



LOST

Don't know where or how to start - so don't.

It can be difficult to know when to start when organisations are big and opportunities could be anywhere. Opportunities can exist anywhere in the organisation. With too many staff to ask, lots of ideas can surface, creating unrealistic expectations that need to be managed.

How can we:

- Ensure we think big and are ambitious and creative around the opportunities?
- How can we move beyond ideas such as consultancy and cafes?
- Make effective decisions around where to prioritise?
- Harness the ideas from staff, but be honest and realistic with them about what will be taken forwards?

Premature Death

Ideas killed off too early or incorrectly.

Too many ideas are killed off early or wrongly because bad decisions are made, sometimes through lack of data, sometimes through lack of experience. New ideas and models usually come with very different reference points that can make judging performance difficult.

How can we:

- Be culturally open about what we know and what we don't?
- Use appropriate metrics, benchmarks and KPIs that are from outside the sector rather than force in what we already know?
- Bring in advice from those that know - and then listen to this advice?

Infection

Poor performing ideas that aren't stopped kill the enthusiasm for everything else.



Backing the wrong idea, and then continuing to back the wrong idea, can drag down the rest of the portfolio of opportunities. We know many new things that are tried will fail, but one big failure can tarnish all the other good work with the same brush. We need to be able to fail fast.

How can we:

- Give opportunities the chance, but know when to kill them? How can we know when something should be killed?
- Create a culture of experimentation to allow rapid learning and testing rather than placing big bets?
- Create agile ways to continually fund opportunities, rather than having all or nothing business plans?

Analysis Paralysis

Too much thinking. Not enough progress.

Startup investors don't ask for five year financial forecasts of new ideas, they buy into the vision, the opportunity, the team and the plan for the next round of funding. New ideas in charities aren't treated this way, they're subjected to repeated financial modelling and analysis.

How can we:

- Mimic the best of the investment analysis approaches from the startup investing world, rather than applying BAU planning and analysis tools?
- Recognise that the best analysis comes from launching experiments and learning about real behaviour in-market?
- Create a culture that's biased to action rather than analysis?

Bored to death

No pace. No process. No enthusiasm.

It can be a struggle to move at the pace within large organisations and when competing priorities exist. Work that should take weeks instead takes months. Progress is slow, initial enthusiasm leeches away and nothing ever changes.

How can we:

- Create an expectation of pace, setting demanding timescales to ensure that new opportunities are prioritised?
- Devote appropriate levels of resource behind new initiatives so things can move at pace?
- Create pathways through organisations to allow them to not be slowed down by BAU?

Myopia

Too much internal thinking and insular focus.

Too often charities are solely inwards focused, looking at what they could do to deliver their mission. Outside the bubble are many others - big and small, charity and commercial - trying to deliver the same impact. But there's no way of working in partnership with others, too much is attempted alone.

How can we:

- Charities work collaboratively with others that are doing good rather than trying to do everything themselves?
- Support, endorse, promote or fund social startups delivering the same mission?
- Share the risk and reward of new ideas with others?

Homeless and unloved

Structured in the wrong place within the organisation.



Opportunities to deliver mission and money can straddle different parts of the organisation. But too often the responsibility to develop and scale these sits within a silo without sufficient access both sideways and upwards.

How can we:

- Create new models of organisation design to give them the best chance of success?
- Create ways of working that give access across the organisation and to different teams without conflict or protectionism?
- Provide access to senior decision makers so progress doesn't get bogged down?

Wrong help

Bad advice kills ideas.

New models, new ideas and new ways of thinking require a different ecosystem of support. Many existing suppliers won't be relevant, yet procurement can slow progress and kill any attempt to be agile and entrepreneurial.

How can we:

- Build a new ecosystem of support?
- Know what should be delivered internally and where external support is needed? Know when it's best to learn new capabilities and when it's best to bring them in?
- Create appropriate supplier relationships and incentivisation to act as partners and align everyone's success? Can we create a new definition of value for money?



Catch 22

Ideas killed through being caught in the machine.

Governance is not built for pace and agility. Decisions need to be made by Trustees who meet quarterly. Finding space is hard on an Exec team agenda that's occupied by the day to day priorities, meaning decisions that should take hours take months.

How can we:

- Create appropriate governance to allow decisions to be made quickly and to progress at pace?
- Spin things out to create space and distance from the core charity?
- Create appropriate delegated authority from Trustees?

Drowning

Too much to do, nothing done well.
Too busy to think.

Insufficient resources provided to a team, coupled with too many expectations, often means time is spent doing lots of things badly. Creating something brand new takes a single-minded focus.

How can we:

- Ensure we're realistic about balancing resource levels and expectations?
- Create space for a single minded focus?
- Remove the BAU requirements and time sinks that don't add value?



Power of Politics

Lack of strategic fit, senior support and importance.

Internal politics, different agenda and a focus on short term priorities can all kill future-focused opportunities. A focus on the future can be difficult to maintain when short term challenges create pressure.

How can we:

- Align key stakeholders around the burning platform?
- Create a common narrative around the potential of combining mission and money?
- Provide exec level sponsorship and championing to ensure access across the organisation?

Paralysed by Fear

Fear of what others might say or the fear of failure means no risk is ever taken.



The worry about what the Daily Mail might say stops risks being taken, even when those risks are entirely appropriate. Too often the conversation is about the risk of action, rather than focusing on the risk of inaction.

How can we:

- Design new ways of using the brand to limit reputational risk?
- Create different legal structures to create separation from the core charity?
- Be brave and create a narrative with supporters about what it takes to evolve as an organisation?

Wrong way

Wrong team, wrong skills, wrong experience.

The talent that will make these new opportunities happen is likely to come from outside the sector. We don't project managers, we need to bring entrepreneurial talent in. But these people don't want to work for charities so we need to create new ways to enable us to harness their skills and passion.

How can we:

- Bring in the best talent to drive these opportunities forward, not defaulting to assuming internal staff have the capability or experience?
- Create new models of reward and incentivisation to allow us to compete effectively in the market for the best talent?
- Create and protect a different, entrepreneurial culture that will allow these people to thrive?

Crashed and burned

Too much emphasis on one big idea, with nothing else in the portfolio.

25% of startups fail within the first year, so we should expect a lot of what is tried to fail. It therefore becomes essential to maintain a portfolio of ideas. Instead, too many charities put all their effort and resources behind one idea at a time and have nothing in the pipeline behind it.

How can we:

- Take a portfolio of ideas forward, of varying risk profiles, rather than just focusing all hopes on one?
- Maintain a pipeline of opportunities at different stages of maturity?
- Manage the resourcing implications of maintaining a portfolio of opportunities?

Starved

No investment to create, no investment to scale.



It can be challenging enough to invest sufficient resources to work on developing new models and new opportunities, but then finding the investment to grow and scale big new ideas can be impossible. New ideas can be doomed to fail without sufficient investment behind them.

How can we:

- Allocate sufficient investment to give this work the best chance, and release this funding in a risk managed, phased approach?
- Access different types of funding from within the charity? How can we access long term, investment based funding rather than in-year budgets?
- Set ourselves up to attract funding from external investors? Generate the networks and relationships in both the social and commercial investment worlds?