



Board room

# Maximize Your Board to Support Fundraising

**Is your board helping to raise the funds you need? Create a more powerful fundraising board with these keys.**

By Veronica Meury

As organizations vie for donor dollars, many are seeking ideas to maximize their board's fundraising effectiveness. When considering a change to boost fundraising, start by asking:

- Are board meetings productive and results-oriented?
- Is attendance at board meetings where it should be? Do you have an attendance policy, and do all board members follow it?
- Are members engaged and comfortable enough to suggest new ideas?
- Do skills on the board help to meet the organization's mission and goals?
- Are all board members actively engaged in fundraising activities?
- Is the outside community effectively represented on the board?

If you answered "no" to one or more questions, it may be time to look at expanding or changing your board composition based on member skills and experience. Here are key elements to consider:

## Does Size Matter?

Board size affects how well board members share with one another and fulfill their responsibilities, but there's no one-size-fits-all formula to determine the optimal number of members. Begin by looking at your board's current size and asking if

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this number is enough to meet your fundraising objectives. What community connections do your board members have? Is everyone involved in some way with raising funds? What's the board's over-all work style and culture? How does the board communicate?

No matter how big a board is, members need to be involved in fundraising. A larger board creates more positions for different skill sets, experience, and professions. There are more people to do the work. But larger boards don't necessarily mean more capital. The smaller a board, the more opportunity for each member to be active and engaged in growing donations. Small boards can also be more flexible in scheduling meetings and setting agendas.

A good working board generally has 10 to 20 directors. If a board goes over 20 members, administrative functions become unwieldy and individual contributions may be marginalized.

## Diversity Creates Opportunities

Your board's composition is a vital element to achieve fundraising success. Is your board's structure in line with your fundraising challenges, or are there holes? Is there a balance of viewpoints? Are any critical needs unfulfilled?



Evaluate and appoint new directors based on the value they bring to the board in terms of skills and background. A diverse group opens up different perspectives and contacts with the community, which can lead to more fundraising opportunities. Seek out a variety of skills, including marketing, legal, and finance.

Cultural diversity is critical: It's an opportunity to reflect the community you serve and can open many doors. Diversity broadens the board's perspective on economic, social, and political problems and can introduce new resources to boost charitable contributions.

## Teamwork Builds Success

The successful board elects members with skills in legal matters, accounting principles, and programmatic areas, and then fosters teamwork among them. The goal is to achieve the organization's budgetary objectives by leveraging board intelligence through teamwork.

One of the executive director's primary roles is to create a team culture of mutual respect and accountability where all members understand their roles and responsibilities. Formal and informal communication is essential. Different opinions are healthy as long as everyone understands that achieving the nonprofit's

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monetary objectives requires teamwork and consensus to get the job done. At no time should staff have to act as referees among directors.

### **Relationships Find Potential**

Maximizing your board's fundraising composition is all about relationships. Never approach any potential board member cold. Start with referrals from professional contacts or individuals with expertise in the nonprofit world. What better way to know the "best fit" for your nonprofit than from people who know the board candidate personally?

### **Step Outside Your Usual Box**

When its time to add a new board member, don't eliminate candidates because there are no obvious connections between your nonprofit and their profession or company. When it comes to fundraising, sometimes adding balanced judgment and a different perspective is more important.

### **Guarantee Board Member Success**

Let board candidates know as much about your organization as possible. Make sure they're enthusiastic about your mission and vision and know what will be required of them. Offer an orientation for new board members as well as ongoing fundraising training, and be sure you have a clear attendance policy for board meetings. The clearer your expectations, the happier and more successful your board members will be, and that translates into stronger fundraising abilities. ■

*Veronica Meury is vice president and executive director of Universal Technical Institute Foundation, based in Phoenix, ([www.utifoundation.net](http://www.utifoundation.net)). She has more than 30 years' experience in the nonprofit sector.*

### **More Knowledge Means More Funds**

To boost your understanding of boards and fundraising, see these articles at [www.snpo.org/members](http://www.snpo.org/members):

- **Is There a Role for Your Board in Raising Funds?** (Vol. 23, No. 3)
- **Bring a List of Names to the Next Meeting** (Vol. 24, No. 5)
- **Defining Your Board's Needs** (Vol. 26, No. 1)
- **Tools for Improving Your Board's Diversity** (Vol. 25, No. 5)
- **Reciprocal Board Agreements: What Do Board Members Give? What Do They Receive in Return?** (Vol. 28, No. 1)

Also see Learning Institute programs online: Board Governance ([www.snpo.org/li](http://www.snpo.org/li)).

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or send a blank e-mail to:

[snpo-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:snpo-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

If you have any questions, contact Jason Chmura at [jchmura@snpo.org](mailto:jchmura@snpo.org).