

NON-PROFIT Know-How

10 nonprofit management tips

Sandy Rees, CFRE, who has analyzed hundreds of fundraising successes and flops, offers these 10 pointers on what makes a nonprofit flourish:

- **Plan.** By all means, have a clear picture of where you are. But don't stop there.

Figure out where you want your organization to go in five or 10 years. Make a step-by-step plan, however tentative, for how you are going to get there.

- **Involve your bosses in fundraising.** Juniors, such as fundraising directors, are not the key to success. Bring up your heavy guns.

Your top managers and board members, who enjoy high community respect and name recognition, should sign fundraising appeals and – in the flesh – head up events.

- **Spend money to make money.** Budget your fundraising program adequately. Miracles do happen, and some non profits – but not many – score big on a shoestring budget.

Persuade your board to pony up the money you need. Many board members are not aware that stamps and paper do not come free.

- **Staff up.** “There comes a time when you simply need more hands,” Sandy Rees writes. If you don't have the money for salaries, recruit volunteers, college interns, or other community-service workers. Do not rely on board members to do vital nitty-gritty work.

- **Copy successful fundraising programs.** Subscribe to professional fundraising magazines and Internet blogs, and buy books by fundraising icons like Mal Warwick. Study what is working – or not – for other organizations. Aggressively adapt the ideas you glean to suit your offers and goals.

- **Cultivate multiple donors.** Never rely heavily on a single grant or contributor. Diversify your revenue streams. It will function as an insurance policy and stabilize your cash flow.

- **Pay attention to your contributor file.** Yes, data entry is persnickety, time-consuming, and boring. It also is key to your long-term fundraising health. It is a big – sometimes fatal – mistake to assign it casually to a junior staff member, then assume that all is well. It isn't.

“A leading cause of donor attrition is lack of communication by the non-profit.”

— Alan Sharpe

- **Make sure potential donors know about the good you do.** Advertisers bombard the average American with 4,000 to 5,000 enticing messages a day. In the same time, the news media beam more thousands of dramatic bulletins on politics, war, the weather, and sex scandals.

To let your prospective contributors know about your organization and its good work, send press releases to your local media. Better still, mail a monthly newsletter about your accomplishments to all contributors.

- **Ask people for money often.** Frame your “ask” in terms of specifically what good the money you need will let you accomplish. Do not be shy!

- **Thank your donors right away.** Send every donor to any appeal a personalized thank-you note within 48 hours – at the latest, one week – after you receive the gift. It makes the donor feel recognized and valued, and sets up a next gift.



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