



How Your Board Members Can Raise Funds without Asking for a Dime

Use these keys to unlock dollars for your organization.

BY TERRIE TEMKIN

It's that time of year again. Along with carols on the radio and extended shopping hours, it's the time when people are thinking about making their end-of-the-year donations. It is also the time when board members in nonprofit organizations are praying that they will capture their share of these philanthropic dollars.

Unfortunately, while scientists are confirming what many people already knew—that prayer is powerful—it is not the answer in this situation. The board that trusts the money to miraculously appear will more than likely find itself in the position of the farmer that, wanting milk, sat down on his stool in the middle of the field, placed his bucket at his feet, and waited for the cow to back into him.

I know, I know... most board members hate to ask people for money. But even the most fundraising-phobic board members can contribute to their organization's fund

development process. The secret is to adopt an investment philosophy in three key areas:

1 INVEST IN BOARD EDUCATION

Everyone is busy. Board members tend to be amongst the busiest of people—choosing to fit community involvement in between family, friends, work, and leisure. All too often we believe that we can't ask anything more of these gracious, giving individuals. But, when most people tackle a job, they want to do it right. How can you expect your board members to do their jobs right without the proper tools, which in this case is knowledge? You must invest in educating them about your organization and its mission.

When was the last time you took your board members behind the scenes to see the inner workings of

your organization? I'm not talking about a tour of the office, though that might be helpful in some instances. I'm suggesting that if you are a theater group you invite your board members to a rehearsal or to see how the sets are built or the lighting designed. If you work with a children's group and it doesn't conflict with confidentiality issues, take the board members to read to the children and to hear them tell their stories. Your board members will be able to speak more eloquently about what your organization does when they experience it. After all, sitting around a board table listening to reports hardly touches anyone's soul.

You say that you're stuck with the reports format? Consider how you can make those reports come alive. Take the time to put personal stories to the numbers. Draw analogies that show the impact of your figures. I stopped buying lottery tickets when I read that my chances of winning were the same as picking the "right" dollar bill off I-95 if there were dollar bills lined up end to end stretching all the way from Key West to Maine!

Help your board members create a 30-second infomercial that they can recite to everyone they meet. Remind

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Stop looking for contributors and start looking for philanthropists.

them that they never know who is ready to hear just that very message. This is *not* a fundraising pitch. This is the organization's story that they are sharing out of their own excitement about being involved. Trust me, it will lead to dollars down the road, but it's just "conversation" at this point.

2

INVEST IN STRATEGIC THINKING

Ask board members what their role entails and almost to a person they will respond with a recognition of their fiduciary responsibilities. However, most don't think about the impact of strategic thinking on those responsibilities. Yet, well-thought-out projections and conclusions, stemming from the breadth of experience on most boards, is perhaps the greatest gift board members can give.

Help board members invest time in thinking strategically about raising funds. Encourage them to consider the pros and cons of various revenue sources and to look to diversified revenue streams. Ask them to develop contingency plans in case money that is expected never comes in—or comes in at a lower number than anticipated. Spend time at a board meeting discussing how to make committed contributors out of the next generation—especially out of those expected to benefit from the potential \$137 trillion transfer of wealth that is in process. Consider how to approach more women, since they control more than 50% of the country's wealth and give to charities at a higher rate than men. Or, calcu-

late how to garner the organization's share of the \$1.5 trillion of new money generated at the turn of the century as a result of mergers and acquisitions.

This is the fun stuff. It is blue-sky thinking. Everyone can participate. And, while no one is asking for money, the organization is definitely moving forward with its fund development process.

3

ASK FOR AN INVESTMENT IN THE COMMUNITY

I can just hear you thinking, "This is all well and good, but sometime I know we're going to have to ask for money." Well, yes and no. Most of us don't like to ask for money because we feel we're begging. Or, we feel that we'll be asked to reciprocate. What if we change the focus? What if, instead of asking board members to call their friends and say, "It's that time of year again. I need to hit you up for my charity," we ask them to engage their friends and colleagues in a discussion of values? We teach them to lead people in a discussion of community issues of concern and to ask for the solutions their friends see. Finally, we teach them to sit back and listen rather than sell their own position.

People are usually forthcoming about issues that are important to them. They will provide clear cues as to how board members might guide the conversation so that instead of making a fundraising pitch, they are sharing an investment opportunity

whereby people can see their hopes and desires implemented through their own efforts. The key is to teach board members to stop looking for contributors—those people whose arms have to be twisted each year—and start looking for philanthropists. Philanthropists know what they value and want to support what they value.

With a little effort, all board members can be effective fundraisers—without ever having to *ask* for a dime in the traditional manner. All they need to do is demonstrate that contributions to your organization are an investment in the community. Think how wonderful it would be if next year at this time the money was rolling into your organization because you had set the proper tools in place. ■

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These resources are available from the Society's Resource Center, 608-274-9777, Ext. 221, www.danenet.org/snpo.

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