What challenges are our charity leaders facing?

Generating more income continues to be the top challenge for 59% of charity leaders (62% in 2017), followed by meeting demand for services (unchanged at 33%) and reduction in public/government funding (32% and 29% in 2017).

Around six in ten (59%) charity leaders think that over the next five years government will see charities as a nuisance for criticising government policy, although they do not anticipate becoming irrelevant (only 16% agree that government will see charities as irrelevant or outdated over the next five years).

Is Brexit affecting the charity landscape?

At the time of our fieldwork most charity leaders felt that Brexit would have a negative impact on their charity (63%). The debate about leaving the EU has moved fast so this reflects their attitude to the process at the time. Since the 2017 survey, there has been no change in the anticipated impact on donations; 37% of charity leaders thought there would be a decrease whilst 36% thought donations would remain the same.

A quarter (23%) of charity leaders said that Brexit had already had an impact on their charity (negative or positive). Of those, a third (33%) reported issues with staff (e.g. shortages, difficulty recruiting and retaining staff) and around a fifth reported issues such as anxiety, uncertainty and fear (19%), the ending of EU funding or projects (19%), and a decrease in donations or non-EU funding (19%).

Do charity leaders engage enough with technology?

Investing in IT remains a key priority, 87% having done so previously or planning to do so in the next 12 months (83% in 2017). Whilst 59% say that they use new technology and social media effectively, only 29% agree that charities are using new technology effectively to increase giving.

Nearly all charity leaders continue to place importance on their technology strategy, with 95% having a strategy in place for dealing with technological change, dropping to 83% of small charities.

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How can we restore public trust in the sector?

Six in ten (59%) charity leaders think that the sector has been badly impacted by recent negative media stories (unchanged since 2017), and a similar proportion (56%) are optimistic about public support for charities. A quarter (26%) believe that more success stories or media support would help rebuild public trust, and one in five (19%) think there should be more transparency in the sector.

PUBLIC TRUST

Most charity leaders think that the sector has been badly impacted by negative media coverage, and that people do not understand the importance of charities.

TECHNOLOGY

Charity leaders see technology as a double edged sword – nearly all think that technology will help them to innovate and find new ways to do good, but nearly three quarters believe that technology will change the nature of the problems that charities have to address.

GOVERNMENT

Few charities are optimistic about government support for the sector and most think that over the next five years, government will see them as a nuisance for criticising government policy.

CHALLENGES

Income generation remains the number one challenge for organisations, followed by meeting demand for services and reductions in funding. This comes at a time when over four in five charity leaders state that demand for their organisation’s services had increased over the last 12 months.

For more information about the survey method and the questions asked visit cafonline.org/charitylandscape

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