

Tip Sheet: Endings/Stop Doings

With both the New Year and New Decade (!) just behind us, I know many of us are thinking about goals. Beyond working towards our goals however, there's something else to consider – and one we don't talk about much – that is “endings” or “stop doings.”

“Stop doings” allow you to focus on what's most important, instead of getting side-tracked. Did you know: great organizations routinely trim what's less than stellar so they can focus on what's essential.

To be your strongest, stop doing: those “things” (programs, partnerships, campaigns, regular practices we have, etc.) that are:

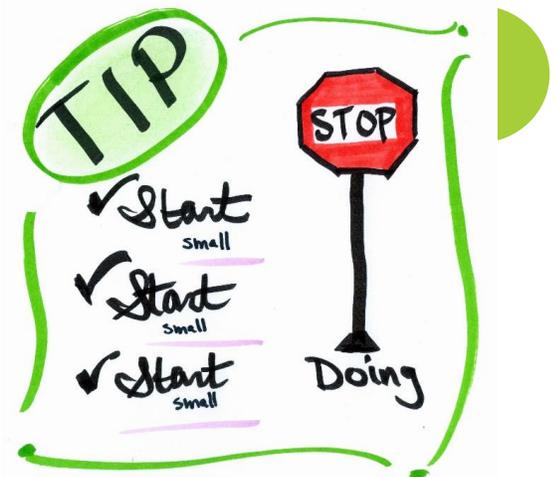
- Not the best or greatest
- Sick and not getting better
- Taking up space needed for better or healthier “things”
- In some way not working

But, “endings” or “stop doings” are hard! We've gotten so comfortable with our routines and habits. Plus “endings” or “stop doings” may involve loss, which is never easy, even if we know it's time to move on.

So, what to do?

I think of “stop doings” or “endings” like weeding – giving room for those wonderful flowers I want to plant. Here are three ways you or your organization can begin “end” or “stop doing” what may be dragging you down so that what's left is stronger:

1. **Start small and safe.** It's much easier, say, to “stop checking e-mails x times a day” than end a less-than-stellar program that's been around for a while.
2. For bigger things, **consider a “ritual” or marker to formally close and say goodbye** to “the thing” so that you acknowledge it's truly over and you free yourself to do something better and more aligned with where you want to be.





Stop Doings

3. **Project yourself sometime into the future and look back.** Is the image you see in the future (6 months, 1 year, or longer) the same as where you are now with the “thing?” Is that OK? If not, what do you need to end to make your desired progress?

I have found this technique one of the most helpful – both in my own work and with the groups I work with.

Take the challenge with me: what will you stop doing or end so you/your organization has more room for what’s really important and aligned with the impact you seek?

If you’re thinking about setting your goals or pruning so that you’re better primed to set some new goals, **envision** would love to help. We can:

- Lead a session with your organization to review and sort through your strongest initiatives and efforts, and those which may benefit from some pruning
- Create a large scale visual that draws out the strengths and challenges of different initiatives so you can literally “see” what may benefit from “stops” and what makes sense to continue or potentially adjust
- Help you with strategic planning where you take a fresh look at where you’ve been and where you might want to go in the future
- Carry out an external review with your stakeholders, members and other key audiences to further inform you about what might be strong and what to consider “stop doing”

Here’s to a great new decade and carrying out only those “things” that are strongest in your organization (and life)!

Charlotte

Want more? Besides my experience with groups to help them “end” or “stop doing” less than stellar activities, here are some great resources that have helped inform my thinking:

Collins, J. 2005. *Good to great for the social sectors. A monograph to accompany good to great.* NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Collins, J. 2001. *From Good to great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't.* NY: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

Cloud, H. 2010. *Necessary endings.* NY, NY: Harper Collins.

<https://www.verbaltovisual.com/essentialism/>. Re-accessed January 8, 2020.