

No substitute for commitment: Part one of a two part series

Written by By Mel and Pearl Shaw, FUNdraising Good Times
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Successful fundraising for a nonprofit requires the full commitment of board members, the executive director, staff, and volunteer leadership. Without this commitment, it is very difficult to meet fundraising goals. People may say they are committed and that is good. What is more important is the extent to which people embody that commitment.

Consider the following. Do all leaders understand how much money the organization wants to raise, and what the funds will be used for? Can each articulate the impact the organization makes, and how it is unique? What about the strategic plan – do leaders understand the plan and how proposed fundraising ties to it? Does each believe the fundraising goal is achievable? Do leaders understand where the projected revenue will come from, and what plans are in place if initial solicitations are not successful?

What about their actions? Do your leaders embody integrity? Are they accountable? Do they encourage transparency? Do they come prepared to meetings and remain in contact with other members of the organization's leadership between meetings? In the area of fundraising, do they make their own financial gift and ask others to do so? Do they generate enthusiasm for fundraising? Do they help secure in-kind resources that can offset organizational or fundraising costs? Do they share their creativity, resources, and problem solving skills to help advance fundraising? Most importantly, do they follow through on agreements?

While it takes time to cultivate and secure full commitment, this step cannot be pushed aside. If a fundraising initiative is executive director's vision she should take time to meet individually with board members and share her vision and commitment. She will need to let board members know what it will take to make the vision a reality and *ask for their support*. She should be prepared to answer questions and overcome objections.

Likewise, if a project is the vision of the board of directors, the board chair should take the time to meet personally with the executive director to share the board's vision and explain how the project will advance the organization's mission and strategic plan. The board should be prepared to answer the executive director's questions, and to provide her with the resources, support, and leadership that the proposed fundraising initiative will require.

The questions and objections raised by board members or the executive director may not be different from those that will need to be overcome when talking with prospective donors and

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partners. These comments, questions, and/or objectives can be most helpful in developing a strong case for support.

Regardless of where it originates, all leaders need to be engaged in the process of defining a fundraising project and its financial goals. What are you doing to engage the leadership at your nonprofit? What actions will you take to inspire commitment and engagement that will help secure funds, involvement, partnerships, and in-kind resources? Let us know.

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