



No Virginia, Development Directors Don't Do ALL the Work

Hello my fellow nonprofit superheroes! Today, let's take a very brief quiz.

There's just one question.

Please read the following statements and put a mental check mark next to any you've heard somebody say. If you've heard something close, that counts too.

___ Board member: "We finally have a development person! Wonderful! Now they can stop hounding me for money!"

___ Board recruiter to prospective board member: "Yes, technically there is a fundraising obligation, but don't sweat it. We have an awesome development person."

___ Development Committee Chair: "Our primary role is to monitor the fundraising efforts of the staff to make sure we hit our goals."

___ Lead Program Officer: "My development director wants me to go out on an ask? Doesn't she know how busy I am???"

___ Executive Director: "I don't get it. Why is my new development manager always at her desk? Shouldn't she be out asking for money?"

Ok, quiz time is over. Just the one question. I meant it.

So how many check marks did you make? More than one?

If you checked any of them at all, you have some rather unreasonable expectations for your development directors and I have a few important thoughts to share with you.

THE MYTH AT THE CORE OF THIS QUIZ

There is a myth that underpins all of the responses above. Did you figure it out?

It's actually pretty simple and yet seemingly counterintuitive.

Ready?

Myth: A development staff member reduces the amount of fundraising work everyone else needs to do.

Not only is this not the case, it's actually the opposite. A development staff member creates more work, not less.

WHY WOULD A NEW DEVELOPMENT STAFFER CREATE MORE WORK?

Let's use another sport. I often talk about a development director as a quarterback. So let's use football.

The Executive Director is kinda like the head coach, but there is no team without a quarterback. Well there might be, but it would be a lousy team.

So the development director is the quarterback and works together on the plays with the E.D.. They think about what the team needs to succeed.

- The right equipment
- Time to study the playbook
- Time to learn the skinny on the opposing team
- Rigorous exercise
- LOTS of practice

Without an investment in all of that, you can have the best coach and quarterback in the league, but there will be no winning.

A new development staff member is a gift, but a great one will put you through your paces. She is building a winning team. She has to!

10 REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS FOR BRAND NEW DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORS

1. New development directors should conduct a one-on-one conversation with each board member to discuss personal giving. About how this board member might expand the network of people who would benefit from knowing and doing more for your organization.
2. Your development director will need time to build or tune up the engine – clean up the database, gather data about current donors and potential, lapsed donors. This may mean she will be at her desk quite a bit in the early days. There is clean up, intel to gather, and a plan to create.
3. Your development director will reach out to introduce herself to all your significant stakeholders and there are going to be times when she would like you to join so that these folks get to know and respect board members and appreciate the enthusiasm and passion of the group.
4. Your development director should introduce herself at the first board meeting and talk about why she wanted to increase the resources of your organization. She should be clear, passionate, and dripping with enthusiasm. This enthusiasm should be contagious.
5. The E.D. should be ready to be busier stewarding and asking than ever before. This is yet another important partnership in the organization. The new development staffer should ask for blocks of time to be held on the calendar in the upcoming month that she can fill with meetings. Updates, renewals, stewardship, asks.
6. Board members should get ready to be stewards. This new development director should provide each board member with a list of “clients” (donors / volunteers / stakeholders) to reach out to and cultivate throughout the year).
7. Board and staff can expect to learn how to tell a five-star story about your organization so that you can all be enthusiastic ambassadors talking about the remarkable work of your organization at every opportunity.
8. There should be substantive time (rather than some or none) on every board meeting agenda to talk about development. And I'm not talking about a 'report-out' with slides of where you are year-to-date and then a list of all the things board members need to do / haven't done / have no interest in doing / had no idea they signed up to do.
9. Development time on the agenda should include time for professional development like storytelling training, contending with objection questions, etc. AND time to strategize and brainstorm on topics like: 1) how might we diversify revenue 2) what could a pitch to a corporate sponsor look like 3) now that we didn't have a gala because of COVID, do we need one next year?
10. Your board recruitment process will change. You will stop telling prospects: Don't worry; we have a development staffer. You will start embracing the role of ambassadorship with prospects. Think something like, “We have a wonderful development staffer/team and we all get that we are leaders and ambassadors. I am not wealthy, I don't know wealthy people, but I have

learned how to talk about the organization. I know how to work a room. I share successes on social media and our staff has set me up to build relationships with current donors. I might even renew a few of them at year end!”

New development directors should feel like a coach, a champion, and a quarterback. I know they are different roles, but this person should take time to make sure the development engine is functioning well, should ensure that the board has the tools it needs to feel a sense of enthusiasm about talking to folks about the organization, and should have a voice in development strategy to ensure that your revenue is diverse and sustainable.

I think they call that building a culture of philanthropy.

And please stay safe.

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