


Everything You Might Ever Want to Know about Raising Funds

There are so many aspects to fundraising that it's difficult to include them all in one book. Fundraisers must align the mission and needs of beneficiaries with the interests of donors, which are themselves varied and segmented. The editors of *The Fundraising Reader* (taylorandfrancis.com) have managed to abridge all these many subjects into a mere 590 pages.

The editors use extracts from 87 written works of many fundraising experts to give attention to wide-ranging topics in fundraising, beginning by explaining what fundraising is, how it adapts to the economic system, and the importance of balancing donor-centric approaches (typically strongly transactional) with transformational relationships (necessarily longer-term). Why fundraising requires planning, strategizing, and building a case for support is well covered. The authors go on to provide information on foundations, major gifts, corporate support, special events, and peer-to-peer appeals, which engage people through strategic interaction.

Fundraising has challenges and rewards. The authors explain what fundraisers do, how they do it, and why more people should consider the practice. They explore the challenges of diversity, fundraisers' social and legal constraints, and the ethical use of technology.

After all the readings about fundraising's history and its effects on today's practices, the authors look at the future of fundraising. Then the editors use scenario planning to project where the fundraising field might be in 20 years or so.

The Fundraising Reader is a fascinating consideration of fundraising, and there's plenty in the book to interest anyone involved in the field. Refer to any topic of interest, because this is a solid reference to help you explore almost any fundraising issue. 

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

Do Away with Harmful Stress & Burnout

Stress is inevitable, but it needn't cause destructive anxiety and burnout. *Banish Burnout* and *The Banish Burnout Toolkit* (apagebeyond.com) give you simple, valuable exercises to help you avoid burnout. Some examples:

Take a walk at lunchtime or around 3:00 p.m. Scientists say that sunlight improves communication between the regions of the brain that help handle emotions such as stress and anxiety.


Every Monday, make one healthy eating improvement (such as having your coffee without sugary syrup, drinking water rather than soda, or skipping the french fries at lunch). Mondays are the best day because you're freshest the first day of the work week.

Eliminate "should" from your vocabulary. "Should" statements are stressful expectations you're putting on yourself. Instead of "I should be able to finish my work in eight hours," for instance, tell yourself, "I would prefer it if I could manage my time better. I'm going to set this as a goal and write

“Monday is the best day for self-improvement.”

out a schedule every day so I'll get the most important things done.”

Increase your physical activity level by simply moving more throughout the day. Some ideas: Stand when in a Zoom meeting. Park far away from your building's entrance. Take the stairs rather than elevators. Walk around your office while on the phone.

Find a coach or mentor – someone to listen to you, offer suggestions, and give you encouragement. Be sure you choose someone with a positive attitude who will provide supportive feedback. 

Are Your Leaders Receiving the Training They Need?

Are you doing all you can to develop future leaders? Leadership coach Brendan Keegan says there are two big leadership-development areas you need to focus on:

Recognize the workplace values of the newest generation as you develop them to be future leaders.

Commit to offering ongoing leadership development to new and current employees.


“This second piece seems like common sense, right? And yet, the offering of leadership training is on the decline,” says Keegan.

Fewer than 50% of leaders have received leadership skills training, according to DDI's Leadership Transitions Report (ddi.com). This report examines responses from 2,102 human resource executives and 15,787 leaders around the world to understand how leaders of all levels navigate their transition to leadership. Here are a few of the data points in the report:

Men are 13% more likely to receive leadership skills training than women.

Success rates for executives hired internally are 25% higher than external hires.

Stressful transitions have a long-term impact, with 45% of leaders who had stressful transitions rating themselves as average or below average leaders compared to their peers.

You may not realize how much people are struggling as they transition to a leadership role, notes DDI's Stephanie Neal. It's natural for new leaders to do all they can to make a good impression so they may “push through difficulty with a smile, hoping no one notices how they're falling behind.” 

“Fewer than 50% of leaders have received leadership skills training.”

Questions about Creativity in the New World of Work

In today's workplace, going it alone doesn't cut it, says Steven Kowalski, and it's crucial to work with others to find innovative solutions. Co-creating is the best way to generate sustainable value, he tells us in *Creative Together* (pagetwo.com). At the end of each chapter, he suggests taking time to reflect on questions, such as these:

What is the core question at the heart of your organization's journey?

How can you reframe your mistakes as opportunities to create something new? What if you gave yourself permission to fail and learn?

What would need to be true so that "seeking credit" is no longer an obstacle to collaboration?

How is creativity showing up in your life?

What would it take for you to leave the comfort of the familiar and go into the depths of the unknown?

How can you widen your circle and invite others into your process? What would you have to let go of? Stop doing? Start doing?

What is changing in your work that's calling for a different future?

Do your personal values align with the core values of your organization?

What if you stopped aiming for perfection? What if you knew in advance that you would lose your way – and talked about how you would work together when that happened?

How would you describe the balance between your life and work?

What can you do today to stretch yourself beyond what feels comfortable and safe? 

“What can you do today to stretch yourself?”

New Data on How Nonprofits Are Transforming Their Organizations

A new survey by BDO ("Nonprofit Standards Benchmarking Report," bdo.com) provides insights into how nonprofits view their financial outlooks and the changes they're making at this critical juncture. Key findings include:

Nonprofits are rethinking their missions as they chart a course forward: 56% of nonprofit executives say they have shifted or expanded the scope of their mission in the past 12 months to meet the new needs of the populations they serve.

Nonprofits are investing in technology, even as budgets are tight: 59% of nonprofits surveyed say they are increasing their investments in technology. The right donor technology can help nonprofits improve donor targeting.

“Nonprofits are pivoting from survival to resilience.”

Reducing costs is a top priority: 38% of nonprofits say one of their top three priorities for the next 12 months is to reduce costs.

Nonprofits are making strategic changes: 47% are pursuing operational efficiencies; 45% are increasing fundraising and donor relations; 36% are seeking new sources of funding; and 59% are entering into partnerships. 

Get Beyond Stupid Or Evil

When you give contradictory evidence to people with strongly held views, studies show, you solidify their beliefs rather than change their minds. We see this borne out in the political realm: Republicans accuse Democrats of being hopelessly naive for doling out money to those who are less fortunate, while Democrats see Republicans as ruthless for caring more about money than people. Dispensing facts and statistics only makes each side dig in further. And we get nowhere when we dismiss a group of people as stupid or evil.


We need to stop listening only to those with views like ours, as Jennifer Riel and Roger Martin warn us in *Creating Great Choices: A Leader's Guide to Integrative Thinking* (Harvard Business Review Press, hbr.org). Executives too often rely on advice from those who share their beliefs, which can hurt their organizations, especially in times of trouble. The more that leaders seek help from others like them, the less likely they are to seek creative strategies that might save their failing organizations, Riel and Martin explain. Simply asking people to have a productive dialogue isn't enough, they say. You need to take specific steps, which they outline in their illuminating book:

Choose a problem you need to solve. Be sure everyone on the team has a shared understanding of the problem and a commitment to solving it.

Identify two extreme, opposing solutions to the problem. Seeing a problem as a two-sided choice is a powerful way to provide momentum toward a solution.

Describe the two opposing ideas in detail. Get clear about what each idea is and what it isn't.

Lay out the benefits of both ideas. Make an exhaustive list of all their positive aspects. Don't consider the drawbacks; doing so will bog down discussion and may cause you to abandon one of the ideas too quickly.

Combine positive elements from both ideas to imagine a whole new approach to solving the problem or, as the authors frame it, to create a great new choice. 

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Soft Skills for Hard Conversations

In her clever, immensely helpful book, *Talking on Eggshells* (newworldlibrary.com), Sam Horn promises to share “soft skills for hard conversations,” and she delivers admirably.


When you “talk on eggshells,” you’re constantly on edge, worrying you’ll say the wrong thing, she explains. Instead, you must learn to handle every conversation with diplomacy, maturity, and accountability. Horn’s knack for using words in ingenious ways makes her book fun to read as well as practical and informative. Here’s a bit of her wise counsel:

Set an example of proactive grace. When someone is being impossible, make the effort to set an example of integrity, empathy, and goodwill, even if people don’t appreciate it or return the favor, Horn urges. When people’s attitudes make you feel impatient, ask yourself, “What could they be going through that makes them act this way? How would I feel if I were in their shoes?” Being kind rather than disdainful is always the best option.

Share how you feel, not how they should feel. Use “I” and “we” rather than “you” words. Avoid the word “should.” Rather than “You should have checked this over more carefully,” try something like, “I feel disappointed that we’ll have to redo work we’ve already done” or “I want us to work together to keep this from happening again.”

Use bridging words. Another word to avoid is “but.” It creates an adversarial tone. Instead of saying “I know this failed before, but . . .,” say “You’re right, this didn’t work before and now we know what went wrong so we can prevent it from happening this time.” *And* can work magic, as when you say, “I know you’re busy, *and* I promise to take only 10 minutes.” People will be thrilled.

Practice the art of “tongue glue.” If someone does something inappropriate, don’t leap in and say what’s on the tip of your tongue. Practicing tongue glue means stopping and asking yourself if you’ll be sorry later if you say something in the heat of the moment. The key is to be “mindful instead of myopic,” Horn says.

Choose to be amused. Humor can save you from almost any situation. Even if someone is being difficult or harsh, you can find a way to handle it with humor. Laughter changes moods, lightens the atmosphere, and makes everyone feel better. As Horn says, “Laughability is likability.” 

Break Out of Your Echo Chamber

What is critical thinking? Perhaps the best way to define it, according to Tom Chatfield in *Critical Thinking* (sagepub.com) is “the opposite of uncritical thinking.” At one time or another, we’re all guilty of uncritical thinking – believing what we’re told without considering whether it’s true, for example, or making decisions without sufficient thought.

You’re less likely to make such mistakes after reading this comprehensive, indispensable workbook. Brimming with checklists and self-assessments, the guidebook describes each element of critical thinking and how to make use of it. Along the way, you’ll learn many helpful approaches to solving

“Look for contradictions to each of your opinions.”

problems, making decisions, and sorting good information from bad. A brief sampling:

Judge your strategies, not your results. You don’t want to repeat a bad strategy, even if it happened to work out okay. And you do want to give a good strategy another chance, even if the outcome wasn’t what you wanted.

If in doubt, wait. Put aside troubling problems, and revisit them later, after time has given you a broader perspective.

Beware sunk costs. Don’t go ahead with something just because you’ve put a lot of time into it. Sometimes the best course is to cut your losses and head down a new path.

Use social media to connect with people and sources with perspectives different from your own. Use a variety of search engines and platforms; don’t rely on just a few favorites.

Pull, don’t push. Aim to “pull” notifications (checking texts, social media, calls, and e-mails when it suits you) rather than letting them “push” you (having them arrive in the background of whatever you’re doing). Don’t let constant interruptions disturb your focus and cloud your thinking.

Seek refutation over confirmation. Look for contradictions to each of your opinions and options. Put your arguments and beliefs to a genuine test. 

Insights into Nonprofits’ Use of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the way most nonprofits lead their organizations. A new survey by NonprofitHR (nonprofithr.com) finds the following:

57% of respondents believe AI will impact their hiring in the next one to three years. In addition, 55% expect that AI will lower the number of gig workers.

82% say that AI will require workers to have more complex skills.

82% anticipate doing more experimentation as a result of AI.

80% plan to develop a strategic plan using AI.

The most common HR uses of generative AI are creating presentations, writing job descriptions, composing social-media posts, and drafting organizational policy.


“Understanding and leveraging AI isn’t just a good idea, it’s imperative,” concludes Lisa Brown Alexander, founder and CEO of Nonprofit HR.

Another study focuses on nonprofits’ use of AI to generate SEO content (online content designed to rank in search engines like Google). “We never use AI to fully generate SEO content,” says Rafi Norberg (rafinorberg@nexusmarketing.com), president of the Nexus Marketing Agency. Why? There’s a risk of jeopardizing partner relationships, and human-written content is more original and user-friendly than AI-written content.

However, Norberg adds, there are ways to use this tool without negative consequences. Examples include:

- **generating** content outlines
- **brainstorming** call-to-action language

- **proofreading** and refining written content to correct grammatical mistakes, tighten the language, and improve clarity
- **optimizing** for featured snippets (highlighted excerpts of text that appear at the top of a Google search-results page and that appear when people search on keywords).

When it comes to search engine optimization, content is key. Creating content “for humans, by humans” keeps nonprofits’ priorities at the center, says Norberg. 

Have a Nice Conflict

When conflict erupts – as it inevitably will – don’t jump to stamp it out. Conflict can be a chance to resolve long-standing issues and help people be more productive. The secret is learning to have “nicer conflicts,” says Tim Scudder, CEO of Personal Strengths USA and co-author of *Have a Nice Conflict* (haveaniceconflict.com). To make conflicts positive and productive, you need to understand these five keys.


1. Anticipate. Anticipating conflict starts with knowing who you’re dealing with. Ask yourself how various people might view the same situation. When two or more people see things differently, there’s always the potential for conflict. If you understand people’s divergent views, you have a good shot at steering clear of conflict’s destructive aspects and moving toward a “nicer” conflict – one that empowers and inspires people rather than leaving them simmering and upset.

2. Prevent. Preventing conflict is about the deliberate use of behavior in relationships. A well-chosen behavior can prevent conflict with another person. But you need to prevent conflict in yourself sometimes too, and that might have more to do with choosing your perceptions than choosing your behaviors.

3. Identify. There are three basic approaches in conflict: rising to the challenge, cautiously withdrawing, or trying to keep the peace. When you can identify these approaches in yourself and others, you’ll handle the situation more productively.

4. Manage. Conflict has three management components: managing yourself, managing the relationship, and helping others manage themselves out of the emotional state of conflict. Managing conflict can be as easy as giving yourself and others time to see things differently.

5. Resolve. To move people to resolution, show them a path back to feeling good about themselves. When they feel good about themselves, they’re less likely to feel threatened and are free to move toward a compromise and resolution.

“Unresolved or poorly managed conflict costs organizations in ways they can’t even calculate,” Scudder says. “Lost institutional memory, low productivity, bad morale, and high turnover all cost real time and money. On the other hand, well-managed conflict can not only prevent all those losses, but it can also promote higher productivity. So, the end result will not only be fewer conflicts, but also nicer ones with positive results.” 

“Well-managed conflict can promote higher productivity.”

“These shared strategies can change everything.”


Collaborate to Generate Real Change

Most issues that nonprofit organizations work on are part of larger, systemic concerns. It can get frustrating to feel that these chronic problems keep us from making much progress in our own efforts. We may feel stuck in processes and routine activities that, while offering some relief, demonstrate little or no impact on fundamental issues.

Challenging intractable concerns requires collaborating among all community stakeholders. Paul Born, in *Breakthrough Community Change: A Guide to Creating Common Agendas that Change Everything* (bkconnection.com) suggests how working together can achieve change that addresses root problems impacting our organizations.

The first part of his book identifies a community’s readiness for change and provides guidance to finding shared goals. To build a common agenda as a community, we need to bring the knowledge and skills of people and organizations together and invite those with lived experience to help us learn, adapt, and measure progress.

Paul Born suggests a step-by-step community-organizing approach that acknowledges the uniqueness of each community. Part II of the book describes strategies to help organize the work. The most effective methods have an evolving awareness of how communities function, how politics works, and how people become engaged. The techniques – asset-based community development, community engagement, social innovation, collaborative leadership, and evaluation – can and often do overlap. Each of these methods is briefly and usefully described.

Born builds upon observations of his own organization’s experience to address how to get started resolving the struggles – such as poverty, racism, sexism, and global warming – that have an impact on us all. This guidance comes from thousands of people who have achieved breakthroughs by learning and acting together. *Breakthrough Community Change* offers paths for those who want to share knowledge, experiences, skills, and activities to build more livable communities and healthier lives for all. 



–reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

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Beyond the Briefs

To explore issues raised in these briefs in more detail, take a look at these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

How to Coach People through Stress: Use Reflective Inquiry for Best Results (Vol. 38, No. 4)

Are You Using These Drivers of Fundraising Success? (Vol. 40, No. 3)

Spark New Ideas throughout Your Organization (Vol. 39, No. 2)

Study Shows Gaps in Nonprofit Management – and Ways to Improve (Vol. 19, No. 9)

Can We Call a Truce? Tips for Negotiating Workplace Conflicts (Vol. 27, No. 6)

A Path to Stronger Programs, Greater Engagement, and Less Burnout? (Vol. 36, No. 1)

Find Ways to Innovate – But First Move Past Inertia (Vol. 40, No. 1)

The High Cost of Employee Turnover (Vol. 31, No. 3)

Unlocking the Power of Soft Skills: The Missing Basic in Today's Workforce (Vol. 38, No. 3)

Are You Risking Legal Action because of Discrimination? (Vol. 38, No. 4)

Embrace Mindfulness as a Leadership Practice (Vol. 36, No. 2)

The Perils of Problem-Solving – & How to Dodge Them (Vol. 40, No. 1)

Manage for Today, Mentor for Tomorrow (Vol. 23, No. 5)

Six Ways to Get Out of a Rut (Vol. 24, No. 4)

The Overwhelmed Office: Six Fixes for the Stressed-Out, Productivity-Challenged Workplace (Vol. 28, No. 4)

Can You Lobby for a Cause You Believe in? (Vol. 36, No. 2)

Top 10 Things to Understand about How Fundraising Really Works Today (Vol. 39, No. 4)

Why You Absolutely Must Train Millennials (Vol. 37, No. 3)

How to Make Your Training Stick (Vol. 39, No. 4)

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