

FIELD NOTES

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Leadership Without a Map

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We must nurture our board in the same way we do major gift donors.

Transforming Your Board

“We weren’t required to fundraise when I came on the board.”

“I work the golf outing, so that’s my participation in the annual campaign.”

“I can’t fundraise. It’s a conflict of interest.”

“It’s the staff’s job to raise the money.”

Any of these sound familiar?

We have the pleasure of working with many non-profit leaders and have yet to find one who doesn’t deal with the same issues. Before you give up on your volunteers, consider the following ways in which you can transform your board member’s attitudes and abilities toward fundraising.

It seems that most boards have at least a few members who are willing to take on a fundraising role. Even if you have these leaders, you may have to spend some time nurturing their potential. **After all, if donor relationships are so important, then how can we skip the step of board member relationships?**

First, identify these board members, and ask them to work with staff members on the annual campaign. They may not create the plan, but they should contribute.

New campaign leaders may worry that not all board members have an interest in the campaign. That’s okay. It usually doesn’t happen the first year. There must be a realistic

balance between challenging the entire board to participate and keeping key players engaged and motivated. Recognize progress and success stories at all meetings and identify prospective board campaigners to work with for the next campaign.

In order to truly transform (and possibly even re-build) your board of managers, **you, as staff leaders, must commit to nurture, train and grow the interest of your board members one by one.**

Executive directors who take this approach create amazing results. Their initial volunteer leaders are more committed. The board as a whole becomes stronger and more focused on what’s important. Momentum builds. A board can transform its attitudes and pride around fundraising in two short years when the staff and board leaders work together.

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- **Don’t assume** your board members understand their role and your expectations. Explain and remind often.
- **100/20/50:** Jack Lund, CEO, YMCA of Greater New York, recommends that 100% of the board gives 20% of the campaign goal and raises 50% of the goal!
- **Challenge your board** to take on a portion of your campaign as the Board’s “project.” Focus on one specific initiative

that is important to them. For example, can the board give and get enough funds to support 500 kids in your swim programs for the coming year?

- **Recruit captains** for the board “projects” **and draft ALL board members** to teams. Whether they all participate or not, you are sending a clear message that this is now their role.
- **Discuss ways to motivate your board** with your campaign leaders. If they truly know their peers, they may have a better sense of what will inspire the team.
- **Tie your strategic plan to your fundraising efforts.** Boards get excited about new initiatives they want to achieve in the coming five years, but they often forget the resources required to achieve those initiatives. Make sure your board understands that financial support is paramount to achieve these goals, and that **staff cannot do it alone.**

Looking for additional help to transform your board? Contact us for more information on workshops and resources to help your volunteers succeed as fundraisers and as leaders!

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