



Smart Growth for Good Causes

How can you ensure your organization gets better while dealing with all the challenges of getting bigger? First, listen to those who've been there.

"Smart growth" is usually associated with urban planning, but good causes must also think very carefully about how they grow. When your staff grows and your ability to serve more people expands, you will be tested on several fronts. Can you maintain program quality? Will your internal culture remain strong and cohesive? Will bigger mean better or just more problems?

One year ago, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation decided to take a closer look at these questions. The foundation, which focuses on youth



development, had just completed ten years of support for three nonprofits: Citizen Schools, Harlem Children's Zone, and Roca. Each of these organizations had grown significantly over the past decade, but more importantly, each had also expanded and improved its services.

The foundation commissioned me to interview the leaders of these organizations, asking them to reflect on the growth they experienced as well as the challenges they faced. Specifically, I asked these leaders how their respective organizations had changed across 6 dimensions:

- **Theory of change:** was it a constant, or constantly evolving?
- **Organizational culture:** how do you maintain a healthy and cohesive culture when so many new people are joining your team?
- **Evaluation:** to what extent have you quantified your impact, and did this change as your organization grew?
- **Development:** with growth comes an increased demand on fundraising. How did your staff and board evolve to handle these demands?
- **Infrastructure:** what other changes occur internally when you serve more people, and how did you respond to those?

August 2011

Smart Growth for Good Causes

How to get better when your organization gets bigger

The 3 Things Your Audience Wants

Does your presentation deliver them?

A Dozen Years of Grazing Cows

Happy 12th Anniversary to *free-range thinking!*



About Us

- **Impact on the sector:** how have you leveraged lessons learned in the last ten years to create change beyond your prescribed geographic area?



Our objective in this research was to learn if there were common experiences that might serve as lessons for other nonprofits hoping to grow and broaden their impact. Naturally, each organization had its own take on these questions, but despite their differences in size, geographic and programmatic focus, the interviewees frequently echoed each other, sometimes strikingly.

Of course, given such a small sample, we would not represent the common themes that emerged as definitive lessons in "how to scale up a nonprofit organization." Nevertheless, if you lead a nonprofit that is poised for growth, or if you make grants with the intent of helping nonprofits grow, the lessons these nonprofits have learned over the last ten years are worth considering as you ponder the next ten.



The full report, "A Good Thing Growing," was posted on the foundation's website this week, and you can read it by clicking [here](#).

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The 3 Things Your Audience Wants

Do your presentations deliver them? Join us in September for our webinar "Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes" and make sure they do!

Based on unprecedented research and incorporating the advice of twenty highly regarded public-speaking experts, ***Why Bad Presentations Happens to Good Causes*** is a two-hour online class designed to help presenters at all levels, from newbies to seasoned veterans. Curriculum in this two-hour course includes:



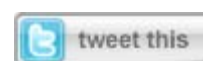
- The three most common characteristics of excellent presentations
- The five most frequent mistakes (and how to avoid them)
- How to structure presentations to ensure your audience learns more
- Why PowerPoint should never be used as a presentation *and* a handout
- Techniques to help you deliver talks with greater confidence

Classes will be held on September 28th and 30th from 11a-12n Pacific each day (2-3p Eastern), and tuition is \$250 per student. (Group discounts are available.) To learn more and register online, click [here](#).

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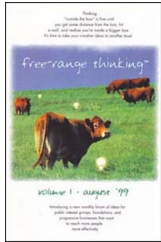
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A Dozen Years of Grazing Cows

Free-range thinking celebrates its 12th anniversary with this issue.



Volume 1, Issue 1

During the first week of August 1999, issue #1 of a brand new newsletter arrived in about a hundred mailboxes around the country. Above the masthead, it offered this thought: "Thinking 'outside the box' is fine until you get some distance from the box, hit a wall, and realize you're inside a bigger box. It's time to take your creative ideas to another level."

Twelve years later, *free-range thinking* reaches nearly 5,500 readers around the world, and it remains the *only* publication in the public interest sector with a grazing cow in its masthead. (Take that, *Farm News!*) Thank you, dear reader, for your interest in this humble publication, and thanks to all the interviewees and other contributors who helped fill our issues month in and month out!

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