

# Fundraising Mistakes We Make with Our Boards

Are you asking too much of your board – or not enough? Check to make sure you're not making any of these errors.

By Gail Perry

If your organization is like most, your board members are avoiding fundraising as much as possible. That may be because you're making some or all of the following mistakes:

## Mistake #1: Letting board members equate fundraising with “asking for money”

Many board members are confused about fundraising. They think it's asking for money. And that's what they're afraid of – the money part and the asking part. They often don't know that it's a process with multiple activities – things we do every single day, over and over:

- **identifying** potential donors
- **cultivating and involving** them in our cause
- **finding ways** to thank donors and foster long-term relationships.

Help your board members understand that fundraising is much, much more than asking people for donations. It's building and keeping friendships.

## Mistake #2: Asking trustees to make “cold” or “cool” calls

Cool and cold calls are the worst possible place to use the energy and good will of your kind-hearted board members. Why? Because cold – and cool – calls have the highest rate of failure.

If you ask trustees to make fundraising visits with a low likelihood of succeeding, you'll set them up for rejection – one of the things they fear most. Send them out to make visits that are already set up for success.

## Mistake #3: Expecting too many calls at too low a dollar level

Yes, we do want board members to help solicit. But don't ask them to spend too much of their valuable time on smaller gifts.

Ask your board members to make only a few calls – at higher dollar levels. Point them to the most important, visible, high-potential prospects.

Focus them where they can do the most good: fewer calls at much higher dollar levels. Make the most of the limited time they have available.

## Mistake #4: Focusing on emergency fundraising rather than long-term relationships

All too often it takes a crisis to mobilize our board members. And when we concentrate on the crisis, something deteriorates. The conversation does become all about money rather than about the great work the organization is doing for community good.

Don't ask board members to help pull in money quickly to respond to a budget shortfall or cover some major financial loss. Involve them in friendmaking and fundraising projects before the urgency hits.

## Mistake #5: Not giving board members the proper training, structure, coaching, and support

Don't challenge your board members to perform without giving them a terrific education. Provide thorough training to correct their misconceptions about fundraising. Give them clear goals, inspiration, and first-rate support from staff. They will appreciate your help!



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## Fundraising with Your Board

Probe the intricacies of board fundraising by checking out these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

**How Your Board Members Can Raise Funds without Asking for a Dime** (Vol. 19, No. 6)

**Board and Staff Consensus: A Powerful Fundraising Tool** (Vol. 15, No. 1)

**Is There a Role for Your Board in Raising Funds?** (Vol. 23, No. 3)

**Why You Need a Prenuptial Agreement** (Vol. 13, No. 1)

**Getting Comfortable with the F Word: Fundraising & the Nonprofit Board Member** (Vol. 20, No. 4)