

# Moving the Needle

## Blue Garnet's Quarterly Digest

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### In this edition...

All too often, the cart ends up before the horse when it comes to impact. Put your horse first! Put another way, it's easy to get stuck in the trees. Elevate your view to see the forest! You may have heard us mention the Impact Thinking mindset a time or two (or three, or four...). But what does it really mean? How does it create clarity and help you to be a high performing organization? How does it affect your learning and evaluation efforts? This topic has been at the forefront of our minds lately, with our recent briefing on impact thinking and Way-Ting and Jenni's new role as adjunct faculty teaching a course on the subject. We invite you to enjoy some of the resources that will guide you to high performance, with a special focus on the timely topic of impact thinking and evaluation.

### Client Spotlight

In the last few weeks of December, we wrapped up an exciting project with the Blue Shield of California Foundation. In this project, we worked with the Foundation to develop their measures of success and Impact Story Learning Report. Keep a lookout in the next few weeks for a case study featuring this meaningful work!

### Impact Thinking Briefing

Exceptional organizations practice a critical mindset we call "impact thinking." It's a longer-term, holistic view of achieving social impact, characterized by continuous learning, accountability that drives results, and strategic, dogged, and effective pursuit of intended impact. In our two-part briefing, we explain why impact thinking can be challenging and share tips for how to get "unstuck" from the status quo mindset. See how your peers rated themselves on the path to impact thinking, and let us know where you stand in this [poll](#).

[Click here to read the briefing now!](#)

### New Insights from the Sector

Here are our latest picks of publications and resources, which we hope will prompt important questions, learning, and discussion. As always, you can check out the [resources page](#) on our website for additional information and guidance.

### Opportunities

Take the Nonprofit Finance Fund's Annual State of the Nonprofit Sector Survey. Help contribute to their effort to build knowledge about the vitality of the arts and culture sector.

[Take the Survey »](#)

USC's Marshall School of Business Brittingham Social Enterprise Lab is currently accepting applications for their Master of Science in Social Entrepreneurship Program. Deadline to apply is February 15th. [Learn More »](#)

### Upcoming Events

[2/3/15 »](#) Nonprofit Finance Fund Webinar Series: A Foundational Understanding of Nonprofit Finance

[2/5/15 »](#) Center for Nonprofit Management Consultants Roundtable on developing and deepening skills and practice

[2/11/15 »](#) Stanford Social Innovation Review Webinar: The Dawn of System Leadership

[3/16-19/15 »](#) California Charter Schools Conference.

Register now to hear our very own Jenni Shen's co-presentation with Camino Nuevo. Sacramento, CA

[4/22-24/15 »](#) Social Venture Institute for Women. Vancouver, British Columbia

## Strategy

**Define Your Destination** » Instead of pursuing growth and scale for its own sake, we ask our clients to think strategically about the ends they seek. The Stanford Social Innovation Review's [What's Your Endgame](#) examines six potential "endgames," and argues that focusing on a different kind of goal can help leaders to maximize their social impact.

**Be the Strategist** » Agility is essential in a rapidly changing world. So where does that leave strategic planning, which traditionally is a rigid process? McKinsey's [Rethinking the Role of Strategist](#) examines how to address this issue, depending on your strategy leadership style.

## Performance

**Check Your Playbook** » Practicing smarter grantmaking (acting in the best interest of grantees) can make the difference between good enough and exceptional performance. Use GEO's [Smarter Grantmaking Playbook](#) to build a comprehensive plan for improving your organization's practices in grantee relationship building, supporting nonprofit resilience, learning for improvement, and collaboration.

**Motivate Through Pride-building** » Strategy& (formerly Booz & Company) recent article, [Three Secrets of Organizational Effectiveness](#), explores a new approach to creating a high-performance culture through "pride builder" employees instead of a top-down programmatic approach.

## Results

**Take a Step** » You ask your grantees to assess their impact, now use this simple tool to turn the mirror on yourself. Often philanthropies are intimidated by assessment and evaluation, but this simple tool serves as a great starting point and framework for staff and Board leaders to discuss your impact. Partnering with Southern California Grantmakers, Exponent Philanthropy has been sharing their [free 10-minute impact assessment](#) with grantmakers in our region. Stay tuned as we'll interview Hanh Le, Chief Program Officer, to hear stories of how local foundations are taking their first steps!

**Measure What Matters** » In early December, Measure of America released [A Portrait of California 2014-2015](#), a human development report that uses public data to understand well-being in the golden state. It's a must-read for policy-makers, business and nonprofit leaders, philanthropists, and anyone interested in measuring what matters.

## Highlights from our blog, *The Social Impact Geek*

Strategy matters. It matters a lot. But here's the secret that "strategy consultants" don't always tell you: strategy means nothing if you can't make it real. Read [The Un-sexy Work of Making Strategy Real](#) to learn about the importance of implementation and implementation planning.

Woody Allen once said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans." While his quote is good for a laugh, we fundamentally believe that organizations need strategic plans to achieve their audacious goals. [To Change or Not to Change \(your strategic plan, that is\)](#) is chock-full on insights into how emergent strategy works.

Read about the Blue Garnet approach to strengths-based performance in [The Inside Scoop on Strengths-Based Performance](#) from our resident expert, Giselle Timmerman! Read about why strengths really matter, and how we cultivate a focus on strengths here at Blue Garnet.

[5/20-21/15](#) » Center for Effective Philanthropy 2015 National Conference. Click [here](#) for an SCG Partner Discount. San Francisco, CA

## Save the Date

[6/2-3/15](#) » Center for Nonprofit Management 2015 501(c)onference. Los Angeles, CA

[6/10-11/15](#) » Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) Learning Conference 2015. Registration opens March 17th. Boston, MA

[6/23-25/15](#) » Social Impact Exchange 2015 Annual Conference on Scaling. New York, NY

[9/16-18/15](#) » Social Enterprise Alliance 2015 Summit. Denver, CO

## Blue Garnet News

Jenni and Way-Ting are excited to announce that they are entering the world of academia! They are teaching “Impact Thinking, Measurement and Evaluation” as adjunct faculty for Pepperdine University’s Masters program in Social Entrepreneurship and Change. So far, teaching a course on this topic everybody loves ...evaluation... has been pretty re- warding—one student even admitted that he now “doesn’t hate evaluation.” High praise! The course will feature guest lectures from prominent social entrepreneurs, such as Rick Nahmais of Food Forward, so we are looking forward to sharing more as the semester progresses!



The Blue Garnet team recently discovered that we have a knack for zombie apocalypse survival skills! At our recent team activity, we successfully escaped from being “trapped in a room with a zombie” by solving clues hidden throughout the room. We had a blast working together—we challenge you to beat our 100% survival rate and under 40 minute escape time!

### INTERESTED IN MORE?

We invite you to subscribe to our newsletter at [bluegarnet.net/newsletter-signup](http://bluegarnet.net/newsletter-signup), check out additional resources at [bluegarnet.net/resources](http://bluegarnet.net/resources), or read the latest on our blog, *the Social Impact Geek*, at [hellobluegarnet.wordpress.com](http://hellobluegarnet.wordpress.com). Subscribe and connect to hear our thoughts, musings, and exploration of the topics that matter most to our clients and to us. Read, share your comments, share with colleagues, and become a part of the conversation!

