

Engaging Board Members in Fundraising



“Board members aren’t seats. They are human beings.”

- Dr. Debra Beck, Laramie Board Learning Project

Getting adults to do things

“Motivation is something people do for themselves. Your job is to surface those reasons”

– Daniel Pink

- Learners must be motivated if training is to be successful.
- Behavioral change happens in stages: Precontemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action, Maintenance. “Transtheoretical Model of Change”
- The 70/20/10 theory proposes that 70% of learning comes from experience, 20% from supported interactions with others – coaches, mentors, and 10% from formal training.
- Four conditions are needed before board engagement: 1) perceived ability, 2) task ownership, 3) values congruence, 4) trust and safety. Dr. Will Brown, Associate Professor, Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University

What board members need from you (or each other)

- A compelling case for support that links money to outcomes
- Finding the large donor in themselves
- Transformational experiences
- The right assignment that corresponds to their movement up the change ladder
- Leadership and direction
- A plan with practical and doable actions, a menu of options
- Personalized training, coaching, and encouragement
- Encouragement & Logistical support
- Gratitude & Celebration

Other ways to support your board members

- Be the professional
- Ask questions
- Deliver value
- Have a plan for each person
- Match the right person to the right job
- Start with the willing few
- Turn board members into donors
- Be a people mobilizer
- Thank, celebrate, reward



Common mistakes fundraisers make working with board members

- Thinking scolding will produce action
- Assuming your needs are highest priority
- Assuming high levels of commitment or understanding of the mission
- Assuming board member understanding and commitment to the case for support
- Failure to provide a detailed action plan, broken into baby steps
- Failure to follow up, failure to follow up, failure to follow up
- Treating everyone the same, with the same expectations
- Failing to engage leadership
- Thinking group decisions or job descriptions will motivate individual action
- Forgetting to create a developmental plan for each person
- Not respecting or leveraging roles and protocols
- Recruiting board members for their connections without asking if they are willing to use those connections for your organization.

Five aspects of fundraising where board members can participate

1. Match making
2. Friend making
3. Asking
4. Thanking
5. Stewarding

