

## **How to Get Your Board to Step Up to the Plate in Fundraising**

It is a common problem. Board members are reluctant to accept their responsibility to give and to solicit gifts for the nonprofit they serve.

Sometimes, the problem originates with the development staff. Perhaps they assume too much. Do the board members really understand the mission? Can they articulate it? Were board members properly informed about fundraising responsibilities when they were asked to serve on the board? Are they aware of the "realities" of fundraising? You might want to consider including a dynamic little book in your orientation package for your board members. Emerson & Church's *Fund Raising Realities Every board Member Must Face: A 1-Hour Crash course on Raising Major Gifts for Nonprofit Organizations* by David Lansdowne is a quick read at 112 pages, and will help board members or prospective members understand and face the facts of fundraising.

The book covers the responsibilities of each board member to both give and to solicit gifts. Lansdowne makes it clear that fundraising is "inside out." That is, the burden begins with the board, staff, and volunteers. Only when these supporters have put their money where their mouth is will other potential givers have the confidence to give to the organization. A reasonable goal is for "insiders" to provide up to 20 percent of the final goal of a campaign.

The fact is that board members, unless they are very experienced with nonprofits, probably do not know these basic facts:

- Almost everyone is uneasy about asking for money. The ones who make it look easy have come to grips with the need to do so and who have prepared.
- That gifts come primarily from individuals. Of the billions that are donated to charity annually, some 85 percent comes from individuals...not foundations or corporations.
- That raising money takes money. Starting a fundraising campaign requires staff, materials, postage, perhaps a consultant, or a market survey.
- That a small number of donors contribute the most money. Professionals know this as the 90/10 rule. Ninety percent of the money from gifts will be from only 10 percent of donors.

- That there is a way of charting gifts to ensure that you have the appropriate number of prospects in each category of giving from small gifts to large ones. The [gift chart](#) or table is essential and it works.
- That publicity will not raise gifts and that individual solicitation is unavoidable.
- How a fundraising campaign is structured and run.
- What a case statement is and what to expect from it.
- Why understanding and being able to articulate the organization's mission is so important.
- How to research, rate and cultivate potential donors.

In other words, this little book provides answers to the questions that board members will likely have about fundraising...and answers to questions they have not even thought of yet.

So often, board members and volunteers suffer anxiety about fundraising because they do not grasp the whole picture, understand how the entire process works, and how they will be supported and helped by the staff and the campaign's leaders.

Educating and preparing your board may be the most important task you perform when you begin