Creating a Culture of Fundraising

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Does this sound familiar?

- Development staff feel burnt out or alienated from rest of organization
- Money is seen as a “necessary evil” in order to do the “real” work
- You have a feeling your group could raise a lot more money
- Bringing up financial matters often makes meetings tense

Four Signs of a Healthy Fundraising Culture

- Everybody does some fundraising
- People feel that they are part of a team
- Fundraising is talked about regularly
- The group owns their fundraising goals, successes AND failures

What is a Healthy Fundraising Culture?
Case Study: Californians for Justice

- Californians for Justice (CFJ) in 2004
  - Membership base of 500+ high school youth
  - Sixteen paid staff
  - One Development Director
  - Weak organizational fundraising culture
  - History of grassroots fundraising

Five Steps to Building a Fundraising Culture

1. Identify fundraising champions.
2. Get everyone involved.
3. Train, practice, debrief
4. Recognize and reward accomplishments
5. Have fun!

Step 1: Identify Champions

- Another voice to advocate for fundraising
- Can be any staff member
  - Who gets excited about fundraising?
  - Who always asks how they can help?
  - Who do other people listen to?
- Thank your champions
Step 1: Identify Champions, cont’d.

Brainstorm

- Think about potential or current fundraising champions in your organization, write their names down
- In pairs: Brainstorm ways that you could involve these champions in advocating for fundraising in your organization
- What special skill or perspective does your champion have that gives their voice power?

Step 2: Get Everyone Involved

- Make fundraising an organizational priority
  - Examples: New donor drive, annual event
- Provide collective experiences
  - Short, targeted campaigns (e.g., new donor drive)
  - Share planning and goal-setting
  - Group fundraising activities (e.g., team phone bank)
  - Collective evaluation
- Make it fun! (see Step 5)

Step 2: Get Everyone Involved, cont’d.

Exercise

- What are the biggest three events/programs in your organization? (NOT necessarily fundraisers)
  - Done every year, a tradition
  - Staff, board, members, allies get excited about them
  - All hands on deck
  - Reflects your organization’s mission
- In pairs: Brainstorm ways you could add a grassroots fundraising component to these major activities
Step 3: Train, practice, debrief

• **Training** sets people up for success
  Helps people be more confident
  • Train before campaigns or activities
  • Offer fundraising *survival kits*
    - Scripts
    - Tips
    - Articles
    - Sponsor/donation forms

Step 3: Train, practice, debrief, cont’d.

• **Practice** helps people become comfortable with fundraising in a safe environment
  • Ways to practice fundraising:
    - Role playing in groups, pairs during trainings or before fundraising activities
    - Having people write up their own talking points
    - Coaching
    - Other?
  • **Practice** can also help build community and a sense of team effort ("We’re all in this together")

Step 3: Train, practice, debrief, cont’d.

• **Always debrief as a group** after fundraising activities, events or campaigns
  • **Evaluate** how the group did as a whole, don’t nitpick individual faults or spend too much time on individual accomplishments
  • Use an **evaluation chart** to show how successful your activity or plan was:
    - Total amount raised/pledged
    - # of donors/new donors
    - Average gift
  • **Debriefing** allows people to synthesize and learn from their experiences
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Sample Debrief & Evaluation Questions

- What went well?
- What could’ve gone better?
- How much money did we raise?
- How much did we spend? (profit?)
- What did we learn?
- Did anything happen that we didn’t expect or prepare for?
- What can we improve for next time?
- Others?

Step 4: Recognize & Reward

- Recognize and reward people’s accomplishments
  - Silly prizes and awards (see Step 5), individual and team recognition via email announcements, at meetings
- Doesn’t matter how large and small
- Use campaign goals to mark progress:
  - # of asks done
  - # of “Yes’es” or “No’s”
  - # of new donors
  - Amount of money raised by each person or team(s)

Step 5: Have fun!

- Encourage friendly competition
  - Weekly / monthly contests
  - Silly prizes (e.g., party hats, trophies, dollar store trinkets)
- Lighten the mood
  - Use quizzes & games during trainings
  - Use fun visuals, pictures
- Share stories
  - During debriefs and updates
Conclusion

1. Identify champions
2. Get everyone involved
3. Train, train, train
4. Recognize and reward
5. Have FUN!

Culture change takes time! You are laying important groundwork. Be patient and ask for help when you need it.

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