

Development Boards: 15 strategies to make the gain worth more than the pain

This download relates to a session delivered by =mc's consultant, Angela Cluff, at the IoF National Convention 2007.

1. What's the money for? – the 70% case for support

Writing your organisation's case for support can become an industry, taking months of intensive work as internal stakeholders refine the arguments and refine them again. It's *not* necessary! What you need to do is create a short document that powerfully expresses:

- the need
- your organisation's solution
- how the world will be different when your solution is implemented
- what will happen if your solution isn't implemented
- why your organisation is the right organisation to tackle this need

Write it concisely. Write it in simple language. Write it emotively. Most of all write a *70% version* – and then involve your Development Board in improving it. There are two reasons for this. First, ultimately it is *their* case for support. Second, involving them in developing it is an important part of transferring responsibility for the fundraising target *to them*.

2. Wrong people? – audit members against a job description

Creating an effective Development Board is hard, even with the right members. It's almost impossible with the wrong members. Sometimes it's appropriate to invite people to join the Development Board *before* you ask for their personal gift. But even in this circumstance you need to be confident that each person you have on the Board:

- has given – or is likely to give – a personally significant gift
- is willing to ask others for gifts
- has an network of contacts to reach new prospects
- can speak effectively on behalf of the project and your organisation
- will contribute as a member of a team

3. Wrong people? – work out from a good core

It's easier to build an effective Development Board from a small core of the right people. But sometimes, for whatever reason, you are faced with some members who are the wrong people. In this circumstance focus your energy on the right people and build out from them. You can deal with the wrong people later – and much more easily – as the strength and commitment of the right people grows.

4. Wrong people? – enlist 'insiders'

Even with a core of the right people, Development Board meetings can be a nightmare! Even usually focused, business-like, passionate volunteers get distracted and talk about anything but fundraising. So identify one or two key members of the Board whose support you can enlist. Share the strategy for each meeting with them before hand and challenge them to help you keep the meeting on track.

5. Wrong job? – honest 1₂1s

All Development Boards enjoy peaks and endure troughs – sometimes the money comes in relatively easily, other times it's really hard going. In the troughs, it's often important to take time out to have honest conversations with individual members about why it's so tough. Sometimes the existing Board have exhausted their contacts and the Board needs refreshing with new people. Think hard about who can hold the right conversation – it's often easier for a volunteer to be more honest with an outsider than with a member of the organisation's staff.

6. Wrong job? – ways out

Ultimately if you have the wrong people on your Development Board you need to offer them ways out – nicely and without letting off the hook completely!

7. Not asking? – ask them properly

The first key to getting volunteers to ask properly is to ask *them* properly. We set the expectations of how to ask by how we ask volunteers for their own gift. This means that we must take potential fundraising volunteers through the seven steps of solicitation – or if we get their gift without doing this, ‘train’ them in how to do it.

A good ‘ask’ consists of

- a case focused on the prospect
- recruiting the right ‘asker’
- expressing the *impact* of the gift
- expressing the *leadership* that the gift will create
- acknowledging *past giving*, as appropriate

8. Not asking? – 2s and 3s

No one wants to ask and fail – but it’s the reality of fundraising. One way to overcome the fear of asking is to link volunteers together in 2s and 3s to ask specific prospects. There are two benefits. First, they don’t feel quite so exposed. Second, they will challenge each other so that planned asks actually happen.

9. Not asking? – training

Obvious really – most volunteers will benefit from some form of ‘asking’ training, even if it is billed as something else! Like any other skill in life there are techniques that work and that can be learned.

10. Not opening their address books – prompt lists

Many fundraisers become frustrated when they ask their apparently well-connected Development Board members who they know who can help. So often the answer is ‘I don’t know anyone’. The answer lies in *how* you ask them who they know. The secret is to create effective *prompt* lists – lists of potential prospects to put in front of your Development Board members.

Create these lists by including:

- people who you know, who you *know* they know
- people who you know, who you *think* they know
- some longshots (ask them if they know and if they don't who they know who might know)

11. Not opening their address books – good research

Focus your research effort on connecting potential prospects to members of your Development Board or other key people you know well.

12. Not opening their address books – cultivation events

Create a series of events that Development Board members can bring potential prospects to hear about the project and the work of the organisation. Ask volunteers to commit to an effective follow-up process *before* the event.

13. Anything but fundraising – ask for and act on advice

Whenever a volunteer relationship is tricky, think about how you can engage the volunteer by asking for their advice on something you know they'll want to advise on. BUT remember you will need to act on their advice or explain why you haven't!

14. Anything but fundraising – create meaningful involvement

Fundraising is a hard, hard job. Your fundraising volunteers probably want to have a real say in your organisation. So you must create meaningful ways in which they can be involved.

15. Anything but fundraising – respect no

Whenever a volunteer says ‘no’ categorically to asking a particular prospect for money, respect it. It’s likely they have a specific and confidential reason why they won’t. And if you continue to push, you’ll risk alienating them completely. Instead explore other routes to asking this prospect, asking the primary volunteer contact for advice if appropriate.

Further help

=mc has a team of unrivalled fundraising consultants able to assist with the biggest and smallest campaigns. Between us we share experience in small and large charity work, international development, arts and culture, disability and the environment.

=mc consultants have worked with many of the UK’s major charities on their strategy or fundraising. We’re proud to be helping or have helped Oxfam, UNICEF, Christian Aid, Imperial War Museum, NSPCC, NCH, Tate Gallery, National Trust for Scotland, BHF and NCH.

To find out how we’ve helped these organisations achieve their big ideas – and how we could help you – call us on **+44 (0) 20 7978 1516** or visit

www.managementcentre.co.uk/fundraising.

We hope you found this download useful and enjoyable.

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