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5 Books for Finding Inspiration



by **Jeannette Eaton**
FEBRUARY 6, 2018

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Here are five books to inspire you, whether you're a job seeker or you're just looking to dive deeper into your social-impact work in the new year.

Each book offers suggestions—useful for nonprofit veterans and newbies alike—on how to be more engaged and creative we push ourselves to grow and evolve in our work.

A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas, by Warren Berger

One of the many shifts marking the transition from childhood to adulthood is the decline in the number of questions we ask. As we learn to echo the ideas of our teachers, parents, peers, and bosses, we can lose our ability to keep digging deeper, and to keep asking “why?”

A More Beautiful Question explains how asking more thoughtful, nuanced questions can lead us to creative solutions for the problems we face at home, at work, and in our community.

Read *A More Beautiful Question* for interesting and accessible stories from activists, teachers, tech giants, and well-known businesses as a guide and an invitation to begin refining your questions by asking “Why?”, “What If?”, and “How?” more often.

My favorite quote from this book: “Whether we’re talking about countries, communities, families, or individuals, ‘we all live in the world our questions create.’”

The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact, by Chip Heath and Dan Heath

The Power of Moments asks us to think about the experiences and memories that stick with us as well as those that fade away, and explains why certain moments rise above the rest. It serves as a reminder that even the smallest moments can change our lives.

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By structuring the book around stories from companies, organizations, and teachers who have set out to give their customers, clients, and students more memorable moments, *The Power of Moments* challenges the assumption that things simply happen *to us*, asserting that we have more control over crafting these moments than we think.

My favorite quote from this book: “What great mentors do is add two more elements: direction and support. I have high expectations for you and I know you can meet them. So try this new challenge and if you fail, I’ll help you recover.”

The Networked Nonprofit: Connecting With Social Media to Drive Change, by Beth Kanter and Allison Fine

If you’re a nonprofit leader wary of change or reticent to embrace social media, *The Networked Nonprofit* is the book for you.

The most compelling argument in this book is that nonprofit organizations could be simplifying their work by more readily utilizing social media. Use *The Networked Nonprofit* as a guide offering concrete steps, illustrating exactly how this can be done.

Whether your organization is new to social media, or is an office of seasoned users, this is a book you can return to again and again, always finding something new and useful.

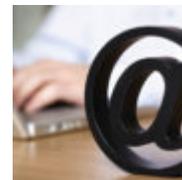
By offering screenshots of tweets, posts, and website pages, the authors use visual aids to accompany their work and end section with reflection questions to help you get the most out of the topic.

My favorite quote from this book: “We are in awe of the work that nonprofit staff, free agent activists, volunteers, donors, bloggers, and others do every day with such passion, energy, selflessness, all to help heal the world. Our aim with this book is

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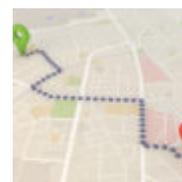
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to celebrate their efforts, build on them, and encourage hesitant nonprofit leaders to join them online.”

How To Think: A Survival Guide for a World at Odds, by Alan Jacobs

What we read, what we watch, what we listen to, and who we spend our time with all inform our thinking. In *How To Think*, Jacobs reminds us that “thinking is hard,” that most of us stop listening when we meet an idea we don’t like, and that when we stop listening, we stop thinking.

In a world where people are surrounding themselves with others who share their views, Jacobs demands we seek out things to read and people to listen to with whom we disagree. This book reminds us that the very essence of our humanity rests in our ability to recognize those on the other side of an argument as more than merely “mouthpieces of positions we want to eradicate.”

His message is ultimately one of hope; it is a reminder that we can choose to pause and thoughtfully consider how we’d like to engage.

My favorite quote from this book: “For most of us the question is whether we have even the slightest reluctance to drift along with the flow. The person who genuinely wants to think will have to develop strategies for recognizing the subtlest of social pressures, confronting the pull of the ingroup and disgust for the outgroup. The person who wants to think will have to practice patience and master fear.”

Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less, by Alex Soojung-Kim Pang

Rest examines the frenetic pace of our lives and challenges the assumption that working faster, harder, and more is the key to

success. *Rest* uses compelling research and real-life examples from well-known writers, politicians, thinkers, scientists, and innovators—all of whom discovered the value of making space for rest *and* work each day.

Rest, the author asserts, is not the same thing as not working, but is instead an active pursuit that will leave us feeling creatively and intellectually recharged. Rest can be taken in the form of naps and sleep, yes, but also through exercise, deep play, and routine.

This book invites us to imagine what our lives might be like if we thought of rest as something more than what we squeeze in when we're finished doing everything else on our list. It encourages us to consider that getting better at finding moments for rest can have a positive impact on our work, as well.

My favorite quote from this book: “Today, we treat being stressed and overworked as a badge of honor, a sign of seriousness and commitment; but this is a recent phenomenon, and it inverts traditional ideas of how leaders and professionals should behave under pressure. For most of history, leaders were supposed to appear calm and unhurried; success began with self-mastery and self-control.”

What are you reading this year? Do you have any titles to add to the list? Have you read one of these books? Let us know in the comments section!

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by **Jeannette Eaton**

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For nearly two decades, Jeannette has been working for nonprofits and helping people

identify their strengths. She has experience as an advocate for women and girls in crisis, a volunteer coordinator for adult literacy, and a family literacy instructor.

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