



Putnam Consulting Group

Confident Giving • Dramatic Return

The Secret of Success

One Question Guaranteed to Save Funders Time, Save Money, and Achieve Results

In my experience, the best foundations do one thing very effectively -- they never fail to ask the question guaranteed to save time and money, and achieve results. That question is this: "If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently?"

If you ask that question of other organizations working on the same issue -- and of other foundations that have attempted to do what you're trying to do -- I guarantee you will reap the benefits. Listen to what they have to say, implement their suggestions, and you will save your foundation staff time, financial resources, and headaches. You will also have a much more successful grantmaking program, and it will happen much faster than if you hadn't asked the question.

Let me give you a few examples. I was working with a community foundation seeking to implement a human services initiative, so we took some site visits to other communities across the country that were doing the same thing. We asked each of them, "If you could develop your initiative all over again, what would you do differently?" And each one of them said, "If I could do it all over again, I would develop a communications plan from the very beginning." Jackpot. These organizations had found that without a communications plan, they were hindered throughout their whole initiative by poor communication and coordination and lack of awareness among key stakeholders. Unfortunately, the foundation I worked with chose to ignore this advice and did not prioritize a communications plan; as a result, years down the road, they too are hindered in their efforts.

Another important discovery we made by asking this crucial question is that most foundations say they should have invested more in the data-collection capacity of their grantees, because now their grantees find themselves several years into their initiatives but unable to collect the data they need because they don't have the in-house capacity. That means they have to go back and reinvest resources. Learn from those foundations, implement that suggestion, and save yourself time and money.

It's simple, right? Ask the question, listen to the answer, implement the suggestion, save yourself time and resources, get faster results, and have greater impact. I guarantee it works.

Let me ask you a question: If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently? E-mail me your stories at kris@putnam-consulting.com. I will be sure to share them so that we can all learn from each other, act efficiently, and get the best results

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