

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PHILANTHROPY IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

Not-for-profit organizations are different than for-profit organizations. And this difference is no more apparent than in the relationship of philanthropy to the not-for-profit.

Some people define *philanthropy* as *voluntary action for the common good*. Many talk about fund development as *the engine that drives philanthropy*. Without charitable giving, most not-for-profits cannot survive.

But too often, organizations do not fully understand the value of philanthropy and the importance of fund development. Many organizations isolate fund development in one corner of the organization. Other organizations value fund development but assign it to staff and/or a committee of the board.

Philanthropy and fund development -- inextricably entwined -- belong to the entire organization. Every individual. Every department. All volunteers.

For a not-for-profit organization to be truly successful and effective, the organization must develop a *culture of philanthropy*.

This means that everyone in the organization ... from the janitor to the president of the board ... understands that philanthropy and fund development are critical to organizational health AND that each individual (both the janitor and board president) has a role in the process.

First and foremost, everyone is an ambassador for the organization's service, and for philanthropy and fund development. Being an ambassador means doing one's own job well, understanding how all the various jobs in the organization create one integrated system, and -- most especially -- treating all of the organization's customers (clients, donors, volunteers, community people, etc.) with care and respect.

Everyone is an ambassador for philanthropy and fund development. If the quality of the program is not good enough, it doesn't matter what the fund raiser does. If board members don't talk enough about the organization with their friends and colleagues, it doesn't matter how hard the executive director tries to raise funds. If the receptionist isn't sufficiently helpful, the best direct mail solicitation will not be as effective as it can be.

This is the culture of philanthropy. An attitude. An understanding. A behavior. After the culture of philanthropy is firmly established, fund development is more effective.

Many organizations hire development staff or assign development to their executive director. All organizations should establish a board-level development committee.

But regardless of staff or committee, the board is ultimately responsible for the financial health of the institution. That means that the board is ultimately responsible for fund development.

The board's development committee is responsible to provide leadership, to institutionalize the process of development within the board. The staff provides leadership and information and support and lots of content.

But the best staff and the best committee engage each and every board member -- and other volunteers -- in the process of fund development.

Every board member is responsible to do the following:

- Understand and promote the culture of philanthropy.
- Serve as a philanthropic ambassador within the organization and community.
- Give an annual contribution to the best of personal ability. When there are special campaigns, give an additional gift.
- Cultivate relationships on behalf of and in support of the organization.
- Help identify and cultivate prospective donors and fund-raising volunteers.
- Participate in some fund-raising task every year.

Every staff member is responsible to do the following:

- Understand and promote the culture of philanthropy.
- Serve as a philanthropic ambassador within the organization and community.
- Program staff (or any individuals with direct contact with clients and community) are expected to help cultivate relationships on behalf of and in support of the organization. This doesn't mean help fund raise. It means being sensitive to and aware of others, providing them with quality service, and paying attention to their interests.
- Many staff are also expected to work with development staff to support grant applications and other development activities related to program.
- (And, organizations should give their staff an opportunity to give a charitable contribution.)