhD from The Ohio State University, where he directed The Excellence in Philanthropy research project, which became the basis for his dissertation "Mission Accomplishment as Philanthropic Organization Effectiveness."

Rob has been an active member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (formerly National Society of Fund Raising Executives) since 1986, when he attained the association's CFRE designation. He has served as President of the Central Ohio and East Central Illinois Chapters of AFP, and is currently a member of the Washington DC Metro Area and Maryland Chapters of AFP. He is an active member of ARNOVA (Association

for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action) and the Academy of Management. He has been published in both leading nonprofit research journals: Nonprofit and Management Leadership and Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly.

Rob has been an active volunteer and donor for a wide variety of nonprofit organizations and currently serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees of LeaderShape, Inc.