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Kim Klein

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Nancy Adess

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Robin Ferguson

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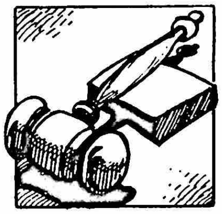


Do You Have an Effective Board of Directors?

by Stephanie Roth

A strong, effective board of directors is essential not only for successful fundraising, but also for the development of a healthy organization. Your board is your organization's leadership, and in the best of circumstances it brings varied perspectives and vision, as well as the work of governance, planning and fundraising. Building and strengthening your board is a process that continues for the life of your organization. This article presents that process in a series of steps that, if followed, can help you avoid the crisis mode in which many nonprofits operate.

Although the steps described are purposely ordered as follows, you may find that a more logical place for you to start is at step 3 or step 5. This is a circular rather than a linear progression, which allows you to use what works for you.

Evaluate Current Composition

As a first step in strengthening your board, analyze the people who are currently on it. An assessment of the individuals on your board will help you to determine gaps in skills and experience that need to be filled. The easiest way to do this is to make a grid (see chart) with skills and experience listed in the far left-hand column, and the names of your board members across the top, each name heading up a column. You may find it helpful to group the left-hand column's categories under the following headings: 1) skills and expertise, 2) representation, and 3) commitment to organization. You and your board should determine which specific qualifications to include within each broad category for the most effective functioning of your board. Every board will have a slightly different list. *Skills and expertise* might include fundraising (including personal solicitation, special events, or grantwriting experience), legal, public relations, or accounting. *Representation* refers to the various constituencies you want included on your board, such as the community your organization serves, clients, women, people of color, etc. *Commitment to your organization* can include a belief in and understanding of your mission, a willingness to be active (including fundraising), and time available for the work required.

Your board is your organization's leadership.

Once you have completed the grid, checking off the categories filled by each current board member, you will have a clear picture of the strengths of your board, as well as where gaps exist. You may find you have people with the appropriate skills to fulfill board roles and responsibilities, but few members with sufficient time to give. You may have equal numbers of men and women on the board, but very few people of color. By identifying what your weaknesses are, you can begin the process of recruiting new board members in a thoughtful, planned way. This process also forces your board to articulate its needs, based not on who you know, but on what is required to carry out its work.

Recruitment and Selection

Too often recruitment of board members is done haphazardly, at the last minute, and without a sufficient pool of candidates from which to make informed choices. It is important to give the recruitment process enough time to allow you to identify and cultivate potential new board members.

Recruitment is usually carried out by a nominating committee of the board. The main function of a board's nominating committee is to coordinate the identification, recruitment, and selection of new members. Their final recommendations are brought back to the full board for approval. If the committee gives itself sufficient lead time to carry out the process, you will avoid the last-minute crunch to find new board members.

The most common complaint I hear about board recruitment is that there aren't enough good, interested people who also have time to give to one more thing.

A committed, skilled representative group of individuals is key to the success of your board.

Executive directors and board members will wrack their brains to think of people they can invite onto the board, limiting the pool of candidates to people they know personally. (This is not the case for membership organizations, where board members are recruited from the membership, and are voted onto the board by the membership.) A broader and ultimately more successful recruitment process must look beyond friends and acquaintances of current board and staff members.

In developing a successful recruitment process, you must first identify the groupings of people from which you can seek good candidates. This might include clients (and former clients), colleagues, volunteers, major donors, community members active in other organizations, and local business people. After exhausting those possibilities, think about casting the net beyond people that are already known to your organization. Use your newsletter to publicize openings on your board. Ask the people you know in community organizations, businesses, and government for their suggestions.

After identifying candidates, the next step is an interview to enable you *and* the candidate to make an informed decision about their serving on the board. Interviews should be conducted by a team of current board members, the executive director, and other staff where appropriate. Plan the interviews, with questions developed in advance, so that all candidates are asked the same questions. The interview should be seen as an opportunity not just for the board to decide on which candidates to select, but for the potential board members to find out more about the organization, what will be expected of them, and whether or not they are willing and able to make the required commitment.

Here's a true-life example. The board of directors of the Women's Counseling Center (WCC) was barely functioning for over a year. Their process of recruiting new members had always been to beg people they knew to join the board, and the morale of the group was consistently low. Finally they decided to restructure and expand the board. One of the first steps they took was to develop a selection process for new board members. They formed a committee that created a questionnaire to distribute to all potential board candidates. The questionnaire was used as a preliminary screening mechanism, and asked about the candidates' experience in nonprofit organizations, fundraising experience and/or willingness to learn, time available, and what they felt they could offer the organization. The committee reviewed the questionnaires and selected several candidates for interviews.

Simply by creating a more formal process, where potential candidates were asked what they could offer the organization, the dynamic shifted. Rather than a thankless chore, people started to think of board membership as a privilege. In addition to finding the kind of people who could make the commitment required, the process helped the organization think about their expectations of their board members. By clarifying this to themselves, and communicating their needs to the community, they were able to attract people who were willing to work and who wanted to be part of the leadership of the organization.

Orientation and Training

To carry out their jobs successfully, board members need to know what is expected of them. An orientation process for all new board members is an important step in integrating them onto the board. A useful tool to do so is a board manual—a set of written documents about the organization that is compiled and distributed to each board member. Included in a board manual should be:

- mission statement
- brief description of programs
- current budget
- most recent financial statement
- list of current funding sources
- organizational chart or description of structure
- list of board members' names & addresses
- by-laws
- long range plan

An orientation meeting should include a presentation about the organization's purpose, programs and structure, introductions of staff and current board members, and plenty of time for questions and general discussion that begins to involve the new members in the organization.

A community theater in Brooklyn uses a "buddy system," where new board members are assigned to experienced ones for their first six months on the board. The experienced board members are expected to check in with their buddies once a month, to answer questions

Think carefully about how much time is reasonable for board members to give.

and provide whatever support is needed to enable the new members to fully participate in the work of the board. This can be particularly useful when you are bringing on new members who do not know many (if any) of the other board members, or those who have never served on a board before.

Training on the roles and responsibilities of a nonprofit board can be extremely useful for both new and old members. A daylong retreat, separate from the pressures of a regular board meeting, can be used to educate members about the role of the board, to develop a bond among members and a sense of teamwork, and to do problem-solving on board-related concerns.

In addition, periodic training on specific topics such as fundraising, public relations, or the issues your organization is working on is a way to expand the skills of your board members and will often increase their commitment to your organization as well. In particular, a board that is reluctant to participate in fundraising won't become eager to do so overnight, but a special training session using an outside expert can be an important step in convincing them of the importance of their involvement.

Statements of Agreement/ Job Descriptions

An increasingly popular mechanism to clarify the specific commitment of board members is a written statement of agreement. In the article "Earth to Board: Are We All Clear?" by Kim Klein (in the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* reprint *The Board of Directors*), a sample statement is described. The statement should be drafted according to the needs of your organization, and should include general areas of responsibility of all board members (such as number of board meetings they are required to attend per year, responsibility to participate in fundraising, length of their term of office, etc.), as well as the specific area of responsibility that each board member agrees to take on.

If you want to have an even more detailed description of tasks, job descriptions for officers and members of committees can be drawn up. Without becoming an

Assessing Current Board Skills & Experience

Qualifications	BOARD MEMBER S. Smith	E. Garcia	M. Jackson	Etc.
SKILLS				
Fundraising				
Personal Solicitation				
Grantwriting				
Corporate				
Events				
Legal				
Management				
Personnel				
Fiscal/Accounting				
REPRESENTATION				
Female/Male				
Person of Color				
African American				
Asian				
Latino/a				
Native American				
Geographic				
Clients				
COMMITMENT				
Agree w/mission				
Time Available				
Willing to Fundraise				
Contributes Money				

These are just examples, and not a complete listing of qualifications needed for every board.

Adapted from *"Expanding Your Board of Directors,"* by Lisa Honig, in Grassroots Fundraising Journal reprint, *Board of Directors.*

arduous process, simple, task-oriented job descriptions can help board members understand what they are agreeing to do and how much time it will require. Giving current board members the opportunity to develop their own job descriptions and/or statements of agreement often increases the likelihood that they will honor their commitment. Job descriptions and statements of agreement are also tools by which you can hold board members accountable.

Board Structure and Functioning

A committed, skilled, representative group of individuals is key to the success of your board. But only with a well-organized structure, strong leadership, an agreed-upon process for decision-making, and a set of committees with clearly defined goals and tasks will the board actually get its work done.

Board members are often well intentioned when they agree to serve on a board, but then find there are unrealistic expectations about what they should contribute. Think carefully about how much time is reasonable for board members to give (probably no more than 8 hours a month, in most cases), and make sure the workload is realistic.

Your organization's by-laws are its governing rules. They spell out the way the board conducts its business. Many board members have never read their organization's by-laws, and many by-laws are so outdated that the board has not followed them for years. By-laws should be simple and should include: the terms of office (generally, board members should *not* be permitted to serve life-terms), roles and responsibilities of board members, including officers, the process of removing board members, frequency of full board meetings, the number required for a quorum, etc. When developing by-laws for the first time, it is helpful to look at the by-laws of other nonprofit organizations to get an idea of the areas covered and the language used.

Short-term committees can be called "task forces" or "teams."

Decision-making is one of the most conflict-ridden aspects of board functioning. Are decisions made by consensus or by a majority vote? Which decisions are made by the board and which by the staff? In which cases does the board chair or president have the authority to make a decision? If a decision has to be made between board meetings, what is the process to do so? There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. What is important is that your board takes the time to think them through, and decide how it is going to function.

Committees are the structures by which most board work gets done. Regular board meetings are most effective when used to make decisions, delegate work, and determine future directions for the organization. In deciding on how many and which committees to form on your board, establish the fewest number of committees you need to get the work done. Rather than having 10 different standing (i.e., permanent) committees, establish a committee for a specific function, then disband it when the job is completed. This keeps committees alive, functioning, and with a clearly defined purpose. Such short-term committees can be called "task forces" or "teams" to reinforce their temporary nature.

Some of the committees most boards will need to have at some time are fundraising (which can be divided into subcommittees such as major donors, special events, corporate support), personnel, nominations, finance/budget, long-range planning, and program.

Each committee should set goals, which are then discussed and approved by the entire board. A committee chair can make sure that the work gets done, that reports are made to the entire board, and that the committee has enough active members to carry out its work.

Many board committees recruit volunteers who are not board members to expand the pool of people available to get the work done. For some committees, such as personnel, this may not be appropriate, but fundraising is certainly an area that lends itself to participation from non-board volunteers.

Evaluation of the Board

Boards of Directors, like the organizations they are designed to govern, are always changing. Because the needs of your organization change over time, the role of your board will also change. Your board will be more hands-on in the early years of an organization's life, or if there are very few paid staff. As the organization grows, increases its staff and its daily operations become more complex, the board generally expands its governing, planning and fundraising roles, and has less involvement, if any, in the day-to-day work.

The development of a strong, well-functioning board of directors does not happen overnight—particularly if your board is in any kind of crisis. Do not attempt to institute lots of changes at once. Choose the most important areas to strengthen, develop a long-term plan for further changes, and then evaluate the process as you go. Think of the steps outlined here as a circle that your organization travels around, preferably on an annual basis. By continuing to change and refine the process, you will build a strong board that can be flexible enough to change and grow over time to meet the needs of your organization. You won't ever completely avoid the problems every organization faces, but you will have a group of board members who are prepared to lead. ■

Stephanie Roth is a consultant and trainer for nonprofit organizations, specializing in board development, fundraising and multicultural organizing.

For further information, you may wish to review the publications of the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, especially the pamphlets that make up their Nonprofit Governance Series. These are good resources for board (and staff) members. They can be obtained from: National Center for Nonprofit Boards, 2000 L Street N.W., Suite 411, Washington, DC 20036, 202-452-6262.

The Reply Device

by Kim Klein

A letter asking for money has four essential components: the outside or "carrier" envelope, the letter itself, the reply device, which is a form or card people fill out and return with their check, and the return envelope, called in direct mail the "response vehicle."

As the *Journal* article "But Will They Open the Envelope" noted (February, 1993), the most important element of a mail appeal is the carrier envelope. People who throw away direct mail usually do so without opening the envelope, and evidence shows that if you can get a person to open the envelope, you have passed the most difficult hurdle.

Of course, without an effective letter, their opening the envelope will be to no avail. In the last issue (April, 1993), we focussed on the construction of the letter itself.

Probably the most overlooked component of the direct mail appeal, or indeed any letter that asks for money, is the reply device. However, as consumers become more accustomed to direct mail appeals, it is clear that this little element is more and more important.

The following scenario is increasingly common: a couple finish their dinner, and, since he cooked, she goes to wash the dishes. He keeps her company while sorting through the mail. He separates the bills and the personal letters, then looks at the first direct mail piece. From the carrier envelope he recognizes the name of a group he has just read about. "Honey, we got a request for money from 'Wildlife and Jobs'—that group that is showing how we can save the environment while creating new jobs." She responds, "The group we read about yesterday in the paper?" "Yes," he says. He glances at their letter, but moves right to the reply device. "It costs $25 a year to be a Basic Member, or for $50 you get a free calendar," he says. "Let's send $50. We need a calendar and they seem like a good group. I talked to Wilma today and she is a member of that group." "O.K.," she says. He throws the carrier envelope and the letter in the wastebasket and writes a check. Or, even more commonly, he takes the return envelope and reply device and puts it in a file called "bills due." When they sit down to pay their bills at the end of the month, they also make their charitable contributions.

More and more, when people open mail from groups they have heard of, or causes they believe in, they move right to the "bottom line"—how much will it cost to join? If the reply device holds their attention, they may return to the letter, or as in the case above, they may throw the letter away and make their decision based on factors outside the letter.

Today's reply device must be able to tell the prospective donor exactly what he or she will get by joining the group and how much it will cost, and it must create some excitement about the group, rekindling the interest of a prospect who has put the request aside to answer later.

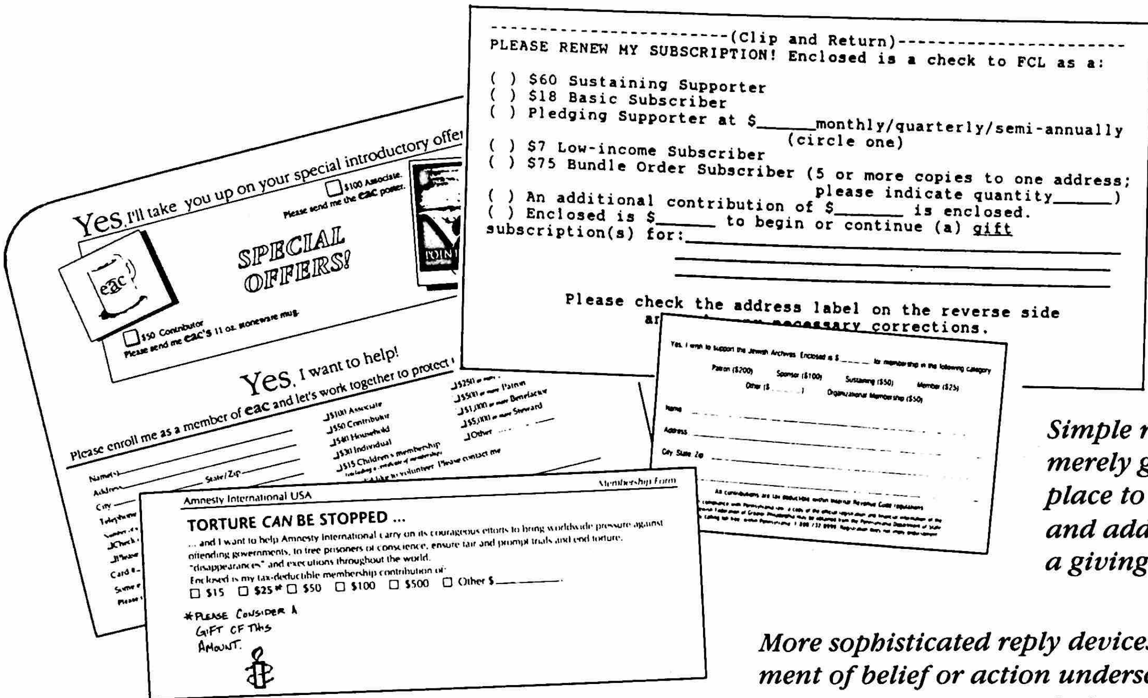
The original use of the reply device was to give the prospect a place to write his or her name, address and amount of gift (see examples). Quickly, they evolved to merit the name Reply Device as they added a phrase to articulate the donor's actions: "Yes, I'll give." or "Count me in."

Today, they require much more thought and design, based not only on the psychology of the whole mail appeal, but also the increasingly limited attention span of direct mail consumers.

Psychology of the Reply Device

In the direct mail letter, the organization refers to the reader using the word "you" as in, "You may have heard" or "I'm sure you join me in feeling that . . . ." The reader reads about him or herself. In the reply device, the reader responds to the organization while continuing to read about him or herself. "Count me in" the reader is asked to respond. The trick is to inspire the reader without going overboard in describing their desired reaction.

The phrases that work best are usually an affirmation of some sort, rather than a description of an emotion. Phrases such as, "I'm with you" or, "I'll take a stand" or simply, "I will help" usually work better than, "Yes, I'm outraged" or "Tell them to shove it." (A real appeal) I recently received an appeal from a group I had decided to



Simple reply devices merely give the donor a place to write their name and address and indicate a giving level.

More sophisticated reply devices include a statement of belief or action underscoring the donor's desire to give. Some include special offers or are incorporated into the giving envelope.

join. When I read the reply device, I changed my mind. It said, "I hope their dump (referring to an illegal landfill) makes them throw up. Here's my money to stop this blight." The thought of throwing up made me nauseated so I threw the letter away.

The Design

If possible, the reply device should display the logo of the group, and have a catch phrase to remind prospects of what the group stands for, or its mission. Some organizations actually put a brief description of their group or their project on the back of the card.

Probably the trickiest part is using few words to let people know how much it costs to join and what the benefits are. Many organizations use a simple series of boxes with differing amounts of money, with the benefits the same for any amount of money.

If you have more elaborate benefits of membership or incentives for giving, put the amount first, then describe the incentive.

Naming your membership categories, unless you have really clever names, or really good incentives, is not worth that much. "Patron," "Benefactor," "Friend," all have little or no meaning, and inevitably reflect a hierarchy of giving that is just as well avoided. (See the upcoming article on the use of "benefit clubs" in the next issue of the *Journal* for more discussion on this topic and examples of clubs that work.)

The rest of the card must have room for the name, address and phone number of the donor, or a place for a label, and a statement about how to make out the check.

Remember that people will read until they find a number they are comfortable with, but all else being equal, people will generally choose the second option in a line of numbers. So given a choice such as

____$15 ____$25 ____$50 ____$100

most people will choose $25. Put the amount of money or the membership option that you want most people to choose, and that makes the most sense, in the second slot and build your categories around that. Sometimes your numbers will not be in order of ascending value, as in:

____$35 ____$25 ____$50 ____$100 ____other

You may wonder why not start with high numbers or put a large number in that second slot? Because people will not pay more than they can afford, and you don't want to scare them off. A group with this sequence:

____$100 ____$50 ____$35 ____$500 ____other

may wind up giving a message that small gifts are not encouraged.

On the other hand, do not suggest an amount you would rather not receive, such as $5. If someone wants to or needs to send that much, they can check "other." By suggesting it, you will get it from people who could have given a lot more.

We have continually stressed in the *Journal* that direct mail appeals, like all fundraising strategies, must be conceptualized as a whole, with a look at what is to precede or follow, and its ultimate priority in your fundraising plan. The reply device is an example of something that is taking on increasing importance as part of the whole, and, far from being a detail, now requires planning and attention all its own. ■

What Good Givers Do

by Kenneth Dayton

After 40 years of both asking for and making major gifts to worthwhile causes, I've seen the difference between good givers and bad givers. Fortunately I have seen and been inspired by a lot of good givers, but unfortunately I have witnessed a lot of bad givers as well.

Here's what I think good givers do:

► They aim to be good givers. Like any other important endeavor they undertake, good givers want to do it well. That takes thought, planning, and an attitude that I characterize as trusteeship—the conviction that we all are trustees of the money we have earned or inherited. It is fun to have money only if it can help others, but distributing money in a way that makes a difference is a difficult and wonderful challenge.

► They decide how much to give in a particular year, and in a lifetime as well. There is no right answer to this question, but each person should decide how much he or she can give. In making that decision, it may help to look at some statistics on giving trends. The people of this country give on average 2.5 percent of their income. That's up from 1.8 percent a decade earlier. The amazing—and shameful—fact is that low-income givers contribute a higher percentage of their income than their wealthier counterparts. Those who make between $10,000 and $20,000 give 3.2 percent of their income, compared to only 1.8 percent for those who make between $50,000 and $75,000 and 2.9 percent for those who earn over $100,000. Good givers donate much more than that.

► They enjoy giving. They would rather say Yes than No, even though they sometimes have to say No. They are turned on by the pitch of the solicitor and always have open ears. They are happy to part with the money because they know it's going to help. For some, giving is only a painful and necessary act forced by societal and social pressures. But not for good givers—for them, it's a joy.

► They never refuse to be solicited. You don't have to give, but you do have to listen if a personal request is made. People who will not listen, who will not see a solicitor, miss out on so much. They narrow their horizons, they shut themselves off from valuable knowledge and input, and they get typed as miserly skinflints. I know an extremely wealthy person who won't ever see a solicitor. He is a miserable person.

► They see the solicitor as quickly as possible. Like

Reprinted by permission of the Chronicle of Philanthropy.

"How about tomorrow at 10:30?," not "Oh, I couldn't possibly consider that until December, or next year, or after I get back from my around-the-world cruise," or "Call me in a year." What help are those answers to people involved in a worthy cause?

► They are always humble, never arrogant. Good givers recognize that the solicitor is doing far more than they are for the good of the cause or the community. All donors are being asked for is money. The solicitor has already contributed time, energy, and money—probably a far higher proportion of his or her income than he or she is asking the donor to give. Solicitors therefore should be congratulated, thanked, and encouraged. Good givers treat the solicitors with respect, admiration, and appreciation.

► They respond to the solicitation as quickly as possible. That doesn't mean that they have to answer right when the pitch is made, but good givers try to get back with a telephone call and a confirming letter within a day or so. Good givers do not make the solicitors sweat it out, call back for an answer, or write another solicitation letter. An early commitment by a donor is infinitely more helpful to an organization than a late one. Even an early rejection is far better than a late one. When good givers say No, they do it in a thoughtful and helpful way—and promptly.

When donors delay their answers, they can cause the organization infinite trouble. The donor's name comes up at every meeting of the development committee; the committee members discuss how and when and who has to call the donor again; they start to argue over how to handle the donor; and the donor becomes a problem.

I know a large giver who is solicited for his favorite cause early in each year but never confirms his gift until December 31—and then only after repeated letters and calls. Who is he kidding? He's not a good giver. He just enjoys being fussed over. Some are even worse: They delay making up their minds, dangling the possibility of a gift in order to be wooed and mollycoddled. What a way to treat a non-profit institution about which one theoretically cares!

► They give as much, not as little, as they can. Some givers automatically give half or even one-fourth of what they are asked for and so, of course, they are always asked for two or four times as much as is hoped for. Others give the smallest amount required to get on a certain list of donors. Sometimes donors should try giving twice as much as they were asked for—what fun they will have! Such a gift can open up a whole new world of excitement and involvement for them.

The main thing, though, is to give thoughtfully. Good givers think about the size of the drive, whether they should be part of it, their position on the giving pyramid, and how much they can give in relation to other demands. They think about the effect of the gift on the drive, and the amount they donate is the result of a thoughtful, well-researched decision. It is not based purely on the size of the request unless, of course, the request makes perfectly good sense.

► They pay immediately, or as soon as possible. A gift paid at the start of an organization's fiscal year is worth much more than one paid just as the books are being closed at the end of the year, in which case the organization has had absolutely no use of that money for the entire year.

The same thing is true of capital or endowment campaigns. Often donors have to spread their gifts out over several years to make the donation as substantial as possible. But donors should not kid themselves. A five-year gift in equal installments is worth only about 75 to 80 percent of an up-front gift. The sooner they can pay off a long-term commitment, the better givers they are. It can make a big difference to the financial well-being of an institution.

► They are not demanding. Good givers don't ask for special consideration and special treatment. Good givers give freely rather than with all sorts of conditions. Good givers have faith in the institution that receives the gift. If they don't, they shouldn't make the gift in the first place.

All of those characteristics could apply to passive givers, those who only give and never participate. But the best givers care so passionately about a cause that they combine the gift with personal involvement and volunteered time. That's what gives the greatest satisfaction of all—to give completely to a cause in which one believes deeply. That has to be one of life's greatest joys and satisfactions. ■

Kenneth N. Dayton is the former chairman and chief executive officer of Dayton Hudson Corporation in Minneapolis. This article was adapted from a speech he delivered at the annual meeting of Independent Sector.

KIM KLEIN: REPORT FROM THE ROAD

Tel Aviv, March 14, 1993

This report covers our experience in Bangladesh, our third Asian country and the ninth country we have visited on our round-the-world trip. In the next report, I will discuss what we learned in India.

In Bangladesh we conducted a fundraising training for several organizations working with the disabled, and consulted with one feminist organization.

Some background about Bangladesh will help in understanding the situation for non-profits (called NGOs or non-governmental organizations) there. After India became independent of colonial rule in 1949, Pakistan was partitioned off as a separate country, with Bangladesh called East Pakistan and Pakistan called West Pakistan. This arrangement divided the Hindu portion of India from the Muslim portion. (On some maps you'll even see India referred to as Hindustan.) This was devastating economically for what became East Pakistan, which had had a vibrant and prosperous economy. (In fact, the city of Calcutta had been built by the British to serve as the shipping port for the entire region of West Bengal and what is now Bangladesh.) The partition plunged both of these regions into poverty, from which neither has recovered. Finally, East Pakistan launched a bloody civil war and emerged victorious but poverty stricken as the independent state of Bangladesh in 1971.

In addition to the poverty brought about by partition and the war, problems caused by Bangladesh's geography serve to worsen its economy. Three major rivers flow through the country, flooding thousands of square miles of farmland every year. Almost as often, Bangladesh is devastated by a cyclone, and hurricanes are frequent. We were told by one reporter that 300,000 children die of cholera every year from contaminated drinking water.

Foreign aid accounts for 85% of Bangladesh's income, but much of it must be directed at disaster relief, so little progress in development has been made in twenty years. (Massive graft, corruption and waste in the aid that reaches Bangladesh also play a part in its lack of progress, but that will have to be the subject of another article.)

The vast majority of the population lives below the poverty line, and millions of people suffer from malnutrition. Some 80% of the population is illiterate, with illiteracy rates for women upwards of 95%. Bangladesh is also one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with a total population of over 95 million in 56,000 square miles, a density of 1,719 people per square mile (by comparison, India has an estimated 597 people per square mile).

Working with the Disabled

There are 57 registered organizations working with the disabled throughout Bangladesh; most are in Dhaka, the capital. The groups are divided in their missions among service, training, advocacy, and education, with most doing some kind of service. At our training there were representatives from 15 organizations mostly working in Dhaka, although some served all of Bangladesh. There are two amazing facts about these particular groups, which people said was true of the disability movement in Bangladesh in general. First, most of their "staff" are unpaid volunteers, and second, almost all the people in power positions (as staff or Board) are disabled. My experience in the United States is that, with some notable exceptions, organizations working for disabled people, particularly in social service, are heavily staffed (both paid and unpaid) by non-disabled, or more correctly, temporarily able-bodied staff.

The community of disabled people in Bangladesh has organized itself into an impressive array of groups and a formidable lobby. The volunteer staff for the groups work full time at a variety of other jobs before coming to their volunteer work, where they spend an additional 8 or 9 hours a day, six days a week. The commitment of these people is extraordinary, but this brings us to a third observation: the majority of these volunteers are men, and their commitment is in part made possible by their wives, who take care of every detail of their lives outside of work. The husband is the breadwinner, and when that obligation is fulfilled, he is free to use the rest of his time as he sees fit.

A note about women's lives in Bangladesh: Ninety percent of Bangladeshis are Muslims, and Muslim wives there rarely leave their homes. People live in "joined families"—their phrase for several related families living together. Most marriages are arranged, and the wife moves into the family home of her husband. This home will usually include the husband's parents, the husband's brothers and their wives, and a large number of children. Various sisters, cousins, and occasionally friends may also live there. The oldest son's wife is in charge of the household, although she defers to her mother-in-law, who will rarely use that authority.

A major difference between grassroots NGOs in countries heavily reliant on foreign aid and grassroots nonprofit organizations in the United States is access to institutional funding. In Bangladesh, any organization with a reasonable idea can get funding. In fact, funders seek out organizations and sometimes offer them money. As a result, programs, directions, goals and evaluations are all skewed to meet the needs and demands of funders and so do not always serve the needs of the people. So among many NGOs a debate is arising about taking foreign, government or institutional funding. Grassroots NGOs and sometimes even large NGOs question what this reliance means, and ask if a country can ever be free without being self-reliant.

Most of the disability rights groups we met with are attempting to move away from reliance on foreign funding, and are among the leadership of a broader movement to promote self-sufficiency in the NGO community. Building a large donor base is definitely possible for these groups because even though Bangladesh is an extremely poor country, with only a tiny percentage of its population being middle and upper class, because it is so densely populated, there are still millions of people in the middle and upper classes who can give money. Of course, as everywhere, the bulk of giving is done by middle- and lower-class people.

A Feminist Collective

The feminist group we met with is called Naripokko. Their staff are also all volunteers, and the group is run as a collective. They provide a variety of services to women such as support groups, consciousness-raising discussions, and workshops. This organization is one of only two we have met on our whole trip who refuse all institutional funding despite being offered grants on a regular basis. They want to be accountable only to their membership and feel that taking foreign or government funding has too much potential to be corrupting. Each member must pledge a certain amount of money per month, and also spend time in the collective.

Asking for Money

As I observed in my last Report from the Road, one thing all of the people we have met so far have in com-

Kim meets with women from the feminist collective Naripokko in front of a village they set up. The community includes a farm, hospital, school, shoe factory and auto repair shop. Several of the women of the collective fought as soldiers in the war of independence.

mon is a reluctance to ask for donations in person or to ask for donations from friends. I had always thought that in cultures where people talk about money freely, they would be able to ask for money relatively easily. This is not true. In Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh and India, people talked very easily about money. They asked us how we are able to pay for this trip, how much we paid for various items, how much it costs to get an American Express card, whether we own our house, and more. It seemed that whatever financial question came into their minds about us, they felt free to ask. They also volunteered information about their own finances and answered any questions we had about money.

In each country we asked whether or not it was rude to ask about finances. Although answers varied slightly from one country to another and one person to another, most people agreed that asking about salaries or costs of things is not rude; asking directly for a donation, however, is not done except by religious organizations. Few people were willing to judge direct requests for donations as rude; rather, they commented on how unfamiliar it was. As was true in Australia, there was an assumption that Americans ask each other for money very easily.

In the United States, talking about money and asking for money are related taboos, but in several countries we have visited, they are not related. Rather, asking for donations has its own restrictions, related not so much to money, but to asking for a favor or incurring an obligation of any kind.

With all those we met with in Bangladesh, we presented the idea that cultural norms that make it difficult to ask directly for funding needed to run organizations must be changed. (Challenging cultural norms around money has been the theme of my work in fundraising for the past 17 years, and I wanted to see the response to this idea in different cultures.) Both Naripokko and the disability groups were open to the idea of challenging cultural norms. They saw it as a logical extension of their work, which already involves such challenges.

Once any organization is able to see fundraising as a part of their work, rather than just something that has to happen in order to do their work, demystifying fundraising becomes easier, and the process of asking for money becomes easier. We have asked all of these groups to write to us from time to time and let us know what success they have had. We will keep you posted. ◘

Announcement

CAUSE EFFECTIVE—a New York-based nonprofit that helps other nonprofits raise funds and friends—has provided what it calls "special events management assistance" to over 1,300 nonprofits since 1981.

Now, Cause Effective has developed a program to train trainers to help nonprofits across the country to conduct special events workshops and consultations and to set up special events resource banks.

With funding from Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Charles Stuart Mott Foundation, and Nathan Cummings Foundation, Cause Effective will conduct training-trainer programs in three regions of the country in the coming year. Cause Effective is currently seeking conveners to bring together the management assistance providers in their regions for this unique program.

For further information contact Lauren Goldstein, Associate Director, Cause Effective, 39 West 14th Street, Suite 408, New York, NY 10011, (212) 807-6896.

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