

Boldly pause and go

Boldly pause and go where no trustee has gone before – and face up to the elephant mess in the gloom.

You're looking but you do not see.
You hear the words but you're not listening. The flavour is in the air but you do not taste.

We're all busy busy with our lives and we miss what is right next to us and all around us. We do not use our five senses for reaching out to touch whatever is there – and the more we don't notice it, the more belligerent it gets.

It doesn't go away but starts crashing around and making a mess until, one day, we notice a nasty smell. And finally we wake up to the fact that yes there is indeed an elephant in the gloom and it's demanding attention.

We have the elephant to deal with and all the mess to clear up too. Now that's no way to run a charity.

So here's an old idea: pause.

Yes I know it's not new, but when did you last pause for a while, with your fellow trustees.

Go away for a day ... or half a day or ... a couple of hours ... or even just 20 minutes in the middle of a board meeting. Give yourself a change of pace and a change of place and consciously turn on your five senses. See, listen, taste, touch ... and smell to penetrate the gloom.

Let me tell you what I've sensed and seen other trustees sense in the last couple of months, in moments of bold pausing.

- The long held dream of global expansion has been just that – and we need to get our house in order before we contemplate taking over the planet.
- We imagined that everything was OK but now our new chief executive is telling us the money side of things is looking decidedly rocky, so we have to take action in order not to crash.
- It really is time for the ten-years-in-post-and-counting chair to be asked to move on

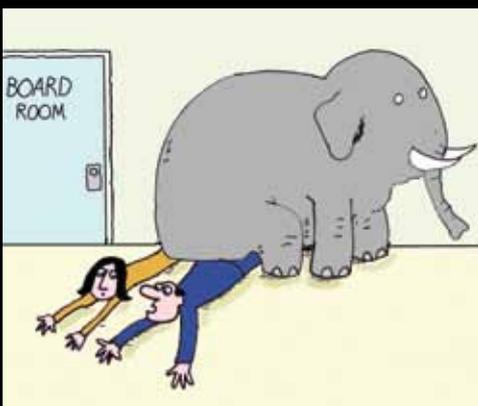
Are bells ringing? Or elephants trumpeting?
You have an uneasy feeling? Pause. Pay attention.

Interrupting what may be our personal and organisational habit of being busy busy busy may bring discomfort. Acknowledging the elephant may not be without pain. Letting go of misconceptions is unsettling.

But when we boldly pause and go where no trustee has dared to go before, we may just find that the elephant in the gloom gets smaller. Facing it and taking action brings it down to size. ●

Martin Farrell
Vice-chair, Read International
Founder and director, get2thepoint
martin.farrell@get2thepoint.org

"Did you notice it too?"



- The charity's founder is gone, but not forgotten, and is saying 'I'll be back' from afar.
- Deeply held values will come under mounting pressure from the market and it's high time to fathom what our values will really mean in practice.