



We've all been through the usually futile exercise of asking board members to bring to the next meeting a list of people they'll solicit. It's no surprise there is seldom a quorum at that meeting!

Most board members just don't like to ask their friends and co-workers for money. But, board members must understand these basic responsibilities:

- **The board's key role** is ensuring the success of the organization's mission. This means identifying and developing resources to meet the mission.
- **Board members are personally responsible** for their organization's financial performance and must take an active role in ensuring it.
- **Board members who actively participate in resource development** give credibility to the organization's fundraising efforts.
- **Board members are expected to set the example for others** by making an individual and/or professional contribution every year.

Is resource development a critical role of the board? Yes! So how can a nonprofit make it easier and more rewarding for board members to become resource developers?

Start at the Beginning

If board members are recruited without a clear set of expectations and a written job description that details giving and getting requirements, is it any wonder they're surprised and even resentful when asked to raise money? Don't be afraid to set out specific expectations for individual fundraising when you recruit new members to the board.

Use a written job description, and hold orientation for new members, explaining their role in raising funds. Give some basic fundraising training to help them get over the fear and discomfort of asking for money. Discuss the many ways they can support your organization's fundraising efforts.

Bring a List of Names to the Next Meeting

By Jean Block

Here's a foolproof way to get your board to raise funds for your organization.

Build an Effective Development Committee

Be sure the development committee is chaired by a board member who can motivate and inspire others on the board. Consider adding non-board members to the development committee so that you can involve others with fundraising expertise and energy.

Begin the development committee's work by analyzing what's being done currently, how effective current efforts are, and what's needed for the short and long term. Perform a cost/benefit analysis on current fundraising efforts. It's easy. Put two columns on the flip chart: Cost and Benefit. List the direct costs and net profit of every current effort. But don't stop there. Include in the Cost column such things as Time and Leveraging. Include in the Benefits column such things as PR, Fun, and Education.

Build a development plan that takes into account a diversity of fundraising methods: grants from foundations and corporations, corporate sponsorships, underwriting and advertising, individual gifts, annual campaign, direct mail, major gifts, planned giving, endowment, in-kind support, federated campaigns (such as United Way), special events, appeals to community organizations and churches, capital campaign (if required), and other opportunities.

A diverse development plan is essential to sustain your organization. It also gives board members a choice of ways to contribute.

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Ways Board Members Can Get Involved

So, you now have a diverse development plan and are ready to promote the development opportunities to your board. What are some ways board members can get involved? Just as a beginning exercise, consider the following menu of opportunities for your board.

Source: Grants from Foundations and Corporations

What Board Members Can Do:

- Research their own company's giving programs.
- Research other companies' giving programs.
- Provide testimonials, and sign cover letters.

Source: Annual Campaign, Direct Mail Campaign

What Board Members Can Do:

- Provide testimonials to include in the fundraising letter.
- Write personal appeal letters to names in their rolodex (and be willing to follow up).
- Make thank-you calls to donors.
- Make fundraising calls to donors and prospects.
- Host an event at their home or office.
- Underwrite the cost of the campaign (printing, postage, etc.)

Source: Major Gifts Campaign

What Board Members Can Do:

- Open doors for other board members and staff.
- Make a personal gift, and ask others to match it.
- Accompany staff on fundraising calls.

Source: Underwriting, Sponsorships, In-Kind Donations

What Board Members Can Do:

- Write proposals.

- Ask for sponsorships and underwriting.
- Solicit in-kind contributions of goods and services from their own and other businesses.

Source: Special Event

What Board Members Can Do:

- Plan it! Organize it! Serve on the committee!
- Sell tickets. Buy tickets.
- Solicit auction items or other items needed for the event.

Source: Deferred Giving, Planned Giving

What Board Members Can Do:

- Make their own deferred gifts.
- Serve on the Planned Giving Committee, and solicit planned gifts.

You cannot ask others to do what you have not done.

Common Obstacles to Board Involvement in Fundraising and How to Address Them

Obstacle: "What, I have to raise money? Nobody told me that! I thought all I had to do was make decisions and go to board meetings."

Solution: Recruit more effectively, using a job description that clearly spells out what's required.

Obstacle: Board members hate to ask their friends for money.

Solution: Discuss other ways to raise money for your organization, such as recruiting sponsorships, working at special events, writing letters, and so on.

Obstacle: Board members are afraid of being turned down when they ask for money.

Solution: Practice, practice, practice, using marketing techniques.

Obstacle: "I give my time, isn't that enough?"

Make it easy for board members to succeed.

Answer: No, it isn't enough. How can we ask the community to support us with contributions if the board hasn't set the example of 100% giving itself?

Obstacle: Board members don't know how to ask.

Solution: Provide training. Help them understand that people give money to opportunities, not to needs; people give to success, not to distress. Make it easy for board members to succeed.

Celebrate, Celebrate, Celebrate!

If board members are going to get involved in fundraising opportunities, they need to feel successful in their efforts, so find ways to celebrate even the smallest achievements. Ask the development committee to include celebrations and rewards at every board meeting. Keep the positive energy and enthusiasm flowing, and make resource development a highlight of meetings, rather than a "have to do" discussion.

Final Thought

Board members must understand that it's their responsibility to lead by example. All board members must make an annual financial commitment to your organization, or they have no right to go to the community to ask for support. It's that simple — and that important. You cannot ask others to do what you have not done. ■

Jean Block is a national speaker and trainer on nonprofit management, fundraising, and board development. She has published Fast Fundraising Facts for Fame & Fortune and The ABCs of Building Better Boards. Visit her Web sites at www.jblockinc.com and www.nonprofits.com to learn more or to order copies of her books.