



February 9, 2022



from the basement desk of  
**David H. King** |  
President & CEO

## I'm Sick of COVID (pun intended)

Seriously, I'm sick of talking about it, hearing about it, reading about it, being tested for it (5 times this year already) and sick of having it (December 2020 for me). I'm sure you are too. And, I'm sick of writing about it...so I'm not going to!

I want to talk about what comes next and what I see as a lasting impact of the past two years — whether this impact is good or bad remains to be seen. But things have certainly changed in how nonprofit organizations (and most other organizations) work as a result of “C” (I refuse to even use the word).

Remote working was put on steroids, and we all learned a thing or two. Some of us realized that having our staff tethered to an office was probably inefficient, and to some degree unproductive. The result is that some of us old dudes (me included) who were hesitant about people's work ethic when out of our sight, have learned that many people are actually more effective and efficient when they don't have to come to the office. They are spared the commute (my commute to my basement office is about 15 seconds now). They don't spend a lot of *water cooler* time catching up on everyone's weekend. Lunch break is grabbing something from the fridge or *Grubhub*. And there's no worry about what I-285 will be like after 5pm. *Alternative hour* fans can do just that with 9-5 results. One employee, who is pretty much useless before noon, is a rock star between about 7pm and 1am.

Most who have embraced this new way of working now see that location and work hours can be flexible with really great results. This can be especially true for organizations that are not in a location with a large workforce to draw talent from, for instance colleges and universities. Attracting a major gift officer to live in a remote or rural location, a couple of hours from the nearest airport, has always been a challenge. But, with some real conscious effort to make sure those gifts officers are on-site enough to be plugged into the energy, activity and culture, there is no reason that some staff can't work from anywhere. That expands the talent pool you can draw from massively.

A remote workforce is not without challenges, of course. Leaders with remote workers must be very deliberate and intentional about how they create and infuse the desired culture into a workforce that does not come together every day. Likewise, resources must be committed to help build relationships between coworkers. While they may have led to inefficiencies in some ways, those water cooler conversations in the hallway, break room, or standing in someone's doorway, went a long way to establish a sense of “we” that is hard to do on a Zoom call. Leaders need to plan (and spend) to bring remote coworkers physically together on a regular basis so that these relationships, that support trust, co-reliance, and teamwork, can foster and flourish.

This phenomenon extends beyond just our staff. Remote Board and committee meetings seem to

draw better attendance, but are they as effective? Will they continue to draw attendance when the novelty wears off? Are we losing some of the sense of *team* in our boards that we lose with employees? All good questions that only time will answer.

These are things we have been thinking about, both as they impact our Firm, how we work, and how they impact our clients. Will we, a few years down the road when the "C" word is a distant memory, see this pendulum swing back to full offices and the traditional 9-5? I suspect the answer is *yes* and *no*. I suspect there will be a return to a more *normal* style of work. But we should all harvest the good aspects of remote work and use them to our advantage going forward...even when we aren't forced to.

[Our Team](#)

## Personal Connections Drive Donors

Three recent reports from the **Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at IUPUI** show that fundraisers benefit from making personal connections with, demonstrating impact to, and cultivating empathic responses from donors without inducing feelings of guilt or distress.

**One report** suggests that meaningful donor connections with nonprofit organizations is a pivotal factor in determining giving patterns and that individuals are more likely to give to organizations to which they have a prior relationship or familiarity. **A second** reveals that in comparison to an email-based fundraising message or a three-sentence narrative description of a nonprofit's work, a video fundraising message generated a 43% increase in the connection rate among its viewers.

**And a third report** indicates that a nonprofit's mission was the top factor influencing donors to sign up for subscription giving and that personal relationships with staff at nonprofits also matter greatly in shaping the decision to become a subscription donor. *1-30*

## Speed Up Giving Boost in Congress

A bipartisan set of tax proposals intended to speed up distributions from foundations and donor-advised funds has been introduced in the House of Representatives, raising the hopes of its backers that the legislation has momentum. The new bill is based on a proposal developed by the billionaire philanthropist **John Arnold** and Boston College law professor **Ray Madoff**. It is a companion to a bill introduced in the Senate last year. The legislation would allow donors to get an upfront tax deduction for donor-advised-fund deposits only if they distribute the money within 15 years. For community foundations and certain other organizations, the bill would exempt donor-advised fund accounts of \$1 million or less from any payout requirements; larger accounts would have to distribute at least 5% annually.

Critics say that money deposited in the accounts often sits idle for many years while generating fees for the organizations that manage them. Opponents say it would hurt charitable giving, among other complaints. Among those opposed, the Council on Foundations released an alternative list of recommendations that it said would spur more giving from donor-advised funds managed by community foundations. *COP, 2-3*

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Whether your need is in Capital Campaign, Annual Fund Campaign, Major Gifts, Leadership Annual Giving, Planned Giving or all of the above, we take a fresh approach to nonprofit fundraising.

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