

Whether or not we are ready, the weather always is

Insights and inspiration from the world of weather by Rhea Blanken

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This article is not about the ozone layer shrinking or the likelihood of global warming. It's about being prepared for the weather, whatever the forecast, being flexible enough to respond to its immediate influence and comprehending its impact on our plans.

With each “new” economic forecast and assn trend presentation, the highlights begin to sound more and more like weather reports than real substantive evidence for future shifts. We know the truth about weather – it's a constant that changes daily. So too with trends; they will always be coming towards us.

Consequently, isn't it more important to be prepared for change, being disciplined and practiced at being response-able (able to respond in the immediate and even moments prior) and flex-able (able to shift actions and resources on a dime)? Isn't that more essential than any specific weather pattern being forecast or trend being championed?

How does one practice being response-able, regardless of the weather? First, let's determine the most appropriate vantage point – local, regional, national or global weather. Are we being presented with past comparisons or current conditions, short range forecasts, or long range outlooks? Weather comes in all these categories and each has value and meaning. So too with organizational, business and cultural trend information.

Then, let's select measures for collecting and tracking data and determine how that influences our judgments. The measures must correlate with what we want to know regarding our weather (future). Inventing new measures might be required. We mostly track temperature. Other areas of general interest are relative humidity, UV Index, air quality, pollen count, barometric pressure, dew point, visibility, and, wind speed and direction. Each of these measures evokes past experiences.

We are ready (or know what to do to be ready) with appropriate resources to enhance or thwart weather's effects. More attention is paid to some weather aspects than others but only because that is what we have come to know and have practiced accommodating.

From the information contained in these familiar weather reports, we know to carry an umbrella, use sunscreen, securely anchor the outdoor furniture, and lay in a supply of de-icing material for the front walk. As the seasons change, we move from one resource to another, working to stay ahead of anticipated weather and seasonal predictions. But we don't seem to take on those same practiced ways of being when interacting with business, economic or association trend forecasts. Rather, we appear to scramble around, wondering what to do.

The key to using weather to master trends

Each of the following weather terms is transferable to volunteer leader and staff activities and communications. We can enhance and influence our "response ability," regardless of organizational circumstances or resources. Your organization can translate these expressions into actions that direct, refine and realize its future.

Outlook

Used to give considerable lead-time that a hazardous event might develop. For example: • Watch – issued when the risk of hazardous weather has increased significantly, but its occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain, "watch" provides enough lead time to put plans in motion, and • Warning – cautions of a threat to life or property.

Advisory

Issued when a hazardous event is occurring or has a very high probability of occurrence, expecting to cause significant inconvenience. Advisories highlight special weather conditions that are less serious than warnings. But if caution is not exercised, conditions could lead to situations that may threaten life and/or property. Examples are: dense fog, wind, heat and frost. Consider: • Who are

your association's weather prognosticators? How is short and long range forecasting built into planning, delivering, and refining memorable membership experiences?

- When do you get your association's weather forecasts – unless your organization has a successful track record for predicting the future, like the Farmer's Almanac, annual probes into the future are not sufficient.
- What are your benchmarks for actual organization results? How are these metrics probes into your future? Measures that balance the present with the future are necessary.
- What practices do you follow to endure the rainy days while waiting for sunny ones? How's that going for you? Maybe your outlook and definitions need rethinking; planning for a flood of volunteer participation doesn't require an umbrella or an ark.

"Your view of the future shapes your actions today, and your actions today shape your future." – Daniel Burrus, futurist

Rhea Blanken is a speaker, author, organizational alchemist and creativity guru creating play-full learning experiences that transform organizations, their staff and volunteer leaders. Contact her for more information at 301-320-8711 or rheaz@resultstech.com