



Transcript

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2 Mini-Sode: Coronavirus

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B: Hello, I'm Brittny Wilson.

N: And I'm Nia Wassink and you're listening to...

Both: The Nonprofit Reframe

N: The Mini-Sode!

B: Welcome back to our second mini-sode right?

N: Yeah, mini-sode number two. We are coming live today is Friday, March 20. It's 11am. I feel like we need to timestamp everything because it's changing so quickly.

B: This is true. And you know I think the days of us pre-recording and guessing what is going to happen by the time it airs, are over.

N: Yeah. By far. I think that should be our first PSA of this mini-sode. Is we do have our next three episodes pre-recorded ready for release, the next three Mondays, and they don't mention coronavirus.

B: They do not.

N: I mean, I think the content is still good. But, just know for those of you listening it's not like we were oblivious to it, it just hadn't happened.

B: Hence this mini-sode.

N: Hence, the mini-sode. Let's just do a quick check-in, how are you doing?

B: You know, this is my first time I've been out of the house in four days.

N: And to our listeners, please know, we are proper social distanced. We are..

B: We should take a picture.

N: We should. I've got a new ring light, just for that purpose.

B: Oh nice! Look at that!

N: Because I've been on so many Zoom calls and like prerecording so many webinars and things. That I realized my lighting in my office is awful.

B: You're an online pro now.

N: I basically am, yeah. I'm going to add that to my resume. So, sorry, you are out of the house for the first time.

B: Yeah, out of the house for the first time in four days, um, I know that my organization is now on a work from home indefinitely. So we closed our programming through April 20th to align with the school district and what our governor suggested, but you know that could change and it probably will.

N: Yeah. I think that is like one of the hardest things right now, it's like death by a thousand cuts. Right, like this gets canceled or this hiatus gets extended and so it's all these tiny little like losses really that we are experiencing.

B: Yeah.

N: And I think back to a week and a half ago and what I mean by that is what feels like a year and a half ago. And like people were still making these decisions, like should we, shouldn't we? And now we start having these directives which

actually makes it a little bit easier.

B: I think so, for sure.

N: And you're not having to spend all this time and space like making decisions. No, we're not meeting right, it's going to be a Zoom call, or whatever system we're using. Zoom, if want to sponsor, give us a call! I love that I looked as if there is a camera over there.

B: I know, I'm like who are you looking at?

N: Like I'm Jim on the Office.

B: Breaking the fourth wall.

N: Zoom, you out there watching us?

B: That's so funny, well and I think it's interesting for nonprofits too and the sector because we, in times of crisis, that where we flourish, right? And so there's this second guessing of well should we close down, should we not, and we really need to be in service to the community, but we don't want to put our staff and our people at risk.

N: Right.

B: And it's kind of a moral dilemma that is happening.

N: Totally, yeah. And that, I mean that is just so hard on the psyche.

B: Yes.

N: I feel like every single call I've been on this week, there's this check-in of like, how you doing? Because we are all so mentally exhausted. Like I feel like I can't make a decision right now.

B: Right.

N: If you ask me what I'm going to make for lunch, I'd be like. I'm going to crawl under my desk because I can't even decide one more thing.

B: Do you remember that time, a long time ago, when I decided that I wasn't drinking rose or eating sugar anymore?

N: Yeah, yeah how's that going?

B: Yeah, that's over. In fact, I'm going to open my second oatmeal crème pie while we're sitting here and eat it because this is just a time of stress eating, for those of us that choose that route. And not making decisions.

N: Yup, there is cold rose downstairs, if you want it.

B: 11am, I think it's ok.

N: Yeah.

B: It's five o'clock somewhere.

N: Yeah. I will say also, side note I've noticed how much I say, I will say, on this podcast.

B: Exactly.

N: But I will say, like there are some serious doom and gloom things for nonprofits and it's feeling super scary. And I know, as a fundraising consultant, that side of my business is out of control just trying to keep up with the demand.

B: Yeah, I was going to ask you how you're doing? I mean this is also a time when you, when somebody is a freelancer or owns their own business, or small business owner, people are freaking out about their income.

N: Yeah. Well I was talking to my Dad and he is a small business owner too, and he's looking at small business loans and the stuff the Feds are releasing. And I'm in a really different position where people are like asking how do we do a crisis communication around this, how do we pivot our gala to an online forum?

B: Yeah, yeah.

N: And so, my business is lucky in that we are kind of diversified in the services we offer, and so that side is really, really picking up. I've talked to some other consultants who were around like in '08, what the hell did you do? And they told me, this is a question I asked, 6-9 months ago, when we were just kind of like, is there going to be a recession? We don't know.

B: Right.

N: And they had said, your work will change. People are going to stop paying for unnecessary things, like retreat facilitation. Instead, they're going to have their board chair's cousin come in and do it for free.

B: For sure.

N: But as long as you have enough other things that you are doing, that will balance it out. And so right now, I'm feeling okay about like work and being able to pay my bills. As long as I do my job well enough that the nonprofits can actually pay me.

B: Right, right?

N: For my contract. But I'm worried for a lot of my friends who are in consulting. Who maybe aren't in the fundraising space and do more of the board governance stuff or some of the other areas where there is just not as much work.

Strategy and planning, you know, people aren't going to be investing in six/nine month processes right now. At the very least they are going to put it off.

B: Sure.

N: During response time. But it could be a long time before that picks back up. So to my consultant friends out there, I'm feeling for you and if you feel like getting into fundraising, let me know.

B: You've got work for them.

N: Yeah. But I was going to say earlier though, before I, you asked that wonderful question, thank you. Was there's all this doom and gloom stuff, but there are also moments where there are really amazing things happening.

B: There are.

N: And that is keeping me totally hopeful.

B: Do you have an example?

N: I've got actually a number of examples of clients who have called me in tears this week because a donor has stepped up in a major way.

B: Aww.

N: I've had two where donor advised fund holders have submitted double or triple their annual giving request to this organization from their DAF.

B: Wow.

N: And we've got some foundations who are really stepping up, who are giving extra, who are, one of my clients just got an email from a longtime funder of theirs saying we know this is a hard time, you're going to be getting a check, it's not for as much as we'd love to give, but it's something for now, and we are going to continue to evaluate so, you know, keep doing your work. Like that stuff is just. I just got chills. People are stepping up to do some good stuff.

B: Well and that's true. We have also noticed the same thing where I work, with funders proactively reaching out and saying hey, we just want you to recognize that we recognize and are aware that your services are changing and/or halting, and that's fine. Don't stress out about what your mid-year report or end of year report is going to look like, let's just all take care of ourselves and we're going to figure it out and adapt and not be so stringent on what we are looking for this year. It wouldn't be a Nonprofit Reframe episode if we didn't mention Vu.

N: Yes!

B: Yes. And his post that he put out this last week, I think spoke directly to the foundations of, ok this is the time. That 95% that you've been holding onto for that rainy day..

N: It's raining.

B: It's raining, so you know, it's time to turn it up. So it's great to see that already starting to happen and I hope that there's more of that as we move forward through this.

N: Well actually I literally got off a call, right before you got here, where we've got some local efforts that are organizing around that.

B: Oh that's great.

N: So, you'll be hearing more around that. As will our listeners, we'll update you on kind of what is happening on these local levels to do some collective action around it.

B: That's great. So what else are you hearing from other organizations, from your clients?

N: Well you know some of them are feeling the full triple-whammy. Some of them, you know it's just the we have to shift our work differently, because now we're going to be remote, so that's challenging. But then you've got those that are totally shifting their work, at the same time trying to figure out how to feed people, how to house people, like how to do their work at a higher rate, but in a totally different way at the same time. Those that have had events get canceled, whether its..

B: Yeah, can I just say one last time, Oh My Gosh, Thank you universe! That we got our Gala in, I mean at the last possible minute.

N: Yeah. Oh exactly. You wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise.

B: There's no way.

N: Yeah. And you know I've seen a lot of my clients and we've been talking through, so their moving their galas, vendors are being wonderful and understanding and so they're bumping them to fall or whatever. Well what does that do, when you've got a Gala in October and then you turn around for your year-end giving a month later. And so we're you know talking about how to shift around some of their fundraising campaigns, and even major donor work right now. But it's also a struggle, because I've got the clients where like their work is so needed right now. Right, like, they have to, have to, have to, continue to operate at really high levels. And then there are others where it's like, yeah, so you had to invest

in some new software, so you could do meetings remote, but this isn't the time to go out and fundraise.

B: Isn't it, it's interesting? I'm noticing that too. I mean I think when, if when we're already embedded in this scarcity mindset, and then we have something like this happen. It just takes us from already being like we're never going to have enough money to, Oh my gosh, this is the end.

N: Right.

B: And it becomes almost like everybody puts their hand out.

N: Exactly, yeah.

B: And the unfortunate part of that is that it dilutes the pool from the organizations that you're speaking of that are really doing the frontline work right now, and need it ASAP.

N: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly. I was having this exact conversation with a board of a client recently. By recently, I mean like yesterday, oh my gosh. Time is irrelevant. It means nothing right now.

B: It's so true.

N: So we're talking about this and they were wanting me to go out and one board member had come with all these great appeal emails that she had gotten, she's like we have to do this. And I think it's exactly what you're saying. They're in this scarcity mindset, and so I pull up the month by month budget and I'm like, look at this, we're doing great. We don't actually have a campaign scheduled until May. Let's keep that.

B: Right. Right.

N: Like we don't need to be adding to the noise, instead let's show a position of stability and actually let's even promote some of the organizations that are doing that work.

B: So powerful.

N: Yeah.

B: To come together as a sector in this unified voice, that says yes, we need you donors and foundations to step up and here are the most critical needs right now. This is our sister or brother organization, please help them. And time your ask, for when you really need it most. And if we all did that, then there would be enough to go around.

N: Oh exactly. I went back to like Maslow's hierarchy, so you're working kind of higher up on the pyramid and that is still important, but if they're not getting food, your work doesn't happen, so let's promote the organizations that are getting your clients food right now because that is exactly what they are doing.

B: Right.

N: And you know it's interesting, I think especially working with boards where you've got folks who aren't embedded in the sector. They're not seeing all these little ripple effects. So, you know, like you've got populations where they're more heavily working in service industries. Think about younger folks.

B: Right.

N: Think about young folks experiencing homelessness, who are more likely in the gig-economy. Those jobs are gone.

B: Right.

N: And so they have no income and so you suddenly have this new client pool, needing food, needing housing resources, needing all these new things because of what is happening in the world, and so we need those organizations fully equipped to respond, because otherwise you know what is going to happen. 3-6 months down the line, we are going to have these massive societal issues to deal with, when these people probably just needed bolstering for a shorter period of time. I don't want to

B: Don't put a timeframe on it we have no idea!

N: I'm not putting a timeframe on it. Yeah, yeah. You know just during this crisis and then they can go back to their jobs and you know the lives that they had before.

B: Well what do you think? I mean what are you telling organizations for example, what Vu is saying to foundations, couldn't we just as much be saying that to organizations about their reserves. I mean yeah, nobody, nobody wants to draw on their savings, nobody wants to draw on their reserves, but I mean, this is the time, if you have them, to be thankful that you have them. And use them if you need to.

N: Yeah, well I was hearing from a friend who was on a peer support call with like executive directors and folks are saying, we're doing layoffs, and when we're talking about people coming back, they're coming back at 60%. And so the organizations dealing with that kind of reality, where like their workforce, they can't afford to pay.

B: Right.

N: And I'm assuming that's because they don't have the reserves needed. So if you're an organization that has the reserves and you can continue to pay your people, even if they're not working, even if they're not working at 100%, like keep doing that, keep paying them, ensure that they have what they need to take care of themselves and their families

during this like crazy, horrific time. And then the ones that are facing like potential closure, we those are the ones we need to bolster up. One of the things that Vu, also was talking about, it sounds like he's our only source for information.

B: We do read other things.

N: But, he was saying like some people are coming out saying it's going to be survival of the fittest, the nonprofits that were smart and did this, that and the other. Those are the ones that are going to survive, which is true and awful at the same time because we know what organizations aren't going to survive, the ones that don't have the reserves that don't have it, those are more likely to be led by people of color.

B: Yeah.

N: More likely to be serving populations that are highly, highly marginalized. So those are the places that we need, our funders, our donors, like funneling through to ensure that they survive.

B: Yup, yeah. So what are our takeaways?

N: Um, hang in there.

B: Hang in there!

N: It's so awful and scary and I'm on fundraising twitter, which is super fun and awful at the same time, because you hear these stories of funders being like we've got a special COVID Response Fund, we just need you to submit this 10-page application for \$200-\$500 grants.

B: Oh Gosh.

N: You're like, no, no, no, no, no. So, I'm going to empower the nonprofits, when you get a funder who does that, who puts that out, give them a middle-finger. Flip them off, like you don't have time for that shit. Your mental health doesn't have time for that shit.

B: Nia promotes usage of the bird.

N: I mean I genuinely think though that getting rid of some of the bullshit right now, is how we're going to survive.

B: Yeah.

N: There is just so much happening. It feels like these waves, these onslaughts of information and changes that are just continuing to take us down. We've got to get rid of that bullshit and focus on our work at hand.

B: You know, and I'm also going to advocate for slowing it down. If you can. If you're not one of those kind of front line organizations who has to quickly adapt and do stuff because people's lives are at stake. If you have the ability, slow it down. And take a minute to kind of assess the situation, things are moving so fast.

N: Yes.

B: And your staff is reeling. Right?

N: Oh yeah.

B: Now we're working from home surrounded by our kids, if we have them. And our partners, if we have them.

N: As long as he survives.

B: Exactly. Exactly. And everything, everybody is processing it differently. And anxiety and stress and fear all manifest in different ways and we need to allow people to be able to process it. And if you can provide some level of stability in a very unstable time, I think that is the best gift you can give your staff.

N: Yeah.

B: And just say, it's okay. Let's all take a minute to figure out this new normal for right now. And we'll figure it out together.

N: Yeah. I think that's one of the best things anybody can do. Whether you're an employer, whether you sit on the board.

B: Yeah.

N: It's just like give so much grace, because we are all just figuring this out.

B: For sure, for sure.

N: And pick up a new hobby.

B: I'm picking up tarot.

N: Tarot?!

B: I wish you could've seen her face. I like fully surprised Nia, she was not expecting that out of my mouth.

N: I didn't know that was like a hobby you could pick up.

B: Yeah, well I'm going to get a book and I'm going to get a deck and I'm going to start learning it.

N: Well, I'm baking bread so...

B: I love it. I've also decided I'm going to try and train my dog better.

N: That would be awesome.

B: So he doesn't jump on you every time you come over.

N: I would appreciate that.

B: Yeah. And I'll say some good things that are happening is that my cat, who tends to be the one who does not get as much attention in our household. Now I'm taking tons of pictures of him and he's the star of the show.

N: He's the cutest thing ever.

B: Okay, so you're going to bake bread, what else are you going to do?

N: Um, oh actually, last weekend I got my sewing machine out and just started going through some projects. You'll note that our recording drapery has been properly hemmed.

B: Oh I love it.

N: Yeah, I think just more things with my hands. Especially as it gets me away from computers right now.

B: Sure.

N: I had to buy new computer glasses, because I just constantly having a headache from staring at them all day.

B: They look lovely.

N: Well thank you so much! Um, but yeah, just things that, more makers space kind of stuff where my hands are being utilized, my brain is maybe able to slow down.

B: Yeah.

N: And not feel like I have to strategize for 14 different fundraising crises right now.

B: Yeah, yeah. Well to all of you listening, first of all thank you. And also, I want to hear about what you're doing.

N: Yeah.

B: And what's going on in your world? You know and what are things that you would like us to talk about on the podcast. Like we said we have the pre-recorded ones coming up, but we're going to be doing new ones moving forward and we'd since, times, they are a changing, we'd love to know what people's interests are.

N: Yeah, yeah, that's a really good point. So email us at nonprofitreframe@gmail.com, follow us on facebook, Instagram, or linkedin. I know we posted out last week that we've kind of slowed down on social media. That will probably pick up at some point, but you know we are just slowing everything down, and that's ok.

B: That's ok, and if you have the means and the ability, please continue to support your local nonprofits, find the ones that are doing the critical work right now, give and give generously.

N: Thanks everybody.

N: We would like to thank our sponsors, Mission Launch is a Colorado-based nonprofit consulting firm focusing on fundraising and board governance, you can learn more at missionlaunchco.com and Jake Walker Music who provides our theme music. You can find him at jakewalkermusic.org. Thank you so much!