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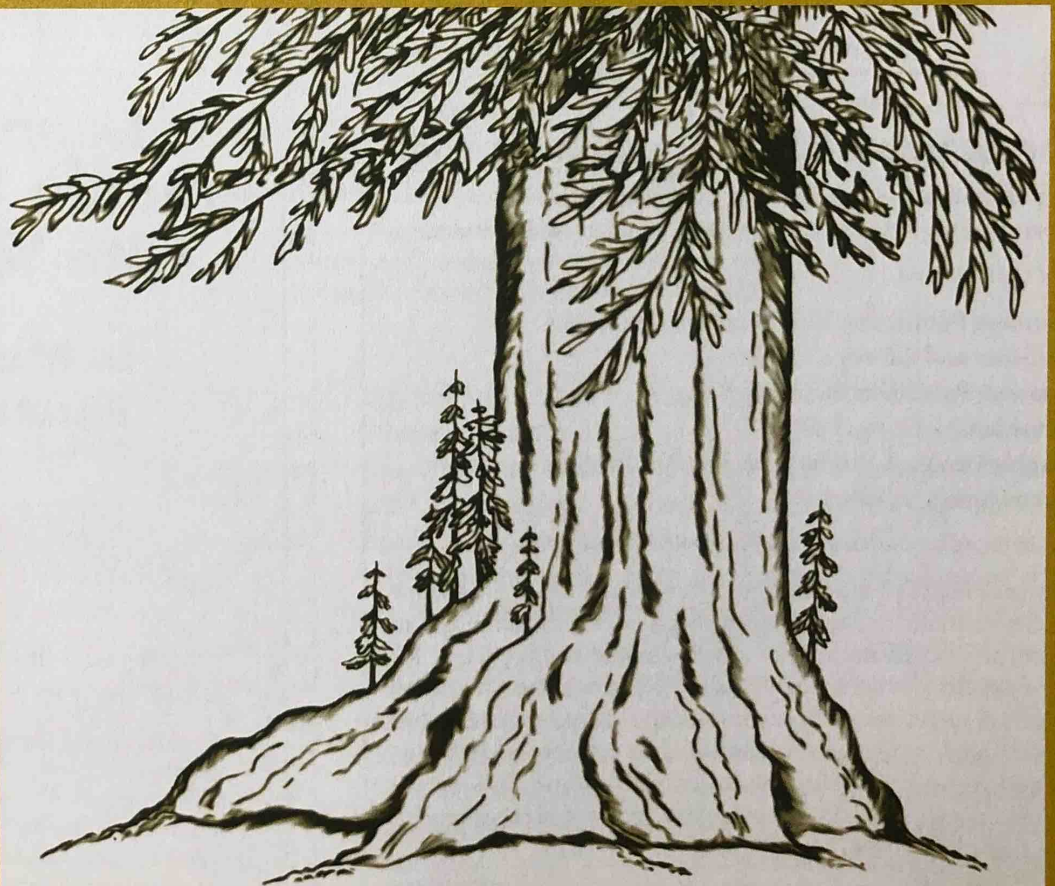
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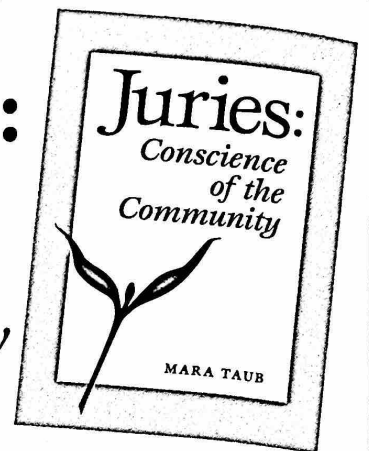
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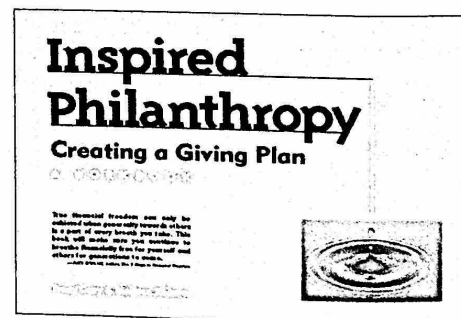


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Why People of Color Need to be Good Fundraisers

by Mike Roque



FIST (Fundraising Independence Skills Training), a joint program of the Center for Third World Organizing and the Southern Empowerment Project, develops greater fundraising capacity in communities of color. This year's FIST participants pose during training for internships with grassroots organizations.

When I started out in fundraising ten years ago, I was usually the only person of color in the room. Today, the situation is much the same. Whether it is a meeting with a potential donor to my organization, or a training I am giving to the fundraising committee of a nonprofit organization, the room is usually white except for me.

Even within people-of-color organizations or multi-racial organizations, the people who do the bulk of the fundraising are often white. I could give a long diatribe on how society oppresses people of color and wants to keep them from controlling money, or talk about how people of color's internalized oppression keeps them from taking control of money. But instead, I want to challenge progressive nonprofits to be more aware of the power dynamics of who raises money for them, and I want to challenge people of color to train themselves and others to be good fundraisers.

The one thing I remember most from the first fundrais-

ing training I went to taught by Kim Klein is her saying, "those who control the money, control the organization." I was then a community organizer with a small, mostly Chicano community organization in Southern Colorado. The board of the organization was 70 percent Chicano, mostly low-income members, yet the fundraising committee was made up of three white people. It was much the same with other organizations with which I worked over the years. Now, after fundraising for both small community organizing groups and large foundations, it still rings true for me: those who control the money, control the organization.

I believe that people of color have been systematically excluded from fundraising for nonprofit organizations. I do not believe that it has been a malicious exclusion or a conspiracy that needs to be investigated by Mulder and Scully. But many organizations have simply not examined the power dynamics of their fundraising work. In this article I

put forth six reasons why people of color have been excluded from fundraising and offer ways for organizations to recruit, develop and maintain people of color as fundraisers.

Why People of Color are Excluded from Fundraising

1) Program Work Only

The first board I joined promptly put me on the program committee, even though my interest was with finance. This being my first board I just did what they told me. Often when people of color are brought onto boards the organization restricts them to programmatic work or, worse, uses them in public relations efforts to give the appearance of being diverse.

2) Banker Boards

We've all been through a Junior League-type training in which the first thing they say is that you need to fill your board with bankers, company presidents and other prominent (i.e., rich) people. This often leaves people of color out.

3) It's Who You Know

Unlike the previous reason for the lack of people of color on a board, in this model the board members themselves don't have to be rich, just know rich people. Even well-intentioned organizations buy into this trap of only putting people on the finance/fundraising committee who already know potential funders—both individual donors and foundations. This usually means people with connections to well-off people. Again, assuming that they would not have such contacts, organizations mistakenly leave people of color off.

4) Lack of Training

Organizations want people on board and staff who can come in and fundraise from day one. In addition, they want them to understand often unnecessarily complicated financial statements. If organizations are not willing to put the time and money into training new fundraisers they run the risk of burning out existing fundraisers and not having anyone to take their place.

5) "We Are So Glad Just to Have You"

Often organizations are just so happy to have people of color (especially their first) on their boards that they do not hold them to the same standards as other board members. If giving a personal gift and fundraising are responsibilities of other board members (which they should be for every organization) then they should be for people of color too.

6) Fear of Losing Control

When organizations begin to recruit board members outside of the original founders—whether it's people of color, gays and lesbians, rural folks, etc.—the very nature of the organization changes. This change happens most dramatically when new people begin to raise money from dif-

ferent constituencies. The organization becomes accountable to a new group of people and the original members of the organization can feel threatened or left out. If you want people of color to share in the ownership of the organization, you need to give up some control.

Challenge to Organizations

In order to overcome these reasons for people of color being excluded from fundraising, organizations are going to have to look at themselves more closely and change some of their behaviors.

1) Be Aware of Power Dynamics

Organizations should examine the make-up of their fundraising committee and fundraising staff. This fundraising team tends to have little turnover, indicating its importance within the organization. Even when people of color join a fundraising committee, they're often not made to feel included or productive. They will serve for one or two years but then rotate off, often feeling that they did not make a difference or were not wanted. This can lead to stagnation and complacency on behalf of the organization and eventually burnout of the members. Even within the most progressive organizations, I have noticed that much of their fundraising team is white. Organizations need to make a point of examining their fundraising team every year, and recruiting people of color specifically to serve on the fundraising team.

2) Invest in Training

Organizations need to make a commitment to investing in fundraising training for new committee and staff members. Even experienced staff and members will benefit from training. Or, they can provide the training for newer members. Training does not have to be expensive. Look around for low-cost training opportunities and get as many of your members to them as possible. Or, try to pull together other nonprofits and share the cost of bringing in a trainer or, better yet, get a foundation to underwrite it.

3) Seek Money from Communities of Color

When bringing in people of color to the fundraising team, trust them to know how to approach fundraising from their community. If this is something the organization has not tried before, don't automatically assume it will not be effective or appropriate for your group. Communities of color have been supporting their own issues in informal ways for years. Use fundraising basics (you have to ask), but don't be afraid of trying new fundraising methods. I have seen successful pig ear sales, church appeals and salsa dances (obviously not everything is appropriate for every group). By reaching out to communities of color to raise funds, your organization will tap into another source of money and make contact with other people of color who may become board members.

4) Plan for Transitions

Organizations need to plan carefully for leadership transitions, especially when a person of color is replacing a white (oftentimes founding) executive director or development director. Progressive organizations often try to recruit people of color when hiring new staff people. This is an important effort and needs to be encouraged, but don't overlook the organizational dynamics of that transition. Without transition activities built into the move from one staff person to the next, the person of color is put into a position where no one can succeed. Organizations need to consider that, if the previous executive or development director has done their job well, funders (individuals and foundations) will have a strong relationship with him or her. The organization must take the time for a systematic transition of these relationships from the outgoing to the new director. Also, the organization should ensure that the rest of the fundraising team will stay on to facilitate a transfer of organizational memory.

Challenge to People of Color

People of color also need to meet the challenges of becoming more involved in fundraising. Here are some things we can do to increase our visibility and effectiveness as fundraisers.

1) Join Boards, Join Fundraising Committees

When asked to join a board, do a thorough investigation of the organizational and board dynamics. Don't join the board unless you have the time and commitment to give it your full effort. Once you join, demand to be put onto the fundraising or finance committee and learn where the real power lies. Even if "numbers" are not your strong point, join. If you're not clear on the fundraising strategy or an item on the financial statements, ask questions. Number geeks (which I consider myself to be) love people who are interested in learning more about what financial statements say. Once you've mastered the basics, the rest is easy.

2) Go to Any and All Trainings You Can

Training, training and more training. You can never get enough training. I have found that I have gotten something out of even the most boring, unrelated trainings I have attended. (At least I'll be more careful when picking out trainings to attend.) Be on the lookout for training opportunities. Ask the organization you work with to pay for you to attend.

3) Raise Our Own Money and Create Our Own Organizations

We, as people of color, need to be good fundraisers. We need to raise our own money from our own communities and create and sustain our own organizations. If we are to see substantial change within our communities we need to be able to control our destiny.

Remember, those who control the money, control the

organization. If we hope to truly develop self-determination in our communities, we must be able to financially sustain institutions within our communities, whether non-profit organizations or businesses. Being a good fundraiser is a strong step in that direction. This does not mean we should not work with each other or with white organizations; we all need to support each other's struggle for justice and equality. **GF**

Mike Roque is Executive Director of the Chinook Fund, a member of the Funding Exchange network of progressive community foundations. Prior to this, he was Lead Organizer/Executive Director of HOPE Alive, a grassroots community organizing group in Pueblo, Colorado.

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Campaign for Human Development

Dictates Right Turn to Community Organizers

by Francis Calpotura

For three decades, the Campaign for Human Development (CHD), sponsored by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has been the nation's leading funder of grassroots community organizing, funding both religious-based and secular organizations. But now, religious conservatives may be turning this instrument for social change into a wedge against progressive organizers who connect race, class and gender in their work.

When grassroots organizations open their packet from the CHD next year, they'll find a new contract they must sign. Part of the contract will state, "CHD will not consider projects or organizations which promote or support abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, or any other affront to human life and dignity." The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, CHD's governing body, has apparently decided that the CHD, and the many organizations it funds, must now toe its Catholic line.

Finding Legitimacy

Since it was founded in 1970, CHD has distributed more than \$230 million in grants to more than 3,000 community-based organizations around the country. A 1994 study showed that CHD grants of approximately \$8 million annually leveraged an additional \$64 million to community organizations. Last year, CHD distributed close to \$9 million to about 250 projects nationwide. Since the majority of CHD-funded groups are located in major cities, most of the constituents who participate in and benefit from these programs are people of color.

"In the mid-1980s when we were just getting started, support from CHD meant that we were legit," says Shannah Kurland, Director of Direct Action for Rights Equality

(DARE) in Providence, Rhode Island. CHD's founding principle was that working for institutional change from the ground up is a legitimate strategy to "effect solutions to the twin crises of race and poverty."

New Guidelines

The current controversy revolves around the revision of the "Moral Guidelines for Funding," originally drafted in 1972 to give direction to CHD's funding mission. The 1972 guidelines, carefully crafted to respond to conservative concerns, applied the "traditional moral principle of double effect": if the major thrust of an organization's program was opposed to Catholic teaching (e.g., abortion rights was its central mission), then it could not receive CHD funding. However, if the organization's mission did not contradict Catholic teaching, it could still receive CHD funds even if one of its programs ran counter to the Church's positions, as long as the "offending" program didn't use CHD funds.

The new guidelines close this loophole, prohibiting funding to "projects or organizations which promote or support" causes anathema to official Catholic doctrine.

Reaction from many community organizers, especially those engaged in multi-issue organizing, has been critical. "CHD's reaction to right-wing attacks puts community organizations doing good work with poor people on the defensive," says Guadalupe Guajardo, a long-time community organizer and a nun with the Sisters of the Holy Names. Young Shin, Executive Director of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates and recipient of CHD's Development of People Award last year for her work with garment workers, was incensed: "This is a women's issue. No one can tell us what to do and how to think about the abortion

issue. This is a question of self-determination." Kevin Borden, lead organizer for Idaho Citizens Network, wonders whether "these new signals from CHD will undermine our coalition strategies."

Writing on the Wall

Founded in response to the 1960s urban rebellion, CHD has been repeatedly attacked by conservatives. In 1971, barely a year into operation, a retired judge charged that CHD funds were being used to support "organizations which participate in abortion and birth control programs." This accusation prompted the 1972 guidelines.

But the attacks continued. In 1984, Thomas Pauken, a well-known conservative, charged that CHD funds went to "leftist political activists plotting to destroy our economic system." As late as September, 1997, the CHD felt compelled to issue a series of fact sheets entitled "For the Record... The Truth about CHD Funding," which firmly defended CHD's funding priorities and the activities of organizations it funded.

Now it seems that the unceasing attack on CHD waged by right-wing groups like the Wanderers Forum Foundation and the Capital Research Center, along with conservative Catholic groups like the Concerned Catholics of Baltimore and the American Life League, has finally paid off. Although CHD Associate Director Tim Collins denies that the new guidelines "in any way change our commitments [or] the way we do business," it is clear that the CHD has capitulated to the right and has given conservatives fuel to assail organizing in poor communities and communities of color.

Major Dilemmas

In certain sectors of the organizing community, the Bishops' latest action will be of little or no consequence. The values expressed and implied by the change of guidelines are in line with the organizational positions of congregation-based community organizations like the Industrial Areas Foundation, Pacific Institute of Community Organizations (PICO) and others, most of which organize in Catholic churches. CHD has accelerated its support for these groups from 2 grants in 1971, to 81 in 1994—fully 36 percent of all grantees. This percentage will surely grow as institution-based organizing continues its most-favored status within CHD.

For other organizations, especially those whose leaders and organizers are pro-choice, the new guidelines present an interesting dilemma. Do we just sign the new contract and hope that the local diocesan director and/or the CHD staff contact don't change the way they do business? If the CHD plays the heavy and gives us a hard time about our activities, programs or public positions on sexuality or abortion rights, will we be prepared to defend ourselves?

Or do we refuse to sign, and instead engage our staff, leaders, and members in a discussion about the issues contained in the contract, consolidate an organizational position on these issues, and risk losing some members or leaders in the process?

Some will undoubtedly choose to claim that "this is not an issue for our organization" because our focus is on economic justice, or environmental justice, or racial justice, or immigrant rights. This would be the type of distancing practiced by the apostle Peter during the night when the Roman tribune interrogated Jesus about his claims of being the Messiah. St. Peter, as predicted by Jesus during their last meal together a few hours before, claimed no knowledge or allegiance to Jesus on three separate occasions that evening. Saving his own skin meant that he had to abandon fealty to his convictions. Some organizations, I assume, will suffer similar lapses.

A New Wedge

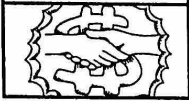
The new CHD guidelines will also drive a wedge between groups organizing in poor communities and communities of color and the primarily pro-choice and women's rights groups. Perhaps we will see a shorter list of organizing groups that will endorse pro-choice marches. Perhaps leaders and organizers will be absent from gatherings sponsored by The National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL), the Feminist Majority, NOW, and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. How many will risk losing their \$30,000 (typical CHD grant) from an already strapped organizational budget by engaging in joint projects and campaigns on the forbidden issues? This latest CHD action is likely to damage already problematic relationships between these important allies.

How CHD's rightward turn will affect efforts to organize poor people and social change movements in the long term remains to be seen. What is clear is that the new directive will accentuate conservative tendencies within community organizing and put progressives on the defensive. The CHD is directly attacking the organizing edge of interlocking class with race and gender.

But organizers are a creative bunch. We will find a way to make this rightward shift into an opportunity to sharpen the ideological edge of our organizations and the movement we care so much about, even without, or in spite of, the Bishops. **GFJ**

Francis Calpotura is co-director of the Center for Third World Organizing in Oakland, California. This article originally appeared in Colorlines, a new, national, multiracial magazine dedicated to covering race, culture and community organizing. To find out how to subscribe to Colorlines, contact Colorlines@colorlines.org.

Techniques



When Fundraising Strategies Wear Out

by Kim Klein

Nearly all organizations have three fundraising fantasies: *Fantasy 1:* The Council on Foundations will declare their group, "The group to fund now and forever" and, using one simple proposal photocopied over and over, the organization will apply to several foundations and receive lots of money. Because no strings will be attached to this money, there will be few reporting requirements.

Fantasy 2: Someone whom no one in the organization knows dies and leaves the group \$1,000,000 to do with as they see fit. Because no one knew the person, no one in the group is bereft at their loss.

Fantasy 3 (When it is clear the other two aren't happening): The organization creates a perfect fundraising plan, in which a variety of strategies work well and there are plenty of volunteers to help with the work. No one resents the time fundraising takes, because the strategies are lucrative and fun. Every year, the group uses the same plan and makes more money.

Fantasy 3 has a lot going for it. It is based in some reality. It calls for a plan, it recognizes that fundraising takes time, and it acknowledges that you have to fundraise every year. In fact, Fantasy 3 only goes wrong when it postulates that one plan will be created and used successfully year after year.

Wear and Tear

The fact is, like anything else, fundraising strategies wear out. Like taking care of a car, the trick is to anticipate wear and tear and deal with it before damage is done. There are a number of reasons for fundraising strategies getting

stale. Most common is that people in the organization get tired of them and start taking shortcuts. Mail appeals get terse and boring. The newsletter is full of typos and the articles lack passion. Thank-you notes are photocopied, with the donor's name filled in by a volunteer.

The second most common reason is that a strategy that works well for one or two groups is adopted by many groups and thus its effectiveness is decreased for everyone. This situation is particularly true with special events. One group makes a fortune on a dance-a-thon. They get a lot of publicity and everyone has a great time. So another group does a dance-a-thon. They do well. After the third or fourth or fifth group does one, people get tired of all the dance-a-thons and look around for something new to do. The dance-a-thon as a fundraising strategy starts to be less effective.

The same fate can befall almost any strategy. Even major donor campaigns (my personal favorite) are over-used in some communities and have lost some of their original effectiveness.

Finally, there is the problem of market saturation. Direct mail, phone solicitation, and other mass appeal strategies are now alienating donors as fast as they attract them.

All of these reasons are related to each other. It is hard to keep a feeling of excitement about your appeal letter if you know that it will show up next to 20 other worthy appeal letters in a donor's mail box. It is hard not to get cynical about all these problems when the struggle to raise enough money is never ending and even if you succeed in raising the amount of money you need for one year, that only means that you will have to start over next year.

How to Prevent a Strategy From Wearing Out

Fortunately, there are a number of things you can do to keep your fundraising strategies fresh. Here are three approaches and three examples to consider.

THREE APPROACHES

1. Let different people in the organization take the lead on fundraising strategies. No one person should write all the mail appeals, for example. Ask board members or volunteers to write a first draft. Get someone who has benefited from your work to write a testimonial. The fundraising staff can then work with these letters, but they will probably be much different letters than what you would have come up with.

Ditto for editing the newsletter. While one person should probably oversee and make final decisions about content, it is deadly for one person to always be in charge of the writing.

Double ditto for thank-you notes. The minute you stop adding personal notes to your thank-you notes, get someone else in there to help you. Volunteers and board members like writing thank-you notes, and a personal note is infinitely better than a form letter.

2. Try variations on a theme. Suppose your community has a dozen awards dinners, or that everyone is invited to a house party every week. If those are common strategies in your area, then send a mail appeal inviting people to stay home. This is called a "phantom event." Tell the people whom you would have invited that they have won an award from your group—the award is that they can put their feet up and have a nice cup of tea right after they write your group a check. They don't need to go anywhere or listen to a fundraising pitch—they just send the cash and relax at home.

3. Remember that just because you are tired of a strategy, it doesn't mean the donor is. I have a favorite Italian restaurant. I don't care if the people who work there get tired of fixing Italian food. I want Italian food when I go there. I want the same menu and the same decor. The same is true of my favorite vacation spots—I keep going back because I know what they offer and I like it. (Of course, I don't mind small improvements now and then.) Don't project onto the donor your own lack of enthusiasm for the strategy.

Even so, strategies do wear out. For example, a phantom event will work for one or two years, or every other year, but eventually it will become "another nonevent appeal" to be thrown in the wastebasket. This is especially true when the same groups that took on and tired out your dance-a-thon idea now use your idea of the phantom event.

A fundraising event takes at least one year to really get going, but often wears itself out after seven or eight years.

Similarly, predictable quarterly mail appeals need to be spruced up and varied in terms of timing, theme, design and such, or they will begin to get tossed after a few years.

So, how can you tell if it is you who are tired, or the donor? How do you know if the strategy needs a little remodeling or should be junked altogether? The answer is that often you don't know. You make your best guess. You can ask other people what they think and take that into account, but they may be reacting from their own tiredness unrelated to your event or campaign.

THREE EXAMPLES

These three examples show a range of responses to tired or worn out fundraising strategies.

EXAMPLE 1: The Community Center Friendraiser

A community center in a small town did a movie benefit every year, showing an old popular film. Before showing the movie, the group put on a short play that was a satire adapting the storyline of the movie to their town. For several years, this event got more and more popular. The plays were as well-received as the movie and often really hilarious. Modifying movies like "Singing in the Rain," "Casablanca" or "The Ten Commandments" to take place in their community was fun for the writers and actors, so it wasn't difficult to get people to participate.

But over time a number of problems with this event developed. First, to keep it available to the whole community, the group kept the ticket prices low. As a result, it was difficult to generate a lot of money; even with sales of popcorn and soda, the profit was not great. Second, the plays were sometimes too long and the jokes were sometimes too obscure for the audience. Third, after five or six years it got hard to find a movie that could be made into an entertaining play, and the novelty of the event began to wear off. Attendance fell after the fourth year and was reduced to pretty much the same people who also supported the group by mail.

When the development director called everyone together to begin the planning process for the seventh annual show, she hoped she could stimulate some excitement if she provoked her volunteers into defending the event. So she started by saying, "Let's not do this event again. It's getting boring." Much to her surprise, several volunteers agreed with her. "Let's quit while we are ahead," said one. "I agree," said another. "Let's stop now and wait for people to beg us to do this event again." "Much better than having them beg us not to do it," said a third. Others disagreed, but only half-heartedly. "It's not that hard to do," said one. "What else are we going to do?" Since they didn't have an idea of what to replace the movie event with, they hired me to help them figure out where to go from there.

We worked together in one long meeting. They had

made the most important move, which was to admit there was a problem. The first question I asked was, "Whose problem is it? Are the organizers worn out, but the audience happy? Or is everyone pretty much out of steam on this one?" Their answer came fairly easily: both organizers and audience were tired of this event.

Before deciding what to do about it, they reviewed their goals for holding an event. They enumerated three:

1. Bring the whole community together for a fun time. This means the event has to be affordable and children need to be welcome and entertained.

2. Bring in people who have not come to the community center before. Two types of people are particularly targeted—newcomers as the rural town expands, and the people who work on the surrounding farms who generally don't come to events.

3. Make more money than the film/play event had brought in. The group agreed that in their efforts to be affordable, they had "given away the store." They would have to create some income-generation methods as part of any event to boost revenues.

All three of these goals are appropriate to special events. In this instance, making more money from the event may have to give way to bringing the whole community together, or vice versa, since an event that is affordable for a range of people is not going to be a major money maker. A compromise on those goals might need to be made.

After more discussion, this is how they decided to salvage their event:

1. Discard the old movie idea. They had gone through the most popular old movies and they didn't seem to be a draw any more.

2. Since what attracted the most people was creating the play, turn the event into a talent show. Each act would be given a time limit and people wanting to be in the show would apply by describing their talent and paying a nominal fee to participate.

3. Add another money-making dimension. Merchants, craftspeople and restaurants would be encouraged to have booths in the lobby of the community center where people could shop and eat before the performance. Fees for the booths would be competitive with those at other fairs and events, and would generate the additional money the group wants to raise.

4. Create a small adbook to distribute containing the program for the talent show. The many self-employed people in this community could advertise their plumbing, contracting, massage, art therapy, tarot reading and other talents for enough money to cover the cost of the adbook itself and generate a little profit.

5. See this talent show idea as one that will last about three or four years and will then need to evolve into something else. It has the seeds of a number of other events:

crafts show, bringing in outside professional talent, food fair, and so on.

The first talent show was held on a Saturday afternoon. People from the outlying farms who came into town for supplies stayed for the event or browsed at the booths. The event had a lot more foot traffic because people could come into the booths without attending the talent show or they could just stay for part of the show. Admission to the show was only \$2 for adults and was free for children.

The community turned out a lot of talent, and it was clear that the talent show idea will work for quite a while. Some people were disappointed that there was no movie, so next year they may add a movie as an the evening entertainment to finish off the day.

At its most successful, the old movie/play event brought 200 people in audience and netted about \$2,000. With the income from the booths, the adbook and the entry fees for the talent show, the new event netted \$5,000 from about 300 people in its first year.

The event is still a lot of work, but the income and the new audience and participants have created a new event that will serve the community center for some time.

EXAMPLE 2: Fine-Tuning the Phone-A-Thon

An environmental group has done a phone-a-thon every year. They call all their members to ask them to renew their membership and to take some action on an issue, such as writing a letter or calling a legislator. Callers are also available to answer any questions about the group's work.

The group started using this strategy five years ago when they had about 200 members and were working on a high-profile and fairly complicated worker health-and-safety issue. They have now grown to 1,000 members and have a number of different programs, which they discuss in detail in their newsletter.

Calling all 1,000 donors has made the phone-a-thon onerous. It now extends over several nights and, while there are some people who enjoy making the calls, it is hard to get enough volunteers to cover all the members. Because many of the members are enthusiastic about the group's work, they ask a lot of questions about what is happening and what the group thinks about this and that environmental issue. This takes a lot of time and training of the volunteer callers.

The board and staff of the organization resist going to an entirely mail-based membership renewal system for two reasons. First, some find the phone-a-thon effective and enjoyable in renewing the relationships they have established with many of these donors over the years. Second, they feel that phoning is a more environmental strategy than sending out mail appeals.

However, the development director is having a hard time finding enough people to make all the calls, and get-

ting phone numbers for each member as they join is getting harder. Furthermore, it takes two to three calls to reach most people. Overall, she feels the amount of time the process takes is not justified by the returns.

When the group revisits its goals it finds that the original goal of the phone-a-thon—to build a strong membership base with people who could be counted on to be politically active on the issues as well as give money—is no longer valid. While 200 people might still be counted on for political actions, to keep 1,000 people mobilized takes much more staff than this group has. The group clarifies that raising money from the members is the primary goal of this strategy; knowing this, they are able to solve their problem.

They decide to segment their donors into three categories:

1. People who give less than \$100, who have responded well in the past to being called, and/or whom the board and volunteers who will be doing the phone-a-thon know personally. These are the people who will be called during the phone-a-thon.

2. People who have given \$100 or more for more than three years in a row. These people will be moved into a major gifts campaign. Instead of being called during the phone-a-thon, they will be called at another time by someone from a major gifts committee and offered the opportunity to meet personally with someone from the group. At that meeting they will be solicited for an increased donation.

3. Everyone else on the list. This group—by far the largest—will be sent a renewal letter. Just in case some of these people really did look forward to their annual phone contact, the letter will say, “If you would like to talk to one of our volunteers, do not send back your membership dues now. Just wait for our call. If you would rather not be disturbed, or you are not going to be in on the nights of our phone-a-thon, please send in your membership today.” Of those who do not send back their renewals, those who are not home when called will be sent a second letter (which is

their third reminder) asking them to renew. If they do not respond, they will be put into a lapsed file.

Sorting the names, getting volunteers to go through the names, and then getting a letter out takes the same amount of work as organizing the phone-a-thon used to. However, the organization is now doing a mail appeal, a personalized phone appeal to the most likely responders, and they are ready for their major gifts campaign. They are now using the phone-a-thon properly and working with the donors properly.

EXAMPLE 3: A Sustainable Sustainer Program

The final example looks at a group that has made even more radical changes to their strategy. This organization publishes a magazine that goes to about 6,000 subscribers. The income from the subscriptions does not cover the cost of the magazine, so a few years ago the group decided to institute a “sustainer” program, asking people to give money over and above their subscription fee.

They hired someone with a strong marketing background to develop the program and, over two years, this person put in place an elaborate tiered sustainer system. The basic magazine subscription is \$15. For \$35, you also got a T-shirt. For \$100, you got the T-shirt and a poster. For \$250, you got the T-shirt, poster, and a book written by an author the magazine features. For \$500 or more you got all the aforementioned plus an invitation to a reception for a celebrity.

For three years the group raised a lot of money with this program. Even factoring in the staff time needed to send all the benefits, they showed a handsome profit. But after three years, their retention rate started to fall. Many people who had given \$35 dropped back to \$15. Also it took work to have a new T-shirt designed every year and to find a new book. Staff began to grouse about the time the fulfillment took and the marketing person, feeling unappreciated, left.

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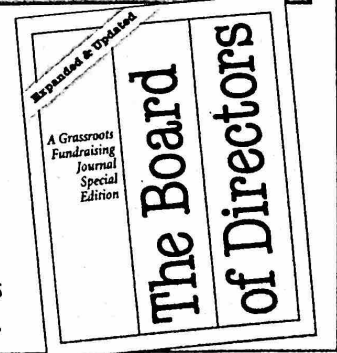
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In response, the executive director and board changed the marketing job description to a development position and hired someone who has both marketing and fundraising experience. This person made a small change at first. In the reply device, she added a box for the sustainer to check if they do not want the benefit for their gift, or if they would like it sent to someone else.

When more than half of the sustainers check that they do not want the benefit and about one-third of the others either have their benefit sent to someone else or just say, "Send it to someone who wants it," the development director had the answer to what to do about this cumbersome program. She got rid of it altogether, all at once.

Loud cries were heard from staff (those who were grouching previously) that "You can't just cut things off like that," but not a peep was heard from the sustainers. At the end of two more years, her sustainer renewal rate is slightly lower than her predecessor's, but without the cost of the benefits and the time fulfilling them, the income is much higher. People are simply asked to give \$35, \$50, \$100 or whatever they can afford. Those who give \$100 or more are called and, if they are willing, are visited and asked for an even higher gift.

Through this process, the development director has more than doubled the number of people giving \$500-1,000 from 10 to 25, and the number giving \$250-499 from 30 to 100. From time to time, when a book is published by someone who writes for the magazine, she plans to make it available to sustainers for a fraction of its retail price.

In this way, the organization has gotten rid of those donors who were actually shoppers disguised as donors and built a strong base of people loyal to the magazine, not the benefits.

Conclusion

Fundraising strategies should be examined every year to make sure they are doing what they are supposed to do in terms of your overall fundraising plan. Your strategies will have to be modified, revamped and sometimes scrapped to meet the needs of a growing organization. It is important to involve a lot of people in fundraising to avoid that feeling of being on a treadmill. Just because something has worked in the past doesn't mean it will always work.

On the other hand, just because something isn't working up to par doesn't mean it can't be made to work with a few adjustments.

Keep your eyes on the overall goal. Be detached from the details, and don't take it personally if something that you started needs to change. By keeping focused on the mission of the organization, you will be able to make its fundraising strategies work for you. **G3J**

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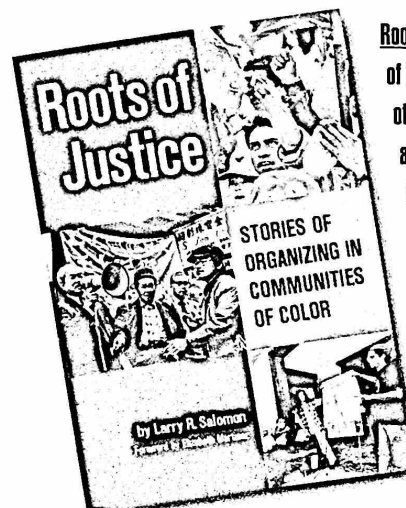
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Is What's in the News

Making the News: A Guide for Nonprofits & Activists

by Jason Salzman

Westview Press / 290 pages / \$19.95

Reviewed by Kim Klein

Michael Moore, author of *Downsize This!*, gave this book an extraordinary accolade when he said, "This book should be in the hands of every community group that wants to make a difference."

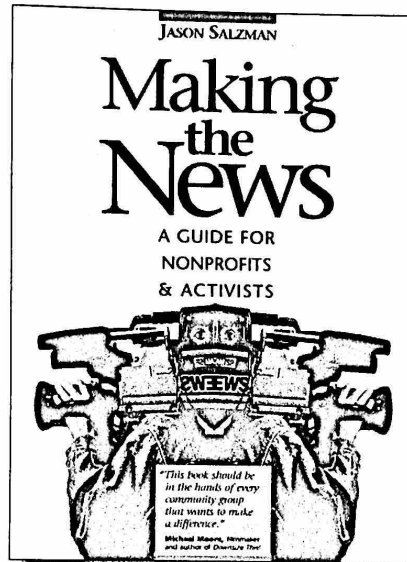
I would have to agree. Salzman understands what it is like to be a small nonprofit with no staff to do media and little or no front money to finance events. His book is logically laid out and, with dozens of real-life examples and a wide range of helpful quotes from colleagues in the industry, it speaks to the real experiences of nonprofits.

Salzman poses the question, "What is news?" and answers with the opinions of several journalists and editors, citing as probably the best definition of "news" Leon Sigal's observation that what is news is what's in the news. Salzman says that many small groups complain about the lack of coverage they get, but have not thought through what will make something newsworthy. Of course, there is an element of chance and timing to getting stories covered, and persistence is one of the most important elements of getting media coverage.

In the introduction Salzman tells of protesters in Nevada who are frustrated by the scant news coverage they receive for their rallies at a former testing site for nuclear bombs near Las Vegas. He points out that rallies are so common at this site that the government has put up a road sign saying, "Demonstrators on Roadway." There is little news value to a rally near that sign.

Salzman does not gloss over the politics of what is covered in the news, nor the fact that more and more media outlets are controlled by fewer and fewer sources. He simply tells us not to give up on mainstream media, and to be smart about how to approach them.

His recommendations remind me of fundraising: you have to be disciplined, be clear in your message (and have a



simple message), not expect everyone you contact to be excited to hear from you, and keep at it.

The book is divided into six sections encompassing 37 chapters. The sections are: How to Stage a Media Event, How to Generate News Coverage without Staging a Media Event, How to Handle Unsolicited Media Attention, How to Be a News Source and Media Critic, How to Develop a Strategy to Win Your Campaign and Resources.

Each chapter is short and to the point. He covers all the topics you would expect—How to Write a News Release, Publish a Letter to the Editor, Promote a Story to Journalists at

National News Outlets—and some you wouldn't. For example, Sway a Cartoonist includes these hints: "If a picture is worth a thousand words, a cartoon can be worth millions of them—and a cartoon can be reprinted in a small space and distributed to decision makers, supporters and opponents." And the obvious, "Don't offer specific ideas for a cartoon...send information that's related to the topics that seem to interest her [the cartoonist] most." Tune Your Cause to Talk Radio and Shine the Media Spotlight on Nonprofit Products are two other chapters that provide helpful and unusual information.

It's easy to read this book from cover to cover or to use it as a reference, going straight to the chapter on what you need to know. There is also a very helpful list of other media how-to books, news media watchdog groups, media literacy organizations, communications consultants, and an interesting bibliography of other readings on media. The book is also well indexed, which makes the information easy to find.

Jason Salzman is the president of Cause Communications, which offers media how-to workshops and consulting services to nonprofit organizations, and is the cofounder of Rocky Mountain Media Watch.

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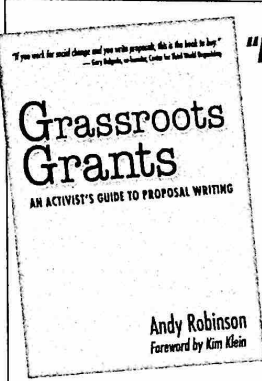
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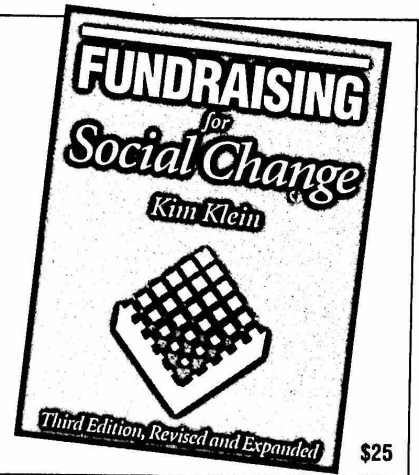
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