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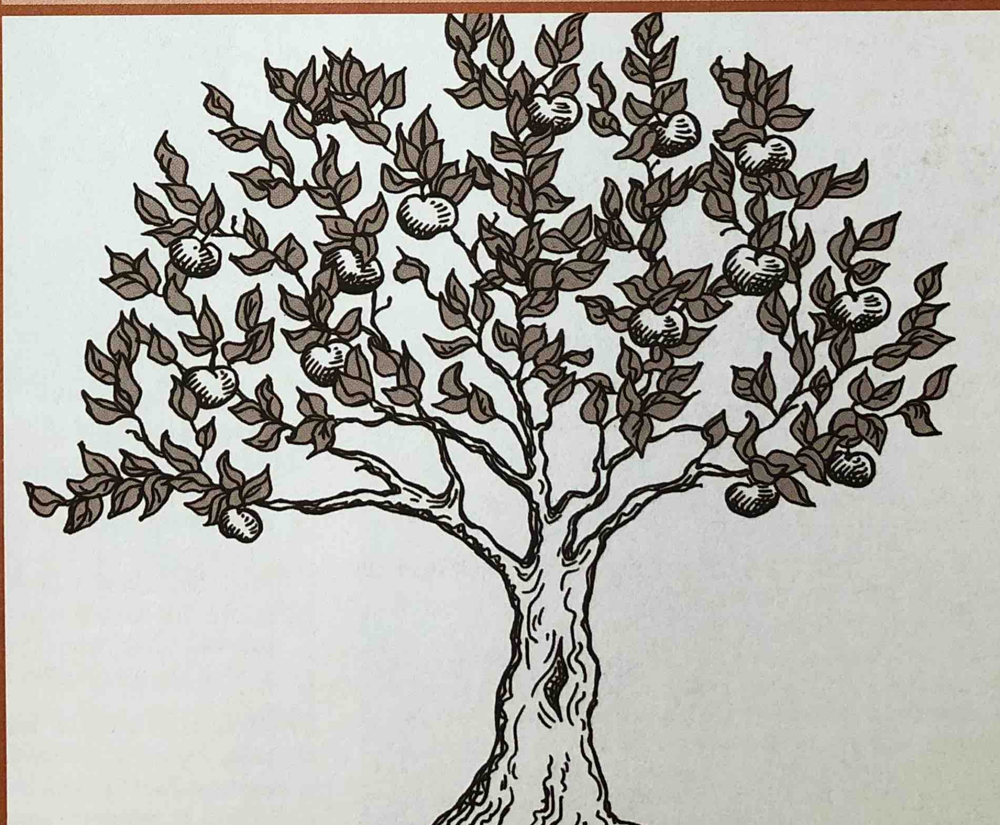

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How to Get Your Board to Raise Money—*Plan X*

by Kim Klein

As longtime *Journal* readers know, we have offered dozens of ideas over the years about ways to get board members to raise money. We have outlined the rationale for board members to be involved in fundraising and tried to shame, cajole, reward, threaten, coax or badger board members into raising money. We have suggested dozens of different ways board members can be involved in fundraising without directly asking for money. In fact, we have written so many articles on this topic that we have compiled the best of them into a very popular booklet called, *The Board of Directors.* Judging from repeat sales of that booklet and repeated requests for training on the subject, we flatter ourselves that we have been helpful.

However, over the years it has struck me that part of the problem of getting board members to raise money is the structure of the Fundraising Committee. People have tried to make that structure work in various ways, which is why this article is called "Plan X"— we have gone through Plans A-W already.

Plan X promotes the possibly shocking idea of getting rid of your fundraising committee. The existence of the Fundraising Committee may be one of the main reasons that board members don't raise money. The committee is often made up of some combination of people who weren't at the meeting when the committees were formed, the newest board members, and people who have been on the committee for a long time and are burned out. They are not particularly effective as a committee.

Even if everyone on the committee has chosen to be there, they will be coming to fundraising from very different viewpoints. At a committee meeting one person will suggest doing an event in order to raise the organization's visibility. Another will argue that an event is too much work for too little money. That person will make a compelling case for a major donor campaign. A third will say that the problem is that the group doesn't reach out to people enough and will suggest a phone or direct mail campaign to bring in a lot of new donors. The group will debate the pros and cons of each idea without realizing that the organization should probably engage in all three strategies.

Sometimes people are recruited onto the Fundraising Committee with the promise that their job is to coordinate the fundraising work of the rest of the board. The committee members faithfully figure out what the plan is and what each board member's role should be and then spend their time resenting the rest of the board members for not doing the work that has been assigned to them. Those board members not on the Fundraising Committee resent the work assigned to them because they are serving on other committees, and some of them went to great lengths not to be on the Fundraising Committee because they don't want to do fundraising.

This article outlines two options for reorganizing the way fundraising is divided among your board members.

These options offer a way to structure fundraising along more logical lines and should be seen as a way to implement the fundraising efforts you are probably already making.

Two Options for Replacing the Fundraising Committee

OPTION ONE: Go from One Committee to Four

Replace the single Fundraising Committee with four committees, which are named after and do the work implied in the three functions of fundraising—acquisition, retention, and upgrade.

The Acquisition Committee is in charge of all efforts to get people to become donors: direct mail, special events, media, speaking engagements—any effort your organization engages in whose main or sole purpose is to recruit new donors who have not given before. The Acquisition Committee's success is measured by how many donors they bring in rather than how much money they raise, because acquisition strategies are the costliest to implement, and sometimes even successful acquisition efforts lose money.

This is the perfect committee for board members who are willing to ask friends to join, or those members who like speaking at Rotary Clubs, churches, synagogues, neighborhood meetings and so on, or those people who like mingling at events with people they have never met.

The Retention Committee does all the work that goes into getting people to renew their gift. They supervise or even put out the newsletter, they oversee the database, they send out extra appeals for money and conduct the yearly phone-a-thon to members. Some special events, especially Open Houses or the Annual General Meeting in membership organizations, fall under the purview of this committee.

This is the perfect committee for people who are willing to talk to people who are known to be supportive of your group. Their goals relate to retaining both money and people. This committee keeps track of your retention rate and makes sure it is what it should be. (An organization's retention rate is the percentage of donors giving one year who give the next. A good retention rate is about 66%—in other words, of all the people who gave one year, 66% of that group gave again the next year. Higher retention rates usually indicate that the group has a weak acquisition program—not enough donors are being brought in. Lower retention rates probably indicate that donors are not being asked for money often enough.)

The Upgrade Committee (more traditionally known as the Major Gifts Committee) has two somewhat different tasks. First, they identify people who could give large gifts (a major gift is defined by the organization, but is generally any gift over $100). Most of these people will come from the existing list of donors, but this committee may also invite people to become first-time donors to the organization with a large gift. Second, the Upgrade Committee works with the top 10% of the donors to ask them to renew or increase their giving. (In an organization with a successful program of individual donors, the top 10% should be supplying 60% of the money the organization raises from individuals.) Because this committee works closely with a smaller number of donors, their success is measured in large part by how much money they raise. The Upgrade Committee will oversee or implement the major donor drives, possibly the pledge system, cultivation events, special mailings to major donors, and the like. This committee is for board members comfortable with asking for money in person and for those who want the most money for the effort they put into fundraising.

One member from each committee is assigned to an *Oversight Committee* (a more true Fundraising Committee) so that the Acquisitions, Retention and Upgrade committees coordinate their work and have a clear division of tasks. Sometimes one or two of the committees may work together on a strategy, such as an event aimed at both new and old donors.

The amount of work and even the kind of work each committee does depends in large part on how many paid staff are involved in fundraising. If the organization has a full-time development director, that person will do much of the coordination and overall planning. She or he may handle all the mailings and the newsletter. Each organization can work this out, so that everyone's efforts are being used in the most effective way. The Acquisition and Retention committees understand that their work is in part to move people to the next level (from prospect to new donor; new donor to continuing donor; from continuing donor to major donor).

Organizations that are building an endowment or planning for a capital campaign will have to create committees for those fundraising activities as well. Many organizations that have gone to this system have also brought people who are not board members onto each of the committees to augment the work of the board members.

Everyone on the board is on one of these committees, so there is no ducking out of fundraising. However, each committee requires different skills, and this structure allows you to play to each board member's strength. Several groups I have worked with have converted to this structure. Some have really liked it, others are still deciding how they like it. However none of the groups has gone back to the old style of Fundraising Committee because, with this system, each group has experienced more involvement from more board members.

OPTION TWO: Move from Standing Committees to Ad Hoc Committees

Option Two argues against having any standing committees. Many boards are using this idea already with functions like nominating, hiring, or strategic planning. The committees are formed, do their work, and dissolve. Functions like finance, personnel and fundraising have not lent themselves to this structure as easily because they are ongoing functions. However, there is a way to organize your fundraising on this ad hoc basis.

To do so, your fundraising plan needs to be structured so that as many strategies as possible are time-limited activities and as little as possible is ongoing. When the plan is put on a calendar, at any given time no more than two strategies are being actively pursued. Then committees are formed for each strategy. The following sample calendar shows how this ad hoc committee structure would work:

JANUARY 5–MARCH 1: MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Goal: 250 new members; income goals to be determined.

Strategies: Mail; one-day all volunteer canvass; Annual General Meeting March 1.

Membership Committee: 10 people: three oversee acquisition mailing, three recruit current members to carry out canvass and train them to do so, and four plan Annual General Meeting.

Budget: to be determined with Development Director.

MARCH 15–APRIL 15: MAIL AND PHONE RENEWAL CAMPAIGN

Goal: 400 renewals with a median gift of $50 = $20,000 minimum.

Strategies: Send out renewal mailing, with follow-up phone call at phone-a-thon evenings of April 2–3.

Renewal committee: three people plus volunteers for phone-a-thon

Budget: $500 for mailing and snacks at phone-a-thon.

MAY 1– AUGUST 1: HOUSE PARTIES

Goal: 10 house parties raising $1,000 each = $10,000 from 200 new or upgraded donors.

Strategy: Find 10 people to host house parties they think could bring in $1,000. Create generic invitation each host can use with house party packet. Help hosts figure out how many people to invite, when to have it, and who should speak.

House Party Committee: Two people plus ten hosts plus three speakers who can cover all ten parties. The two people on the committee may also be hosts or speakers.

Budget: $1,000 for invitations and materials to give out at parties.

SEPTEMBER 10–OCTOBER 30: MAJOR DONOR CAMPAIGN

Goal: $50,000 raised from 200 donors.

Strategy: Combination of personal letters, follow-up phone calls and visits to current high-end donors.

Major Donor Committee: 5 people to coordinate plus 15 more to help with prospect identification, letters, calls and visits.

Budget: $1,500 for training major gifts committee, materials for committee members and for donors.

NOVEMBER 10–DECEMBER 15: YEAR-END WRAP-UP

Goal: Ask everyone to renew who hasn't already; make sure all major donors have been properly followed-up on; send out year-end appeal to current donors; hold Open House.

Strategies: Mail, phone, personal letters and personal phone calls, Open House.

Committee: three people plus the rest of board and staff for discrete projects.

Goals and Budget: To be determined depending on outcome of previous strategies.

Notice that there are about two weeks between the end of one fundraising period and the beginning of the next. Designing fundraising this way will depend on having a full-time development director because a lot of coordination, preparation and follow-up are required to make this work. However, this is a great way to get board members involved, because they only have to work on one strategy plus be available for the year-end wrap-up. Once they have finished house parties or phone-a-thon, they do not need to think about fundraising until that strategy comes around next year.

Organizations that have used this option report great success or great failure with it, depending on the experience of the development director with all these strategies and his or her ability to work well with a constantly changing set of volunteers. The other variable is having enough people to call on for specific tasks. This option will definitely fail if the same people are making the calls at the phone-a-thon, then hosting a house party, followed by asking for money in person and then helping with the year-end wrap-up. That's a formula for certain burn-out.

Conclusion

I believe that the options presented here provide a lot of flexibility and room for creativity, yet offer enough structure so that you do not drown in possibilities of how to organize your fundraising. As with all volunteer work, the premise we are operating from is that the volunteers (in this case, board members) know and accept their responsibility with regard to fundraising and are willing (they don't have to love it) to carry out the tasks that they commit to.

We are also assuming that the paid staff wants to have a lot of volunteers involved. This would mean that staff would have to be willing to take the advice of board members and the suggestions of volunteers and work as a team. This is quite different from the "sole proprietor" approach that is popular among staff who believe they can do everything better and easier themselves and that to use volunteers takes too much effort.

Organizations that want to last encourage people to know how to do many jobs. Theaters have understudies for key roles, sports teams have players ready to replace those who are injured, successful businesses have people who can handle a variety of jobs. This flexibility requires practice and systematically providing learning opportunities. Just as it is obvious that an organization with one or two sources of funding is an accident waiting to happen, the same is true of an organization with two or three people who raise all the money.

Whatever structure you choose for fundraising, make sure it involves the maximum number of people you can possibly manage, so that as many people as possible have as much experience as possible in all the strategies for fundraising your organization uses. GFJ

Kim Klein is co-publisher of the Journal.

Volunteers Are Changing:

How Volunteer Programs Can Adapt

by Will Murray

The lifestyles of Americans have changed dramatically in the last twenty years, and will continue to become more complex in the future. The impact of lifestyle choices is just beginning to be seen in the way people integrate volunteer work in their lives.

Demographics is the change that has already taken place, according to management expert Peter Drucker. Nowhere is this more true than in the volunteer management field. Things have changed, dramatically, in the age composition and lifestyles of people wishing to volunteer, but the change is yet to be felt entirely.

Not so long ago, people worked for a single company until retirement, then volunteered most of their time for an organization whose cause they shared. Spouses of the breadwinners held down the home front and volunteered throughout their homemaker careers.

My grandparents are a classic case. My grandmother never worked outside the home. She raised a wonderful daughter, created ceramic art, and volunteered a great deal of time to the American Red Cross. My grandfather was a die-cutter for the Owens-Illinois Company, creating the dies that would become molds for glass decanters and bottles. When he retired, he too volunteered for the American Red Cross, becoming a volunteer driver transporting ill and elderly people (some not as old as himself!) to doctor appointments. My grandparents stayed in the same volunteer positions with the same agency for decades. Only when they themselves became ill and unable to march on did they retire from volunteer service. Theirs was a rather usual and predictable life pattern.

It's Not Like That Anymore

With the first of the 77 million Americans of the Baby Boom generation reaching retirement age, volunteer managers have been bracing for a wave of volunteers to knock on their doors. The knocks are not coming. People these days do not live like my grandparents. They do not work for a single employer for an entire career. They do not confine their careers to homemaking. And when they retire, they do not settle into a single volunteer position.

People today may have not only several different jobs during their career, they may also have several different and totally unrelated careers. Women are in the workforce in force, with women who do not work outside the home at some time now a minority. And retirees are entirely likely to take another job, work as a consultant or even start up a new business. The refrain I hear continuously from retired people around the country is, "I'm busier now than when I was working." Retired people have second and third careers, grandchildren to visit, distant lands to see, and very, very long to-do lists.

Given these competing interests for the potential volunteer's time, what's a volunteer manager to do?

Take a Project Management Approach

Most potential volunteers have lives so packed with obligations and plans that they cannot commit a large, continuing chunk of dedicated time to volunteering. Many volunteers coming from the corporate sector have learned from their work experience to organize their work as projects. This technique works well for volunteer managers also. Projects have a specific product or outcome, a start date, and an end date. Programs, like the ones my grandparents were part of, are ongoing, with less specific products.

Many potential volunteers feel most comfortable committing to a project when they know what they must produce, by what date, and how many hours it will entail. They need to know that the project—and their commitment—has an endpoint. Many of these new-style volunteer projects also entail a great deal of flexibility in schedule and technique. In project management, the end result counts, and how many hours on what schedule in which location is of very secondary concern. It's perfect for people with complex lifestyles.

Reorganize the Work, Not the Volunteer

Think about a piece of work you need done and then think about a specific person. Which is easier to change? Almost any unit of work can be organized as a project. Having a clear sense of the endpoint is foremost. When the work is done, what specifically will the volunteer have produced? Everything from a fundraising event to front-desk management lends itself to project management organization.

The Volunteer Connection of Boulder County (CO) is launching its first capital campaign, using an all-volunteer staff. We have had trouble recruiting people for the campaign committee—it's a year-long assignment—but have had great success asking people to do part of the work of the committee. The owner of a public relations firm declined to join the campaign committee, but agreed to work with it to develop and implement the public relations campaign. He said he just couldn't commit the time to join the campaign committee, although he is delivering a specific product that will take considerable time.

Modern Volunteer Management Fits with Modern Philanthropy

Donors are also increasingly looking for specific products, results and outcomes. Many emerging donors made their careers in the infotech and manufacturing worlds. Project management is how they made their money. They developed specific products by a specific date, and managed to achieve results. Paul Brainerd, who invented the entire desktop publishing world when he developed PageMaker software, also created a $40 million charitable foundation aimed at environmental activism. In an interview published in the November, 1999 issue of United Airlines' *Hemispheres* magazine, he explained, "There are business skills we bring to a project that many nonprofits don't have. We're adding more value to the equation than just writing a check." This is especially true of younger donors, in their 30s and 20s, who want to know what their contribution is buying and that the charity knows how to get things done.

The requirements for organizing work as projects are simple. The volunteer manager must have specific goals in mind—number of meals served, decline in illiteracy rate, a nature trail to build. Then she or he must identify all the tasks involved in achieving the goal. Each chunk is a potential project that a volunteer could tackle. This approach is available regardless of the size of the organization, and takes no more time to manage than other approaches. The volunteer manager just has to know where she or he wants to end up.

Some volunteer positions absolutely require a long-term commitment and belong in the program, not project, category. Positions that require extensive training, background checks, or other heavy organizational investments demand that the organization recover those initial investments. Programs that require regular attendance, such as teachers for English as a Second Language or Big Brothers also demand a long-term, program approach. Careful recruiting will be ever more important as the kinds of volunteers decline in number.

The lives of potential volunteers are complicated. They are packing a lot into life, and their Daytimers prove it. No longer can people who wish to volunteer carve out large, regularly scheduled chunks of time to do so. Like all other aspects of their lives, volunteer activities will have to fit in where they can. Volunteer managers who reconfigure their work needs as projects, with a defined deliverable and definite time boundaries, are in a good position to attract and engage highly competent volunteers. Many of these volunteers, having donated the sweat of their brow and the sweat of their brain to the organization, will want to donate funds as well. If, that is, they were able to make a contribution that resulted in a significant and tangible difference, and if their time was used productively. We can't ask them to show up every Tuesday from now to forever. We can ask them to donate a defined block of time to create a specific positive result. And they will respond. GFJ

Will Murray is managing partner of Conservation Impact, LLC, a management consulting company specializing in conservation organizations, and a board member of The Volunteer Connection of Boulder County, CO.

Principles

The Perennial Question

of Clean and Dirty Money

by Kim Klein

Recently, I have received several phone calls and e-mails asking about a problem that surfaces at some point in the life of almost every organization. The problem was nicely laid out in the following e-mail:

Dear Kim:

My group is struggling with what I understand to be a perennial problem: dirty money. The questions are: Should we take dirty money and how do we decide? A corporation has offered us a large grant for operating expenses, but several people in our group have problems with this corporation because of the way they treat their workers (badly). On the other hand, we need the money and not many places give you money for operating expenses. What shall we do?

I thought *Journal* readers might be interested in my answer:

Your group has indeed stumbled upon the subject that has probably taken up more time in progressive groups than almost any other topic you could name. In fact, had some groups held a "dirty money discussion-a-thon" and sought pledges for each minute they spent discussing the very questions you raise, they would be handsomely endowed by now and could change their discussion to dirty and clean investment policies. However, you raise serious questions that are not easy to answer, which is why this debate is perennial.

I would like to divide your questions into two parts and look at them both.

The first part is the idea that there is dirty money and clean money. I don't subscribe to this idea. Money is a tool. Similarly a hammer is a tool. A hammer can be used to help build a house or it can be used to bludgeon someone to death, but we never talk about dirty and clean hammers. Because we don't credit hammers with power they don't have, we are able to see just what a hammer is and to separate the hammer itself from what it might be used to do. We need to get that kind of perspective on money. Money can be used wisely or squandered. It can be raised honestly or dishonestly. It can be earned, inherited, stolen, given, received, lost, found and many combinations of all of these. It is not in itself dirty or clean.

If you let go of the idea of dirty and clean money, you can focus on the real questions in accepting money, which are: How does it make you feel to accept money from a corporation whose labor practices you find appalling? And, how does it make you look to others to accept this money? What will be the cost in goodwill, faith in your organization or even actual money given to your organization, if you accept this money?

I have seen organizations answer this question in various ways. The most sensible one was adopted by San Francisco's Coalition for the Medical Rights of Women in 1980 during a marathon discussion about accepting free printing from Playboy Corporation. As many readers will remember, Playboy Corporation has always been a strong supporter of civil liberties and reproductive rights groups, and used to offer to print stationery, envelopes, invitations, newsletters and the like to nonprofit groups working for those causes. The group simply had to put "Printing donated by the Playboy Corporation" somewhere on the printed piece.

The Coalition (the first place I worked as a development director) had occasionally used Playboy to get some of this printing, which was a big help financially, but always with great uneasiness. As a collective, we discussed whether to continue taking the free printing. We argued back and forth, with those in favor saying, "Playboy made their money off of women and we should get some." Those against argued that Playboy exploited women and promoted sexism and we would help them in their sex-for-money pursuit by taking their free printing. Late one night, after we had made and re-made every argument several times, one person finally said, "I don't know whether it is right or wrong to take this money. All I know is that the idea of taking Playboy's money or their free printing makes me want to vomit."

From then on, in questions about taking money, we applied the Vomit Test. If a person who was important to the organization—staff, board, volunteer, longtime friend—said, "Taking money from such-and-such place makes me want to vomit," then we wouldn't take it because that person and her continuing contributions to our group were more important than any money.

I have never found a more rational approach to the question, "How does it make us feel to accept money from a source whose practices we do not condone?"

The second question, "How does it make us look to the outside world to take this money?" is a more practical question. Sometimes a source of money will pass the Vomit Test, but fail this second test. For example, a board member of a tiny health center in rural New Mexico was a fraternity brother of the vice-president of a large uranium mining operation that is polluting the entire area around it with radioactive uranium tailings. Through his contact, the board member secured a grant from this mining corporation, which so outraged several major donors to this group that they stopped giving. The ensuing bad publicity and loss of donations was a major factor in the demise of that group the following year.

When an organization accepts money from a source that is controversial, it needs to think about how its other sources of money might react. Of course, others' reactions are sometimes hard to judge, but generally, people will be shocked or offended if an organization accepts money from a place that is perceived to be in conflict with the goals of the organization. So when a mining corporation whose irresponsible practices are causing serious health problems donates to a health center, it can be predicted to cause outrage. Had they donated to the public library, there might have been less outcry.

The other factor in accepting money from a controversial source is the amount of money relative to the budget of the organization, and what kind of recognition the source wants for their gift. Though this may have happened, I have never heard of an organization spending hours debating whether to accept a $25 donation from even the most foul corporation or from one of that corporation's employees, because that amount of money cannot buy any influence. Similarly, I rarely hear of an organization refusing to accept even a large gift from an individual who may have made their money from a horrible corporation, because the corporation will not receive any glory for that gift.

Sometimes an organization will accept money from a corporation if they do not have to publicize that gift, but refuse to accept it if they do. The hypocrisy of that position can be helpful to groups sorting out whether to take money or not. Ask yourself, "If this gift from this source were to be headline news in our local paper tomorrow, would we be happy or would we be nervous about the consequences?" If happy, take the money. If you would rather people didn't know about the gift, then don't.

The issue of clean and dirty money generally comes up in relation to corporations. Since corporations are only responsible for about 5% of all the money given away in the private sector, and only 11% of corporations give away any money at all, I think organizations are better off focusing their fundraising efforts on building a broad base of individual donors. Seeking corporate funds may not be a winning prospect, no matter how you look at it. GFJ

Kim Klein is co-publisher of the Journal.

Profile of a Donor

by Stephanie Roth

As most *Journal* readers know, 82% of money given away by individuals in the United States comes from families with incomes of $60,000 or less. The donor profiled here is part of that 82%, and is therefore typical of the millions of people in the United States who give money away. She is a donor to a variety of organizations, including some that subscribe to the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal,* but does not come from a family with a tradition of giving, and has never included "donor" as part of how she thinks of her identity.

The donor is a Japanese-American, single woman in her mid-thirties living in a major metropolitan area. She is self-employed as a massage therapist, and lives in a rented apartment with two roommates. She earns between $24,000 and $28,000 a year and lives in a community with a very high cost of living, but her living expenses are reasonable because of her shared housing situation.

While this donor has been involved as a member or volunteer with a handful of community organizations for many years, it is only recently that she began to think more consciously and proactively about her financial support of organizations she believes in.

Her thinking and behavior started to change last year after she attended a weeklong meditation retreat. She began to think about her life goals and things she wanted to change in her life. One area that she gave a lot of thought to was how she spent her money. She also thought a lot about the state of the world and her feeling that she wasn't doing as much as she could to make a difference.

She decided that she wanted to make some changes in the way she spent her time and her money. She made a conscious decision to live more simply and to make more deliberate decisions about her use of money. She pointed out that this decision does not make her feel deprived in any way. She has enough to live on, is able to take vacations, but has shifted some priorities to be able to give away more money.

Many organizations overlook individuals with a demographic profile like our donor's, assuming such a person couldn't afford to give a major gift and thus wouldn't be worth contacting personally. What's important to note here is that the values that led this donor to want a simple lifestyle are the same values that make her a good and thoughtful donor.

Starting last year, she decided to give away 10% of her income. However, she does not receive any tax advantages for her giving, because she files a short form with the IRS. In fact, 71% of Americans do not receive a tax advantage for their giving for the same reason. There are clearly many other motivations for giving, as the amount of money given away each year in the U.S. continues to rise.

When this donor began looking for organizations to support, she turned to friends who work in nonprofits for information on who was doing what on particular issues. She felt she could get the most reliable recommendations from people who had hands-on experience and friends who had worked with a number of organizations in their community. The donor ultimately chose organizations that reflected her interests and commitment to environmental justice, women's rights, reproductive rights, and international relief based in large part on suggestions from her trusted friends. She now typically gives between $50 and $200 as a single gift.

This donor does not generally respond to direct mail appeals, unless the appeal comes from a group she already knows. She prefers not to receive phone solicitations. No organization has ever asked her for a personal meeting, and she isn't sure how she would respond to such a request. She did remember, however, a group that called to thank her for a recent gift. She felt that was a nice touch — a welcome change from the more typical call to ask for money.

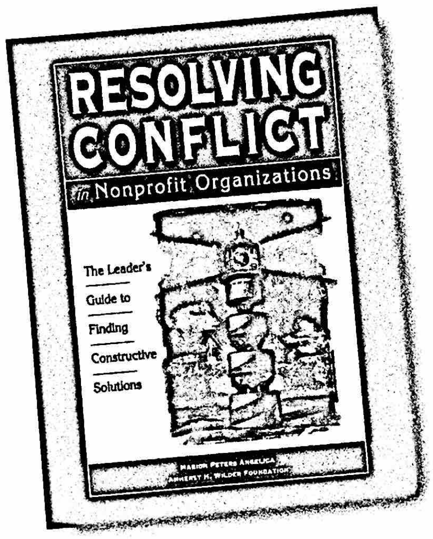
This donor's way of finding out about groups she wants to support—by talking to people she knows and trusts who work with nonprofits—highlights the importance of personal relationships in identifying new donors. Developing such relationships requires getting as many people as possible who are affiliated with an organization thinking about who might be interested in its work. It requires letting staff, board members, volunteers, members and donors know how important it is to talk about the organization to folks they know. Creating "buzz" about the work they're doing, and then asking for support, will lead to more people willing to give it. Too often groups only think about personal solicitation in terms of very large gifts and leave the rest of their fundraising to impersonal acquisition strategies such as direct mail. By doing that, they leave out donors like this one—willing to give $100–$200 to a group if they came with a personal recommendation. GFJ

Stephanie Roth is co-publisher of the Journal.

RESOLVING CONFLICT Constructively

Resolving Conflict in Nonprofit Organizations: The Leader's Guide to Finding Constructive Solutions
by Marion Peters Angelica
Amherst Wilder / 170 pages / $28

Reviewed by Nancy Adess



Does your organization ever have tension-filled disagreements between board and staff people? Staff members, board members or other volunteers who just can't get along? Clashes over what the most important issues are or the best ways to proceed? For many of us, conflicts such as these make us want to stop our ears up and hope they'll be over soon. Marion Angelica has a better answer. In fact, many answers, depending on the specific situation.

Angelica is a mediator with extensive experience serving on and consulting to nonprofit boards. In *Resolving Conflict in Nonprofit Organizations,* she presents a detailed analysis of how and why conflict arises in nonprofit organizations and specific steps to deal with it.

Nonprofits are fertile grounds for conflict, Angelica says, because they are facing continual changes in both external conditions (government programs, natural disasters, community demographics, requirements from funders) and internal conditions (turnover in staff and board, new technologies, cultural differences). Typical points of conflict in nonprofits, she points out, include differences among board members, the division of authority between executive and board, and differences in management and personal styles among staff.

Angelica begins with a thorough analysis of the variety of areas in which conflict can arise, including issues of organizational structure, values, and specific individual interests, and the different ways conflict can manifest—directly, indirectly or violently. She describes what conflict feels like within a person and the need to place it in the context of one's own personal and cultural history.

The rest of the book details how to resolve conflict effectively, the role of the person acting as mediator, and steps in designing and conducting a conflict resolution process. Exercises help develop the skills and techniques key to successful conflict management, including communications skills such as affirming and restating, mirroring body language, asking neutral questions, and breaking stalemates.

The book is replete with such helpful exercises, along with "pearls of wisdom" and useful worksheets. It goes beyond simply describing the issues and techniques to presenting concrete ways to develop the skills to implement them.

Marion Angelica truly knows about conflict—its various faces, its subtleties and maneuvers. She exposes the assortment of unskillful behaviors that keep conflict alive—needing to win, unwillingness to give up a fight, questioning process to derail agreements, bickering as a style to preserve a relationship—and suggests useful interventions. She explores how to manage conflicts between board and staff, involving funders or volunteers, and problems of harassment and discrimination. She also provides information on searching for and choosing the right assistance if outside help should become needed.

If your organization has struggled with resolving conflict in any of its many forms—and what organization hasn't?—here's help to keep you from wanting to hide in the back room till the storm blows over.

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