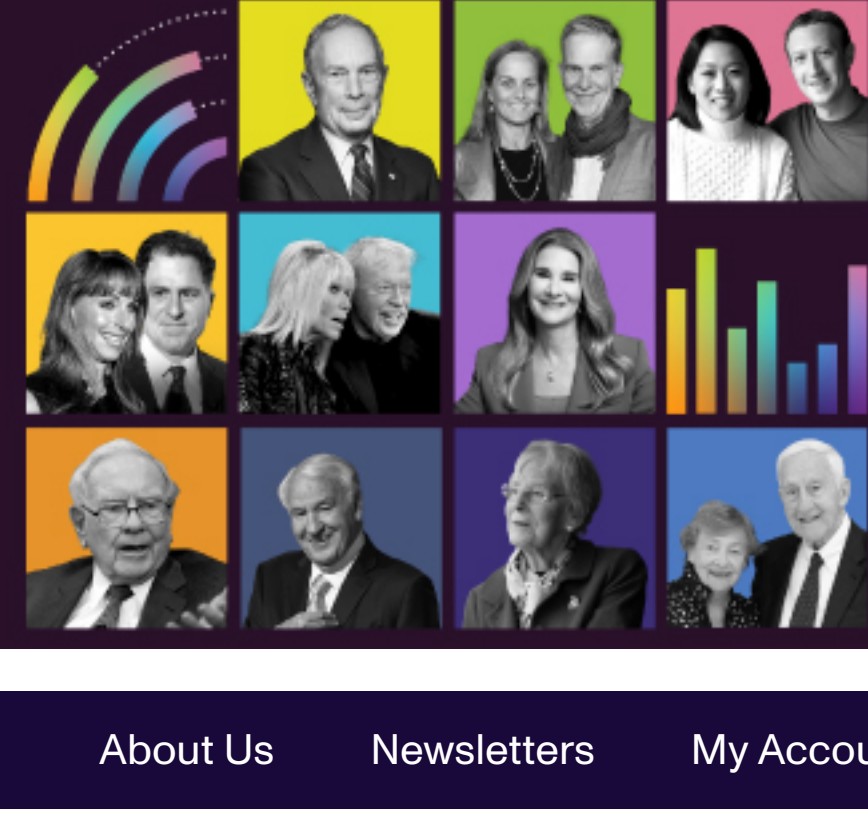


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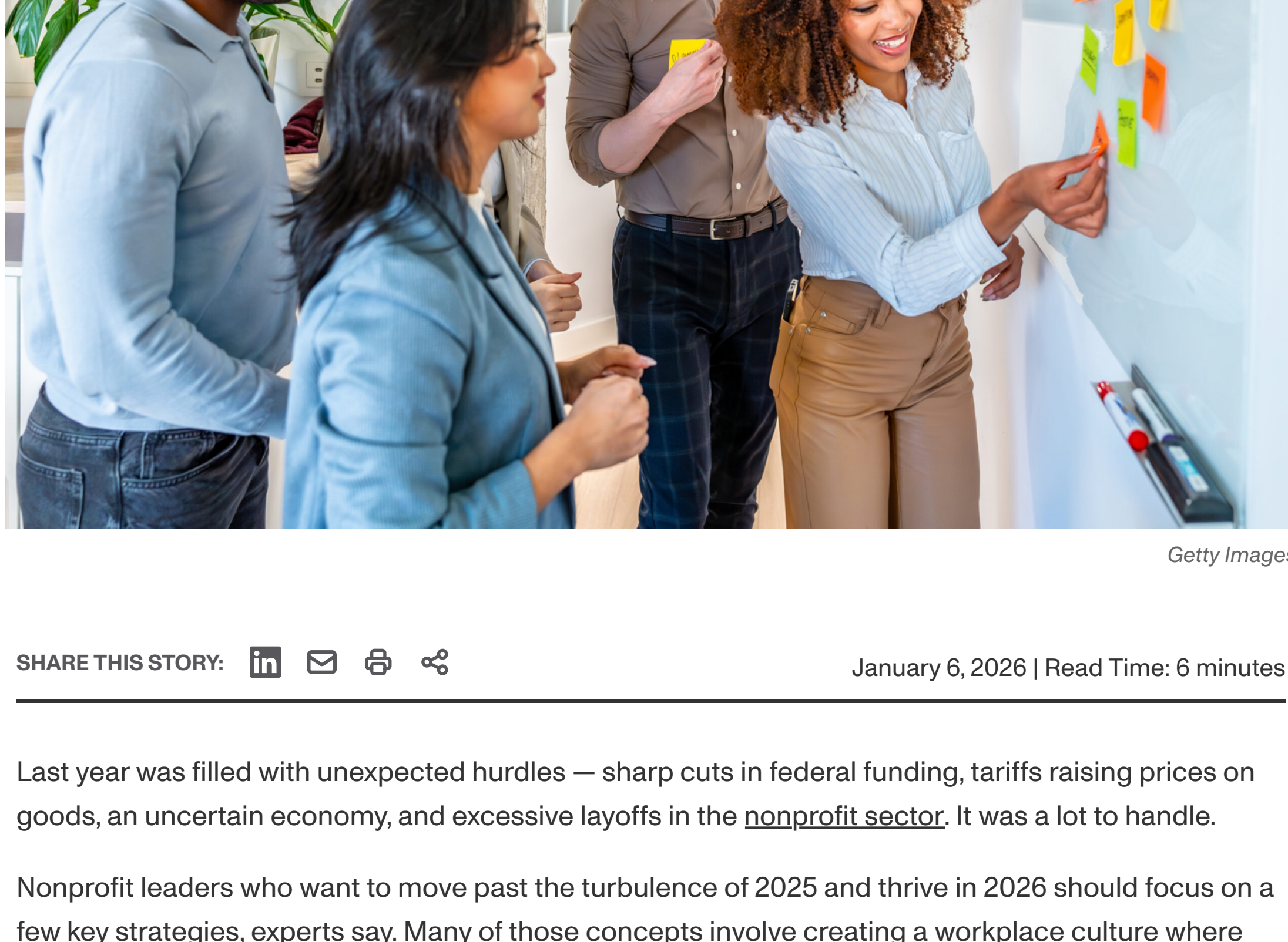
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6 Resolutions to Help Your Nonprofit Thrive in 2026

These practical steps will help you foster a healthy organizational culture during uncertain times.



By **Rasheeda Childress**
Senior Editor, Fundraising



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Last year was filled with unexpected hurdles — sharp cuts in federal funding, tariffs raising prices on goods, an uncertain economy, and excessive layoffs in the [nonprofit sector](#). It was a lot to handle.

Nonprofit leaders who want to move past the turbulence of 2025 and thrive in 2026 should focus on a few key strategies, experts say. Many of those concepts involve creating a workplace culture where employees can bring their best selves to the table and apply that to the mission.

"The nonprofits that will thrive in 2026 are the ones that are leading with care, empathy, and honesty, not just in words but in practice," says [Chantel Simms](#), senior consultant at Nonprofit HR, powered by OneDigital.

So with 2026 just underway, here's where to focus your resolve to help your organization thrive this year.

Acknowledge the past.

For a strong start, it's important to acknowledge that 2025 was a rough year, and continued change may be popping up in 2026, too.

"We are not wired to change this massively this quickly; it's a lot for people," says [Julie Kratz](#), CEO of the consulting firm Next Pivot Point. "Just an acknowledgment that it has been difficult, that we have experienced a lot of change, that we have grieved and lost some things."

Too often people aren't sure what to say, so they say nothing, says [Robbie Robichau](#), an associate professor of nonprofit management at Texas A&M University.

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"They're just afraid to communicate anything about what's happening because it seems like it could change from day to day," she says. "Many folks feel shellshocked."

However, not talking about what happened or is happening "elevates the stress of everybody." Instead, she recommends clear communication and transparency about what's happening at the organization and the impact of the current economic or political environment. "Anything you can do to reassure or manage expectations around all of this perpetual uncertainty" will help, says Kratz.

Get realistic about what you can do.

When a new year starts, many people create a litany of tasks to accomplish. They want to go, go, go, says Simms. However, nonprofit leaders shouldn't be adding more things to their employees' plates but instead should take stock of what realistically can be accomplished.

"January isn't about speed; it's about stability," Simms says. "Leaders should reset expectations for employees around space, around pacing, around priorities, and also capacity. Especially after the unpredictable year that we've had, you can't ask burnt-out teams to sprint into a new year."

If an organization faced funding cuts, staff layoffs, or other perils in 2025, it's important to take a hard look at what is possible.

"Just taking a step back and strategically looking at the organization and where we really need to allocate people," Kratz says. "What's working, what's not, who's struggling, who's not? And making sure those people have adequate resources or workloads are adjusted."

Align leaders with staff.

January is also a good time to help align leadership and staff, says Kratz. As an example, Kratz is working with a nonprofit that does work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion — a topic resident Trump actively opposes. The administration's stance and its actions have led to changes in how the nonprofit operates. Leaders say they are still doing the work but doing it differently. However, frontline employees say the work isn't being done, that they've been told to pause on many things.

An organization can't function well if staff and leaders are not on the same page, Kratz says. So take January to really make sure everyone is aligned.

"I am seeing organizations revisit their strategy, being really clear, and doing a lot more internal messaging," she says.

Create psychological safety — you'll need it to succeed.

While psychological safety may feel like a trendy concept, making sure your nonprofit has it will be crucial to navigating a 2026 that could be as unpredictable as 2025.

The American Psychological Association [describes psychological safety](#) as an atmosphere in which employees can "admit and discuss mistakes, openly address problems and tough issues, seek help and feedback, trust that no one on the team is out to get them, and trust that they are a valued member of the team."

For Employees ...

While leaders at the organization can set the tone, employees can improve their own work environment, too. Our experts offer the following tips for employees.

Find your flock. If your workplace hasn't heard of psychological safety, find a group of trusted allies for support, Branson suggests. "If you don't have that within your organization, then [find it] through your professional associations or other organizations where you can get emotional and professional support."

Prioritize well-being. It's important to prioritize your own health, dignity, and well-being, according to Simms. "Sometimes that gets lost," she says. "People just focus on the work that needs to be done, and they lose themselves within the process."

Mantras can help. Having mantras that remind you of what's important is useful. "Some mantras that would help employees navigate unhealthy work environments can be: 'My worth is not measured by my exhaustion,' and 'I'm allowed to ask for clarity, for support, or for change.'"

Take a 10,000-foot view. Rosenberg says for people to thrive, rather than just survive, they need to take a step back and look at a situation from afar so they gain a better perspective. Simms adds that you should remember work stress "is not a personal failure. Sometimes when we're in that environment, we tend to personalize it, and that can make things more difficult to navigate through."

Advocate for yourself. Robichau says staff can make attempts to tactfully seek better opportunities. "There are ways of framing things in the affirmative without being negative that helps a boss not be defensive," she says. "Framing things as, 'These are the things that I feel like are going really well in my job. How can I do more of this?'"

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"If you've had some budget cuts and now have to think about how to do things differently and still meet your mission, that takes some healthy risk taking," says [Renee Branson](#), a consultant specializing in personal and workplace well-being. "Having that psychologically safe environment allows that to happen."

To create such an environment, leaders need to model the behavior they want to see, says Kratz.

"There's research on this: Companies that fail more frequently, that have more speak-up cultures, actually prevent the failure from being much bigger," Kratz says. "In the moment, it can be hard. And if leaders aren't modeling that, if managers aren't modeling that, there's no way frontline employees are going to feel comfortable doing that."

Embrace feedback.

Giving and getting feedback are practices leaders should welcome throughout the year, notes Simms.

"Create regular structured opportunities for feedback and dialog with employees and not just annual surveys," she says. "It's going to be important to give people space to share their opinions, have open dialog."

Leaders should consider asking staff how they can better support them — both as a way to create psychological safety and to assist staff in doing their best work.

January isn't about speed; it's about stability.

"One of the leadership questions I love the most is, What does support look like for you?" Kratz says. "Usually when you ask what support looks like for somebody, it's wildly different for each individual, and usually your guess is not what they want."

While leaders fear that staff might ask for something like a huge raise, the requests are often for small but important things. "It's usually very simple, like, 'I really want to know that my work matters,'" Kratz says. "Or 'I never got feedback on this project. What happened?'" When Kratz has done it with her own employees, she was asked to read their long emails — instead of replying quickly without fully taking in everything. She added that she was able to build a new email response habit within a few weeks, giving staff what they needed and improving the environment.

Robichau notes that when leaders ask staff members about the support they need, it's important to follow through and provide it.

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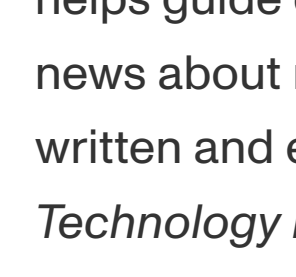
Commit to rest.

Many have just come off an extended break for the Christmas holiday, so the idea of talking about rest may seem redundant. But baking rest into plans for the year will help make the team much more productive.

"Recovery is just part of the work," Robichau says. "So if you want your team to perform, you have to set up strategies and practices that allow them to be high performers. And that means that they can't work all the time."

[Jon Rosenberg](#), author of the book *A Guide to Thriving*, says that organizations need to reframe their thinking around rest and productivity.

"We believe as a society that productivity equals value," he says. "So if I'm producing, I'm valuable. Can we challenge that in the workplace? Productivity equals value, but rest equals value, too. Because when you rest, you can produce better in the long run. Otherwise, we're exhausting the system."



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