



# Is There a Role for Your Board in Raising Funds?

By Doug Eadie

Follow these rules to be sure.

Ensuring that your organization is financially secure and can meet its service commitments is a classic board responsibility. No one would question that paying close attention to your organization's revenues is a valid role that your board should play.

Less clear, however, and the subject of much debate, is how involved your board should be in actually generating revenues, beyond the traditional governing role of setting targets and monitoring revenue flows. At the local level, it's often taken for granted that board service — especially in arts organizations such as museums, orchestras, and theaters — includes playing a hands-on role in bringing in money. This means not only button-holing potential contributors, but also making presentations to funders, and even writing checks.

Direct involvement in raising money has never been a traditional governing role. Severe financial pressures and the need to diversify revenue bases, however, have brought the issue to the forefront.

## Two Simple Rules

Many successful boards accomplish high-impact governing while also involving board members in such non-governing work as raising money by following two simple rules:

### 1. Make certain that governing is the top priority.

Governing comes first — period. No non-governing work should be allowed to dilute or compromise the work of governing. In practice, this means that the bulk of board members' time (85-90%) should be allocated to governing work. In the area of raising money, this means your board must pay attention to



true governing decisions before any hands-on involvement. Examples of such governing decisions in the fundraising area include the following:

- Set revenue targets by major source.
- Identify major new funding sources.
- Lay the professional foundation for fundraising (and for board involvement) by ensuring that an appropriate investment is made in the fundraising function (for example, creating the position of development officer).

### 2. Be sure that the non-governing work is truly high-level and a close fit with the board.

Fundraising is a complex field, involving well-trained professionals in such demanding tasks as researching funding sources, developing complex legal mechanisms (such as endowment funds), writing grant applications, and the like. The professional fundraising job can't possibly be handled by part-time volunteers serving on your board. What board members can do, very selectively, are the following:

- Help identify potential funding sources, drawing on their far-flung contacts.

- Lobby particular funding sources.
- Lend stature and influence to presentations. ■

## Resources

Fletcher, Kathleen Brown, "Increase Your Board's Fundraising," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 5, No. 3.

Ladner, Susan & Susan Zimny, "Fundraising with Your Board," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 13, No. 5.

Temkin, Terrie, "How Your Board Members Can Raise Funds without Asking for a Dime," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 19, No. 6.

Vartorella, William, "Board and Staff Consensus: A Powerful Fundraising Tool," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 15, No. 1.

*These resources are available from the Society's Resource Center at [www.snpo.org/articles](http://www.snpo.org/articles).*



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