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Grassroots Fundraising Journal

VOLUME 20 • NUMBER 4 • JULY/AUGUST 2001

Featuring:

What's Love Got to Do With It?

by Sharon Frey

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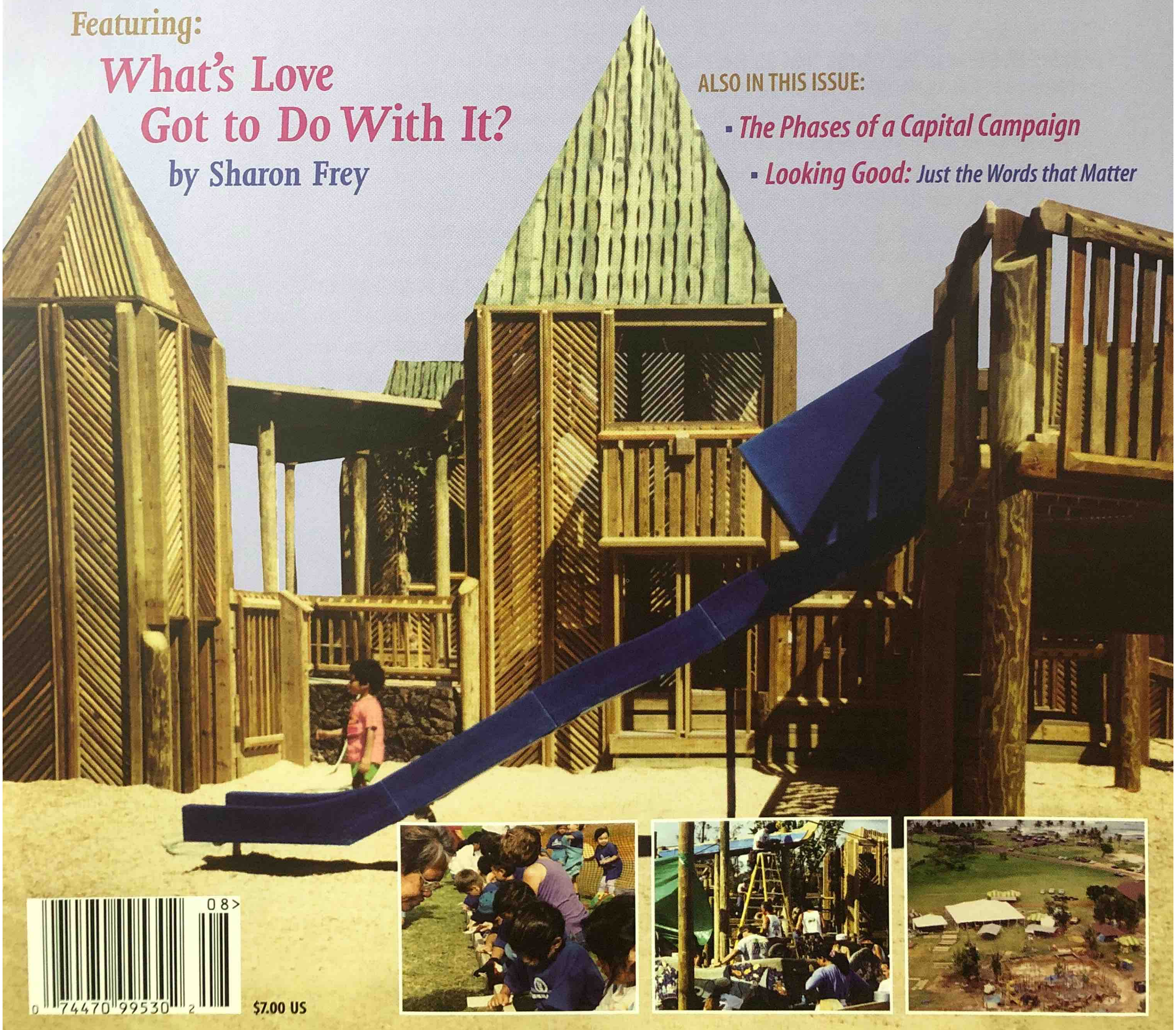

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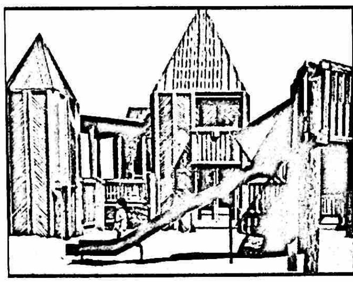

On Our Cover ILLUSTRATING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY ACTION, THIS PHOTO IS OF KAMALANI PLAYGROUND AT LYDGATE PARK IN LIHUE, KAUA'I, HAWAI'I. LYDGATE PARK IS A MAJOR RECREATIONAL SITE FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ALIKE. UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF AN ARCHITECTURAL FIRM SPECIALIZING IN PLAY FACILITIES, SEVEN THOUSAND VOLUNTEERS PITCHED IN TO BUILD KAMALANI PLAYGROUND, KAUA'I'S FINEST PLAYGROUND.

Grassroots Fundraising Journal

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

KIM KLEIN

If you called our office and asked for me in the past two and a half years, you would probably have spoken with my assistant, Shelana deSilva. She came to us as a 23-year-old student, clearly enthusiastic and interested in our work. We quickly learned that she was also bright and hard working. She was charming, efficient, and excellent with customers and clients. She is also hilarious, and we spent many hours laughing at her imitations of people or events. Our dogs and cats adored her; she is one of the few people that our dog, Brooklyn, always greeted with both the full body wag and the whine of joy. Last January, Shelana told me that she had decided to travel in Thailand, India, Greece, and other exciting places and then live with her aunt in London. I knew I would have done the same at her age. So we sent her on her way with deep gratitude for what she brought to our business and our lives.

Miraculously, her shoes have been filled by our newest staff member, Shelly Doo. Originally from Hawaii, Shelly most recently lived and worked in Boston. She brings a wealth of experience in financial management, fundraising, customer relations, and administration, along with a deep commitment to and experience with working for social justice organizations. She also loves animals and has added a picture of her cat, Lola, to our collection. We have so many pictures of animals in our office — including screen savers of various wildlife — that a co-worker calls our space "Wild Kingdom." Shelly is expanding the *Journal's* advertising and marketing efforts and helping with my schedule. She joins the talented and indefatigable Nan Jessup and our part-time but highly valued fulfillment staff, Theary Chan, in the office with me and Stephanie Roth.

We have been lucky over twenty years of publishing the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* to have had excellent people, not only in administration but also in design, editing, mailing, printing, and more recently in our webmaster and marketing consultants. I attribute our success to five things:

1–3. Luck

4. Paying decent salaries and offering generous benefits, especially vacation and holidays.

5. Total transparency in all our work. Our workers have access to all budget and financial information, including everyone's salaries and benefits. We include staff and consultants in decision making, even in decisions that do not directly affect them.

While Stephanie and I are the owners of Chardon Press and ultimately responsible for it, we have found running our business in this kind of collective manner builds loyalty and ownership and brings out the gifts and skills of everyone who works for us.

I say this not as a paean to ourselves (though if you know me personally you know I am not above that), but as a reminder that good staff develop out of an understanding that process is as important as product. In this age of emphasis on the bottom line, we need to remind ourselves that people are more important than profit and that we must lead by example. As Ghandi said, "We must be the change we wish to see."

What's Love Got to Do with It?

BY SHARON FREY

Like starry-eyed lovers, volunteer board members pledge their commitment to the nonprofit of their choice and, with high hopes and dreams, look forward to the happy times ahead. Unfortunately, many board members, like most young lovers, are unprepared for the bumps and turns in the road. Though most board volunteers truly care, when the going gets rough they all too often turn their backs to trouble. Recent nonprofit failures and flounders of some small and mid-sized social service and arts organizations in Washington State begs the question why? Why do board members so passionately committed to their cause and legally committed to governing their organizations fail?

I posed this question to seven leading Seattle experts in nonprofit management, fundraising, and board development: Jeanne Anderson, the former executive director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of King County; Liahann Bannerman, assistant director of volunteer and agency relations for United Way of King County; Peter Donnelly, executive director of Seattle's Corporate Council for the Arts; Steve Forman of Forman Consulting; Gordon Imlay, a former executive vice president for Netzel & Associates; Amanda Madorno of Madorno & Associates; and Ed Schumacher, the principal of Third Sector Consulting. Over the course of these conversations a disturbing trend came to light: boards conducting "business as usual" are at a high risk of becoming casualties of an increasingly competitive nonprofit sector. This article examines the reasons that boards are often unprepared and unable to govern effectively, allowing the organizations they love to fall into crisis.

TODAY'S BOARDS LACK TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

Board volunteers are charged by the communities they serve with the task of maintaining their nonprofits' fiscal well-being — ensuring that each organization provides the goods and services necessary to achieve its mission. Every board has a mandate to focus on the issues related to the responsible management of their donors' funds, including personnel, finance, budgeting, program oversight, board development, and fundraising. Too many boards today aren't up to the task, though it's not for a lack of commitment or caring.

Most of the experts I spoke with agree: "Boards today just ain't what they used to be." Boards are no longer dominated by wealthy philanthropists, experienced in the ways of nonprofit governance and mentored by the generations before them. With so many nonprofits in business (the nonprofit sector is now growing faster than the private or public sectors), competition for experienced board members is keen. Today, as has been the case for the past 15 to 20 years, busy adults of every background and level of experience sit on nonprofit boards. Although the diversity of people on boards today is certainly a plus, the lack of board training and experience of most board members is having a profoundly negative effect on the sector. "Board members aren't trained in their roles and don't understand their fiduciary responsibilities," said long-time nonprofit management consultant and board trainer Ed Schumacher.

Gordon Imlay, now retired after a long career as a fundraising and organizational development consultant, agrees. "Board members don't quite understand that they own the institution they're volunteering for," he commented. "Members don't know the power they have or how the staff/board partnership should work; they're simply not trained properly."

Too often the best intentioned boards are incapable of assessing a director's recommendations. As a result, these boards rely too heavily on the staff and executive director to lead them, when in fact the board should be taking the lead. Complicating matters is the fact that more than half of all nonprofit chief executives have no prior experience working with boards, and few have professional training. The combination of caring but untrained board members and inexperienced staff can be a recipe for disaster.

SETTING HIGH STANDARDS

Amanda Madorno, a professional interim director and board trainer, frequently sees what she calls a board's "cockeyed optimism-naivete" about the nonprofit world. Madorno points out that board members like to think that nonprofits, because they do "good" work, are immune to corruption and other evils. She sees many board members operating under the myth that because nonprofits are feeding the hungry or creating beautiful art, they don't need to be well-managed, competitive, or profitable to survive.

Equally destructive is the misguided notion that nonprofit staff, because they have committed themselves to community service and relatively low salaries, shouldn't be held to high standards. According to United Way's Bannerman, "It's not unusual to hear board members excuse an executive director's poor management by saying, 'But this is a person who is so passionate and caring, and they work for so little.'" Until boards shift their mind-set to understand how necessary it is for nonprofits to live up to the highest professional standards, the sector will continue to suffer.

CONFLICT AND COMMUNICATION

In 1999, the Support Center/Nonprofit Development Center (now called CompassPoint Nonprofit Services) published a report on why boards often govern only during times of crisis. In "Why Don't Boards Govern All the Time?" the authors point out that lack of time, lack of independent information, and a lack of familiarity with the "business" of their organizations are all obstacles. In addition, the article points to another important factor at work: a board's desire to avoid tension and conflict within the group. Amanda Madorno aptly calls this syndrome "the politics of nice," describing the group dynamics that encourage board members to behave in an agreeable, cooperative manner at the expense of making sound business decisions. The Support Center reports that boards view tension as the symptom of an illness that everyone must work to avoid, noting that board members who rock the boat and ask serious questions are usually viewed as obstacles at best and enemies at worst. Communication among board members and the communication norms (or culture) that pervade board meetings prevent many difficult but necessary conversations about management issues from taking place.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Schumacher and many of his associates believe the tendency for boards to turn their backs to serious management problems is systemic. Consultants working closely with nonprofit boards have found that the job of monitoring the performance of the executive director in particular runs against the grain of the fundamental reasons that people volunteer on boards. Not only do boards find the idea of keeping tabs on an executive director's performance unpleasant, they rarely have the training or policies in place to make it possible.

Bannerman of United Way explains that nonprofit board members are in the difficult position of monitoring and assessing the competence of a person whose job and business they often know little about. As one executive director put it bluntly, the executive director is often a professional managed by amateurs who know little or nothing about the executive director's business. In fact, in many organizations, board members have less management training, responsibility, or authority in their own jobs than the director they are charged with monitoring.

Good executive directors understand the value and benefits of a regular performance review that sets specific performance goals and measurable benchmarks (often in line with a strategic or long-range plan). Others, especially those hiding financial, fundraising, or staffing problems, keep their board members in the dark. When a crisis necessitates replacing or removing the director, boards that haven't documented difficulties have legitimate fears of being sued and the legal fees that process can entail.

An annual performance review of the executive director is just one of many personnel policies boards must make sure are in place and observed. Staff evaluations, grievance procedures, and progressive discipline policies, for example, give an organization a system for dealing with difficulties with personnel and job performance. In a worst case scenario, when the answer to an organization's problems includes firing the executive director, boards without a paper trail of performance reviews and a structure for addressing management problems will typically avoid the unpleasant task as long as possible. "No one volunteers to experience the anxiety of firing someone," Schumacher points out. "It's messy, and volunteers will simply look the other way as long as they can." As a result, ineffective executive directors often stay in place years longer than they should.

Schumacher tells the story of a small private school with a director who, according to some, stayed a full five years too long. "The board just didn't want to see what was happening," he commented. Staff morale hit rock bottom, good teachers and staff were leaving left and right, and parent complaints came in a steady stream. It took a full-blown crisis to push the board into action — a crisis that could and should have been avoided.

In another case, the board of a mid-sized arts organization let the work of their long-time executive director go unchecked for years. Suspicions that the organization had grown too big for the director's management abilities were confirmed when a complaint letter from the staff arrived at the board president's home. Several weeks later, there was no money for payroll. Creditors began calling, senior staff resigned, and yet the board remained paralyzed to act. With no formal performance documentation, they feared a lawsuit. A full six months later, the board realized that the organization would fold quickly if the director was not immediately removed. The director agreed to resign with a severance package the agency could not afford. The board was left with an organization in shambles.

Boards comprised of people who understood and performed their duties would have prevented the unfortunate scenarios described above from ever taking place. Board members scrutinizing financial reports would have noticed bookkeeping errors and poor financial management. Board members conducting annual performance evaluations would have had a formal way of documenting a director's failure to achieve goals outlined in the organization's strategic plan. Board members with a proactive approach to governing instead of a reactive approach would have been positioned to respond quickly to obvious signs of trouble and turmoil to assure these organizations' success.

CULTURAL SHIFT

With so many nonprofits operating today, the nonprofit landscape has changed. Today, every organization must act more like a business with a focus on financial health and accountability. The organizations that survive, according to the experts, are those that have both the capacity and the willingness to change and the clarity to base decisions on the best interests of their clients and stakeholders.

Some predict the philanthropic community will be the most powerful catalyst for change. "Nonprofits have gotten away with a lot because they do good work," commented Jeanne Anderson, executive director of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of King County and a former professional interim director. However, she notes that donors of every kind — individuals, government, and foundations — are getting more sophisticated and more concerned with how their money is spent. United Way of King County is one example of a funding agency now demanding to know more about the organizations it serves than how much money is being raised and spent and how many people are being served. Detailed organizational evaluation plans, outcomes reports, and fiscal audits are required and used to understand how well each agency they fund is being managed and to assess the actual changes the organizations are making in the communities and with individuals they serve. This notion of affecting change is at the heart of every good evaluation and outcomes model.

We may see the day when all funders will insist, for example, that boards perform a regular assessment and executive evaluation in order to qualify for funding. Progressive funders like The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City are already leading the way by requiring that the agencies they fund have a annual evaluation of the executive director and regular staff and board training.

CRITICAL AREAS OF FOCUS

Board members can arm their organizations with tools for success by taking action in the following areas:

1. Organize regular board training. It's been said that board training isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. After all, how can a board be expected to succeed if its members are unsure of their roles and responsibilities? Instead of calling for training after a crisis (which is when most boards first realize they need help), call in a consultant when things are going well. As Fern E. Koch of the Buffalo, New York Nonprofit Management Center writes in *The Secrets of Successful Boards,* "The future of your organization depends on the quality of the board. The board is responsible for making sure that it is strong and credible because, in the end, the success or failure of the organization rests in its hands. The only way to improve the quality of the board is to improve the quality of the people serving on it." Koch insists that a thorough board member orientation and comprehensive board manual are critical if board members are to participate in important decision making. She recommends ongoing board development to help members understand the difference between policy work and operational work (or between governance issues and management issues), which she sites as a common area of confusion.

2. Regularly assess the board itself. In his book, *Making Boards More Effective,* Alvin Zander notes that while most boards expect the performance of their board to improve with practice, few actually review and evaluate how well they have been doing so they can identify how their board might be changed. Steve Forman, an experienced Seattle consultant who specializes in the areas of leadership, planning, and board development, recommends that boards ask themselves how committed they are to their own performance through a comprehensive board assessment. Walking through the steps of an assessment program allows boards to take a look at their effectiveness as a group. (For an example of a board assessment tool, see "How Does Your Board Measure Up?" by Stephanie Roth, *Grassroots Fundraising Journal,* Vol. 17, No. 4 and in *Raise More Money: The Best of the Grassroots Fundraising Journal,* to be published Fall 2001.)

3. Institute an annual evaluation of the executive director. Executive directors must be evaluated on paper every year. A job description should be developed. Goals should be set along with definitions of how they should be measured. Board members should inform the director in precise terms what the board expects him or her to accomplish in the coming year. Many tools and models for evaluating an executive director are available. An excellent place to turn is the National Center for Nonprofit Boards, which offers a wealth of resources.

4. ***Focus on improving communication among board members and between board members and staff.*** As the Support Center report observes, new board members are often quiet, waiting until they know more before speaking up. And long-time board members too are reluctant to appear adversarial or not "with the team." To counteract these traditions and create an environment where board members can speak openly with one another and feel safe having a dissenting view, boards need to break with the past to focus on team building, communication exercises, and activities designed to help members get to know each other. In an atmosphere of trust and open communication, the hard questions get asked and the best solutions are possible.

Achieving good two-way communication between board members is half the battle. The other, according to Peter Donnelly, executive director of Seattle's Corporate Council for the Arts, is building trust and good communication between the director and board. At the core of a trusting relationship between the director and board is a constant flow of information: news updates between board meetings, in-depth information on critical issues facing the organization, open discussion on the organization's "state of the union" as Donnelly puts it, a regular (and best practice) performance evaluation of the director, and consistent courtesy build a bridge of trust.

Though Donnelly points out that a trusting open relationship is the key to every executive director's success, he also cautions board members against placing their trust and loyalty in leadership at the expense of their organization's mission.

As most couples know, love and passion aren't enough to keep a relationship alive. Though volunteer board members often have plenty of passion for the groups they serve, their dedication alone won't keep a nonprofit safe from harm. Volunteer boards need new ways of thinking and responding to the needs of their organizations. They need the tools and skills to foster productive working relationships within their group and with their executive director. They need training and coaching to become responsible, effective stewards of stable, healthy nonprofits.

WHERE TO TURN

There's no shortage of books, videos, training sessions, and professional consultants to help nonprofits realize their potential. One excellent source, of course, is Chardon Press, publisher of this journal. Their books and reprints, particularly the *Board of Directors,* have valuable material on board functioning. Here are some other fine resources:

- ***National Center for Non Profit Boards:*** 2000 L Street, NW, Ste. 510, Washington DC, 20036-4907; *www.ncnb.org;* ncnb@ncnb.org; 800/342-5709. Dedicated to building stronger nonprofit boards; offers workshops, publications, and consulting services to nonprofits nationwide.
- ***Internet Nonprofit Center:*** *www.nonprofit-info.org/npofaq.* From board-staff relations to budgeting, this internet resource offers information and advice for and about nonprofit organizations in the United States.
- ***CompassPoint Nonprofit Services*** (formerly the Support Center/Nonprofit Development Center): 606 Mission Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco CA 94103; *www.compasspoint.org;* 415/541-9000. A nonprofit consulting and training service.
- ***Northwest Development Officers Association:*** 2033 Sixth Avenue, Seattle WA 98121; 206/441-6020. The Washington chapter publishes a directory that lists local consultants and their areas of expertise. GFJ

SHARON FREY MANAGES CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION GIFTS FOR BELLEVUE ART MUSEUM.

The Phases of a *Capital Campaign*

BY KIM KLEIN

In the last issue of the *Journal*, we discussed what an organization would need to have in place to begin to plan a capital campaign: a campaign case statement and budget, an adequate database, gift acceptance policies, and an active, motivated board of directors. In this issue, we delve into the intricacies of developing a gift range chart, setting out a timeline for the campaign, and identifying prospects, and we consider how to add an endowment component to a capital campaign.

THE NATURE OF A CAMPAIGN

A campaign, by definition, is time limited and should have a specific beginning and end. It might seem simple to begin and end a capital campaign, and it can be: Begin the campaign when you need to raise money and end it when the money is raised. Organizations doing small campaigns (to raise less than $500,000) often do just that. They approach a few individuals and foundations and possibly send a general appeal to their donor list, doing their best to raise the money in a year or so. However, if you are raising more than $500,000, you will probably run your campaign over two and possibly three years.

THE GOAL AND THE GIFT RANGE CHART

Once you have established the preliminaries discussed in the first article in this series, you will have developed a budget and campaign fundraising goal. The next element to consider is creating a gift range chart for the campaign. The gift range chart will map out how you will meet that goal. A gift range chart is built around an observation numerous fundraisers have made: If you go into your community to raise money, you will notice that a few people give a lot, a few more give less, and a lot of people give a little. Keeping this principle in mind, you can map how many gifts of what size you are going to need to meet your goal.

A capital campaign has a much narrower gift range chart than an annual campaign. In a capital campaign, 40–60% of the goal is provided by six to eight donors: one gift will provide 10–20% of the goal, two gifts will each contribute 10% of the goal, and three to five gifts together will make up 10–20% of the goal. Most groups will spend a great deal of time identifying these few donors before they proceed any further, and we will discuss how to identify those prospects below.

The remaining 40–60% of the money needed will be raised in smaller amounts from more people—how small the amounts and how many more people will depend on the size of the donor pool, their ability to give, and to some extent, how many people an organization wants to involve in its capital campaign. Generally, capital gifts are gifts of $1,000 or more, even if some people need to pay that amount off over two or three years. Although it is fine to invite people to give $25, $50, or $100 to a $1 million campaign, having a lot of small gifts may wind up raiding your annual fund as people decide to give $100 to buy a brick instead of the $50 they normally give annually.

To figure out how many prospects you need, remember that about half of the people you ask will not give and half of those who do will give less than the amount you asked for. At the top of your gift range chart, to be conservative, you will want to identify and ask about four to five times as many people as you need. However, because many of those asked give less than they were asked for, these givers help fill in the bottom of your chart. At the

Proposed Gift-Range Chart for $5,000,000 Capital Campaign

NUMBER OF GIFTS	RANGE OF GIFTS	PROSPECTS NEEDED
1	$500,000–1,000,000	4–5
2	250,000–500,000	8
5	100,000	20
10	50,000	40
25	25,000	60
50	10,000	150
200	5,000	300
250	1,000–4,999	500
ABOUT 543 GIFTS	$1,000–1,000,000	ABOUT 1,083 PROSPECTS

lower levels, then, you only need twice as many prospects as the number of donors you are seeking.

For example, many people who were asked for $5,000 or even $10,000 will end up giving $2,500. People who were asked for $50,000 may give $25,000, and so on. Some people give two gifts—one at the beginning of the campaign and another at the end. For these reasons, the actual number of different people you will need as prospects should be about two-and-a-half times as many as the number of gifts you are seeking.

You can see that the accompanying gift range chart is narrow and calls for a large number of donors who can give big gifts. Many organizations use an even steeper chart, completing multi-million campaigns with only 100 to 200 donors. Grassroots organizations don't generally attract people who have that kind of ability to give. Nevertheless, to complete any large campaign will require being able to ask some people for very large gifts.

(There are other, less likely, sources of funding. It is uncommon but not unheard of for foundations to provide capital funds, and there are some foundations that only fund capital campaigns. The most famous of these is the Kresge Foundation in Michigan. With the increasing number of small family foundations, a group may find that an individual it approaches for a large gift makes the gift through their family foundation. Although the vehicle is a foundation, the fundraising strategy is still that of approaching a major donor. Corporate funding to capital campaigns is generally reserved for large institutions, except in cases where someone high up in the corporation is involved in the group. Many groups providing social services have been able to raise some money from local government coffers. Despite these possible funders, in 25 years of fundraising I have never heard of a capital campaign conducted by a grassroots organization that did not require some individuals to make large gifts.)

RESISTING THE INEVITABLE

I have known many groups to resist developing a gift range chart. One such group, called the "Different Drummer Music Project," wanted to move their music school from its inadequate space in a public school to a building of their own. Their overarching philosophy was of inclusiveness. Their mission stated, "We believe there is a musician in each of us," and their logo showed a treble clef with the tag line, "All notes are created equal." They had a diverse program, with several choruses that performed around their city and a wide variety of orchestral instruments that young people could borrow for the school year. They needed a space where young people could get lessons, practice, and even jam together.

The steering committee of three musicians, two parents, and three community activists found an old boarding house for sale that was perfect for their needs. To raise the money to buy it, they decided to conduct a "People's Campaign." They disliked the notion of developing a gift range chart, with the elitism implied by placing greater emphasis on large gifts than on any gift. Their goal was $1.5 million and they were determined to raise it in gifts of $50–$500, which they felt was "an amount that almost anyone can afford."

They launched their campaign with a concert at which they told the mostly parent audience that they needed their help to find 30,000 people to give $50–$500 each, with the top gift they would accept being $5,000. They raised an impressive $250,000 this way from about 1,500 people, but exhausted their volunteer pool. Finally, the steering committee realized that they could now raise the rest of the money they needed from an additional 20 or so people without being in danger of losing their soul. A parent asked a friend of means to match the $250,000 already raised and got it. A foundation, impressed with the quality of music the young people produced, gave $75,000. Two donors who had given $5,000 were re-approached for $100,000 each, and the remainder of the goal was given by another dozen people with gifts in the $25,000–$50,000 range.

The music school learned that, while all notes may be created equal, people have varying levels of ability to give and willingness to express their support in a manner commensurate with their ability.

IDENTIFYING PROSPECTS

Once the gift range chart has been created, an organization has a clear directive: Identify prospects for the lead gifts. This is a critical step, because if you cannot identify enough prospects, you will have to revisit your goal. Therefore, I suggest doing this step before creating materials or setting up a timeline. Though you identify lead prospects now, it may be some time before they are all asked.

Deciding who may be a prospect for a capital campaign requires the same analysis as identifying a prospect for a major donor campaign plus a couple of additional variables. First, someone in the group or someone close to the group must know and be respected by the prospect. Among other things, the person who knows the prospect will know whether the prospect believes in the cause of the group and will have some idea about the prospect's giving ability. To make this process memorable, we call these identifiers ABC:

*A*bility *B*elief *C*ontact

As part of researching the prospect, you want to have as much useful information about them in relation to your campaign as you can. Toward that end, review any public records about the person, such as newsletters or annual reports from groups similar to yours that list the prospect's name as a donor, newspaper articles in which the prospect's donation to another group has been mentioned, and your own records of gifts by this prospect to your group. You should also find other people who know this prospect and see what they can tell you. You are looking for the kind of information that a person would tell you in the course of a nonconfidential conversation. It is not necessarily public information — the person may not want it to appear in the newspaper — but it is not secret. If someone tells you, "Mary Jones has a large inheritance, but doesn't want anyone to know it," that information is not useful to you. Don't write it down. On the other hand, if someone tells you, "Sam Smith works for a donor who generally remains anonymous and I can introduce you to Sam," write that down. Don't spend time trying to figure out if the anonymous donor is Mary Jones — the anonymous donor wishes to be just that. We have no need to know who it is. We are fundraisers, not the FBI.

In addition to this information, which you would need in order to approach someone for a large gift for any type of campaign, in doing capital campaigns we usually want to know the following:

- Has this prospect ever made a capital gift before? If yes, to what kind of campaign, in what amount, and does anyone know whether the prospect had any negative feelings about how that campaign or their gift was handled?
- Does this prospect have assets that he or she can use for your campaign, such as highly appreciated stock, inheritance, very high annual income, or property?
- Will this person be attracted to naming opportunities? Is there someone in their life they might like to honor or memorialize permanently?
- Is any other member of their family involved in your organization or in a similar organization?
- Is your group one of the prospect's favorite organizations?
- Does the prospect believe in your building campaign, or do you have evidence that she or he probably would believe in it if they knew about it?

You can see that many of these answers call for speculation; that is why it is important to have them verified by two or three people. It is not necessary for the answer to be yes to all the above questions, but it is necessary to have at least some of this information.

For example, a rape crisis center learned that one of their major donors and loyal supporters had given $50,000 to another organization's capital campaign. The rape crisis center also knew that this donor could probably afford many other $50,000 gifts. However, the donor had told her friend on the rape crisis center's board that she was uncomfortable with how that capital campaign had been run. She believed too much had been spent on the outside consultant and on gifts to donors, and she was irritated when the board chair asked her three times for additional gifts after she had told him that $50,000 would be her only gift to this campaign.

The rape crisis center had planned to approach this donor for one of the first gifts for their own capital campaign, but because of this information, they waited until most of the other larger gifts were in and then made sure this donor was solicited by a friend who had given a similar amount. As it happened, the rape crisis center did not hire a consultant and did not give any gifts to donors or name any rooms after donors. These decisions had been made independently of this woman's feelings about the other campaign, but they did make the rape crisis center's campaign more attractive to her. She gave $25,000 and pledged an additional $25,000 once they reached the last $100,000 of the campaign.

In another example, a prospect was approached for a large donation to the capital campaign of a Boys and Girls Club. The club wanted to renovate its existing facility, including upgrading its wheelchair accessibility and adding a new wing. As in the above example, this prospect was able to make a large gift and was a long-time donor to the club. However, the club did not seek to find out what he thought of the capital campaign, but just plunged in and asked him. Thus, they did not learn that he felt the cost of the new wing was excessive. Needless to say, he did not respond favorably to the solicitor's suggestion that the new wing be named after his late mother, who had been a volunteer with the club. Simple information gathering would have easily surfaced this donor's opinion of the campaign and saved everyone some embarrassment. This prospect did not make any gift to this capital campaign.

While gathering and verifying information is of critical importance, it is also important to apply common sense to the procedure. Again, this process is not a Nielsen survey or a police investigation. We are not testing whether the prospect should run for governor, but whether he or she should be asked for a certain amount of money at a certain time.

When you have a list of verified prospects, you can determine whether you have enough prospects to meet the needs of your gift range chart in achieving your goal. If you fall far short of what you need, you will have to reevaluate whether the goal is realistic and consider lowering it for this campaign and rethinking your capital project.

ADDING AN ENDOWMENT COMPONENT TO YOUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

As you can see, a capital campaign entails a large amount of work, but there is also an economy of scale involved. It will take almost the same amount of planning, budgeting, prospect identification, volunteer recruitment, and time to raise $2 million as to raise $1 million. Donors are often attracted to larger campaigns and will stretch their giving to meet a larger goal, whereas they may not make a thoughtful gift at all to meet a lower goal. Obviously, groups should raise what they need and not artificially inflate a goal, but many groups may want to add some money for endowment to their capital campaign budget, over and above what they have included for maintenance of their building.

There are two ways to add endowment to a capital campaign. The simplest is to add a line item to the budget specifying "endowment." The money raised for the capital campaign will then include money that is put into an endowment account. For example, a children's home was building a new gymnasium that would cost $2 million. In addition, they were using their capital campaign as a time to raise money for repairing and upgrading their current facilities; that added another $2 million to the capital campaign budget. Realizing that the preparation and work to raise $4 million would not be that much less than for a goal of $5 million, they added $1 million for endowment. This million will join the $2 million they already have in an endowment fund and give them an additional $50,000–$75,000 a year in interest earned that can be used for general operating expenses.

The second way to add fundraising for endowment to a capital campaign is to raise money specifically for the endowment component of the campaign by allowing donors to earmark their capital campaign gifts for endowment. For example, a senior center needed $250,000 to expand their office space, upgrade their computers, and add a few bathrooms to their facility, which was otherwise in good shape. They debated how they should approach this need. Both the size of the campaign and the fact that the improvements were not that exciting seem to preclude doing a full-scale capital campaign. They looked at doing a quiet campaign with a handful of donors or taking out a second mortgage and adding repayment of the loan into their annual fundraising efforts. At the same time, however, they recognized that their low salaries were causing high turnover among their administrative staff. They decided they could significantly upgrade salaries of the administrative staff with an additional $30,000 a year in organizational income, which they could get by adding $750,000 onto their capital goal to be invested in an endowment. That brought the goal for the capital campaign to $1 million. People responded very well to the campaign, including a few of the seniors that they served.

If you do add an endowment component to your capital campaign, be sure you are able to handle endowment funds. You will need to know either how to invest this money for growth and return or whom to ask to do this for you. An endowment is most appropriate for a group that has decided that it needs to exist in perpetuity. Board, staff, and donors will have to be comfortable with having a large amount of money invested of which only 5–10% (its earnings) can be used every year.

THE TIMELINE

Once you have identified enough prospects to go forward with the campaign, or amended the campaign to have a good chance of success, you can create a campaign timeline and begin asking for gifts. Generally, you will want to raise one-third to one-half of the campaign total before you even announce your campaign publicly. The time in which you raise that money is called the "Quiet Phase." This phase allows you to test donors' receptiveness to the idea of the campaign and learn what questions they have, to train your volunteers, and to get some donors who may help you reach other donors.

The Quiet Phase ends with what is called the "Launch," which is the public rollout of the campaign. You can celebrate launching the campaign with a large party or a more quiet reception for donors, prospective donors, and board members. People often use the launch event as an opportu-

Phases of a Capital Campaign

PLANNING AND PREPARATION: Take as much time as is needed. This process often takes a year or two.

PRE-CAMPAIGN: The process of identifying prospects, setting firm goals, setting the timeline, deciding when and how to launch. This phase takes about three months.

QUIET PHASE: Soliciting the 8–10 lead gifts. The quiet phase can take a year or more, but most groups are able to move through it in six to nine months.

LAUNCH AND PUBLIC PHASE: The remaining fundraising will rarely take less than two years, but should not take more.

WRAP-UP: Making sure all systems are in place to collect pledges, final reports are written, and the campaign is ended. The wrap-up can be done in two or three months.

Often groups wonder when you should actually start building or renovating in this process. Of course, the safest thing to do is to wait until all the money is raised, but most groups start building shortly after the launch or even make the launch the "first shovel," or groundbreaking. Then the end of the campaign can sometimes also be the ribbon cutting for the new or upgraded facility. When construction is underway during the campaign, prospects and the community as a whole have a sense of progress being made and their gifts being put right to work.

Looking Good...

Developing Effective Written Materials

The Basics of Good Writing

BY NANCY ADESS

Better-looking and better-written materials improve an organization's visibility, broadcast its message more widely, and ultimately generate more support. The first two articles in this series described how to give your written materials visual impact and work with production professionals. In this final article, we review the basics of good writing.

JUST THE WORDS THAT MATTER

Once you've attracted your reader's attention with a good-looking, well-produced piece, you have to keep it with effective copy. Good writing, like most of the work we do, is the product of planning and style.

Just as with any project, written materials need to be planned. You wouldn't set out to produce an event or provide a new service without carefully thinking through all the details of the project, enlisting the people you need to help you, and going about it step by step. Producing written materials is much the same, although in a shorter time frame.

People often put off planning, thinking that action is more important — get that flier written or that newsletter out. But unless you're an extremely clear-thinking person, you'd do well to give yourself the "luxury" of planning. This is more obvious when you're thinking about creating an annual report than producing an invitation to a conference or a letter to members, but the principle is the same. By planning well in advance, you can make a realistic timeline to include the elements that make your piece worth reading.

FOUR KEY PLANNING STEPS

First, decide your purpose: Why are you writing something anyway? What do people need to know? What is the primary message you want to get across? You may want to have others help you brainstorm this point. With a newsletter, for example, thinking ahead can help you avoid the last-minute rush to get articles, or help you know what to leave out if you have too much copy. If you plan ahead, you may be able to come up with themes or topics to build each newsletter around, and that means you could ask people for articles well in advance of the deadline.

If you are producing a major piece, such as an annual report, you may also want to develop a theme or pattern to unify the sections of the piece, such as a day in the life of your organization, profiles of people you've served, or case vignettes. A battered women's shelter, for example, could follow a woman as she comes into care and gains confidence and skills through the programs offered and the kinds of help she receives at the shelter. A hospital volunteer program could follow two (or more) volunteers through their days in the hospital showing the range of services the volunteer office provides.

Next, identify your audience so you can focus your writing to the intended reader. If your purpose is to tell city council members or legislators what you've accomplished, your approach will be different than if your goal is to inform potential clients about your services.

When thinking about your annual report, for example, decide whether it's meant to report on your program in a general way to donors, to educate your constituency about your services in a very specific way, or to impress your legislators or other decision makers with the importance of the services or advocacy your organization provides. You can see that purpose and audience go hand-in-hand.

Consider here how important statistics and financial data are to your purpose so you know how to treat them in the text. If your financial information is not as important as your program reports, then tables of numbers and pie charts can take up less space than program information. If, on the other hand, your financial information is of primary importance to those reading the report, then by all means give it a lot of room and concentrate on making the graphic presentation as dynamic as possible.

Third, define your format: What will best meet your purpose, suit your audience, and possibly be new, stimulating, and exciting? For example, some years ago the Women's Foundation of San Francisco designed its annual report on one large sheet (11" × 17") that folded down to mailing size. They used a handsome paper and design to enhance the piece, and they fit all the basic information they wanted to give onto that one poster-sized page.

The ultimate "look" of the piece, as determined by nity to get press attention, particularly if you are buying or renovating a building. Show the press and some prospects your blueprints, architect's renderings, the paucity and inadequacy of your current space, and announce that you are already one-third of the way to the goal. This starts your campaign off with a lot of momentum and says to other donors, "Help us complete this wonderful work."

Following the launch, the object is to raise the rest of the money needed and reach your goal within the announced time frame of the campaign. If you reach your goal early, you can keep raising money, but I think it is better to have a giant celebration and end the campaign early. If you get to the end of your campaign without reaching your goal, you should not extend the campaign.

If you plan well and identify prospects properly, you will know far ahead of time whether you will meet your goal in the time frame you have set. If it is clear in the quiet phase that you don't have enough donors to meet the goal, lower the goal before announcing the campaign to the public. If you have already announced it, figure out if there are other ways you can get the money, or how your budget can be modified to reflect what you can raise. You can always borrow the money and pay it off over time, like a mortgage. However, extending the campaign timeline will only humiliate your group.

DECIDING WHOM TO APPROACH FIRST

You have one more set of decisions to make before you are ready to begin asking for gifts: In what order will you ask people? First, you will ask the people who can make the biggest gifts. Of these, start with the people who are closest to your organization. In some cases this may mean that rather than starting with the biggest gift needed, you start with the person most likely to say yes. You don't want a series of turndowns early on in your campaign.

The early gifts will give you confidence that the campaign is a good thing. The people who are asked to be the lead donors (the top gift and the next set of gifts) are not only people who can give this much money and who think highly of your group, but are also people who like to think of themselves as leaders, risk-takers, example setters, inside-track people who know before anyone else what is happening. On the other hand, although it cannot be planned, it is not unusual for some of the biggest gifts to come in late in the campaign, once it is clear that the campaign is a success. There are people who prefer to bet on a winner and will sacrifice the glory that comes from being the lead donor for that security. There are also people who look to others for an example. They may not feel as close to your group as they perceive someone else to be and want to see what that person will do before making their move. Figuring out which people will be leaders and which followers for this campaign is based 90 percent on instinct and intuition and 10 percent on actual information. Failure to figure this out is often not that serious. Someone you approach to be a lead donor simply may say, "I'd like to see how the campaign shapes up," or, "I'd rather wait to see what Joe does," or, "Come back to me when you have raised $250,000."

From a fundraising point of view, some of our favorite donors are those who come in both early and late. They make a lead gift and then make a gift at the end of the campaign. Some do this as a challenge: "I will give the first and the last $100,000. You raise the rest." This "bookend" approach is very helpful, because you have the donor's confidence that you will succeed expressed in the lead gift and a great deal of incentive to get to the end. Sometimes a donor will make a gift that is smaller than their ability at the beginning of the campaign; when it is clear that the campaign is succeeding, they will come in with more money. More often, a donor makes a lead gift and decides later to give another gift. This can happen, for example, when the campaign is nearing the end and the group finds it has slightly miscalculated how many donors it has and is falling short of its goal. A generous donor may simply make up that shortfall. Sometimes, cost overruns have made the goal too low and a donor will help out with those expenses. Donors will only do this when the group has done their best and is a little short. Donors generally don't like to fill in gaps caused by bad planning or incompetence, and you should not count on this in your planning.

SUMMARY

As you can see, there is a lot to be done before you are ready to ask your first prospect for a gift to your capital campaign. Some people planning campaigns get anxious about all the details; while I don't want you to disregard them (why else would I take the time to write them down?), I also remind you that your donors know you are a grassroots organization. This may well be your first capital campaign and the first capital campaign of everyone involved. They don't expect you to have the sophistication a major university might bring to such a campaign and they might even be suspicious if you did. You will make mistakes, but none of them will be fatal. You will also have some of your most interesting meetings and do some of your most creative thinking before your campaign is over. GFJ

NEXT ISSUE: WILL THE CAMPAIGN SUCCEED? HOW TO TEST THE FEASIBILITY OF YOUR CAMPAIGN BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO DEVELOP MATERIALS AND APPROACH PROSPECTS.

KIM KLEIN IS CO-PUBLISHER OF THE *GRASSROOTS FUNDRAISING JOURNAL*.

to clear writing; these include wordiness, ambiguities, jargon, lack of focus, abstract rather than concrete images, misplaced thoughts or elements, and passive rather than active wording (see box below).

Passive versus Active Voice

PASSIVE: Five bills are selected each year by the Advisory Board as priority issues.
ACTIVE: Each year the Advisory Board concentrates on five top issues.

PASSIVE: Representatives are sent by each committee.
ACTIVE: Each committee sends a representative.

PASSIVE: Grazing standards on ranches was the subject of a workshop led by the Advisory Commission.
ACTIVE: The Advisory Commission held a workshop on ranch grazing standards.

PASSIVE: Miriam is going back to school. She will be missed.
ACTIVE: We will miss her.

PASSIVE: Contributions from clients to further expand the program are invited.
ACTIVE: Client contributions will help us provide service to even more people.

After you've done at least one revision, you're ready to show the piece to others for comments. When you're ready for advice, seek it openly. Rid yourself of that time-consuming ego trip called "pride of authorship." This isn't the great American novel. Ask your editorial committee or people most familiar with the topic to read and comment on what you've written.

Despite busy schedules, it doesn't take long for someone to review even a relatively long piece, such as an annual report, and the piece will benefit from another perspective. Not only can your reader correct any facts that might be wrong, they can also point out problems with the writing and suggest additions that might strengthen the piece. With comments and suggestions in from your readers, decide which suggestions to incorporate and revise the piece again.

As you work on it this time, keep in mind how it will look on the page. Does it need shorter paragraphs? Are there places where you can break up the text with subheadings? For longer pieces, such as educational brochures, it's critical to direct your reader's attention to the different points of information so that someone who only wants to know, for example, about treatment of a condition, or service hours of your agency, or your legislative strategy, can find it easily. To get them there, use subheadings as a guide to the text.

STYLE

Style involves those elements that make the writing clear, help it to move along smoothly, maintain your reader's interest, and show the reader your respect for their intelligence and time. Anyone who has written a term paper has probably used Strunk and White's classic reference, *Elements of Style*. There are, in fact, a number of books relating to style that you might want to dip into from time to time to sharpen up your writing (see box at end). Here are 10 style elements relevant to the type of writing we're talking about.

1. ***Keep in mind exactly who your reader will be.*** For example, when I was hired to write a text on how to write a grant proposal, my client's instructions to me included the following paragraph:

> Write it as if it were written to volunteers, most of whom have two years of college at a community school, have not traveled widely, think foundations will save them, and want to start or get more money for their humane society, church school, health clinic, food bank, homeless shelter, Big Sisters program, etc. Imagine them also to be primarily in small towns or rural areas, with limited or no access to other reference materials.

This told me just how to approach the piece in terms of tone, style, word choice, and breadth and depth information.

2. ***Keep your message brief.*** Even an ardent supporter has only a few minutes to focus on your message. This is where knowing just what you want to get across comes in. In addition, keep all the elements short: short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.

3. ***Use active verbs and active construction; eliminate the passive voice.*** Passive voice is a favorite of deadly dull bureaucratic language.

4. ***Use examples and illustrations*** — verbal and visual — to make your material come to life.

5. ***Don't tell people what they must do***. Assume your readers can think for themselves when they know the facts about the situation, then give them an understanding of what action can help. Wouldn't you rather feel you're making your own choice than being preached to, threatened, or "guilt tripped"? For example, don't tell people that unless they vote for Proposition A libraries all over the state will close. Tell them the importance of the library to their community, the impact of funding cuts, the remedies that Proposition A promises. Then let them know they have a chance to keep the libraries open by voting for the proposition.

6. ***Weed out jargon, alphabet soup, cliches, and flowery adjectives.*** Keep it simple.

7. ***Instead of fancy words, use easy, familiar words.*** I once saw a corporate memo forbidding "portable personal consumption confectionery units" at workers' desks. Honest. They were talking about candy bars. An employment program for seniors described itself by writing, "The purpose of the program is to provide, foster, and promote useful work experience activities for seniors." Why not say, "The program finds work for seniors"?

8. ***Remember that each paragraph should begin with one clear point,*** with the next sentences providing examples or supporting facts.

9. ***Revise, and, if you have time, revise again, cutting out all unnecessary words.*** Look at your second paragraph.

format choices, may also influence how you write it. If, for example, you decide that a picture story might be a fresh and inviting way to present your material, you may limit your text to short but thorough explanatory captions rather than writing an essay.

Fourth, decide who can help you. Consider soliciting help in deciding what to say, such as with an educational brochure, or in actually writing drafts or sections of the piece, such as articles for a newsletter or segments of an annual report. If you have a standing editorial committee of your board (or other volunteers) that helps you brainstorm the content of the newsletter or annual report or the look of various pieces, make sure you use them. They may have wonderful new ideas to bring from their experience with other organizations or their workplace. If you don't have an editorial committee, consider developing one. Two or three volunteers from your program or board can provide consistent help in brainstorming and then checking content, style, looks, and continuity with other written materials.

You may also want to use someone inside or outside the organization to give you feedback on written pieces. This may be a key volunteer or board member, the executive director, or the public relations person (for larger organizations). When planning your production schedule, make sure you include time for these people to read drafts and suggest revisions.

READY, SET, OUTLINE

Now that you know why you're writing something, who is going to read it, and who is going to help you along the way, you can start writing. But do you dread facing the blank sheet of paper or blank computer screen? Do you expect yourself to pour forth with lucid, sparkling prose? Most writing doesn't begin that way. You can help yourself begin by making a list of the principle points you want to cover. For a newsletter article there may be only one or two points: something happened and your organization had a role in it. For an educational brochure, there may be four or five, or more: the need for your services, what the services are, how they are paid for, how to use them.

For example, to develop an educational brochure on the sexually transmitted disease chlamydia, I met with a group of health providers and asked them to tell me everything they thought their patients needed to know about the disease. As they talked, I took copious notes. When I got back to my office, I developed a list of statements that had emerged from the meeting. From there it was easy to build paragraphs around each of these statements.

When you know your key points, state each one in a short declarative sentence. This may be more difficult than it sounds, but it will save you from hopeless muddle in the end.

If outlining in this way is antithetical to your personality and the only way you can start is to just get writing, then try checking what you have written by outlining it afterward. Read each paragraph and write in the margin what the topic of that paragraph is. If you find that each sentence in the paragraph is a topic in itself (a common finding of this method), then you'll know you have too many ideas in one place and you can begin to separate them into their own paragraphs. Keep in mind that presenting ideas and information clearly usually means offering one well-developed thought at a time.

If you've started by making an outline of what to say in simple, clear, and concise statements, then you can evaluate and revise them until they are appropriate to your purpose and interesting to your readers.

THE FIRST DRAFT

Now you're ready to write a first draft. Take each of your topic sentences and flesh out the idea with supporting data and illustrations. Consider how one paragraph flows into the next, and add some phrases to relate them to each other. Phrases and words such as "on the other hand," "moreover," "furthermore," "in addition," "or," and "meanwhile" create bridges from one idea to the next and keep the reader moving through the story.

When your draft is done, let it sit for a few days. If you don't have a few days, give it what I call "the 24-hour rule" by not looking at it at least overnight. After you get away from it, you will come back with a fresher eye. I follow this rule even with correspondence that's of any substance; say, a letter to a researcher or to a donor or legislator. The next day, or few days later, I guarantee you'll find ways to say things more concretely, briefly, and clearly.

During this time, start thinking about how you want the piece to look when it's printed. Keep in mind the graphic elements discussed in the first part of this article (Vol. 20, No. 2; March, 2001). Thinking about layout and design issues now will have an effect on how you approach the length and organization of the piece when you come back to your writing.

If you are not doing the layout yourself, now is the time to meet with the person who is. For example, while writing a brochure about agencies for runaway youth and their families, I met with the designer. Together, we decided that a strong statement on the cover could introduce what the brochure was about and lead the reader inside. That meant composing the right number of words to fit on the cover, having them say just the right thing with just the right emphasis, and getting approval from the client. This step took time. Fortunately, it was time we had while the draft was going through revisions.

When you come back to your piece, you'll be ready to start revising. As you re-read it, look for common obstacles

Chances are it says what you meant in your first paragraph before you were warmed up. Many pieces do much better to start with their second paragraph. A corollary to this principle is to avoid introductory remarks. Get the reader right into your story or your appeal or report. Here are some ways to do that:

- Use a startling statement, such as a little-known fact, to catch the reader's attention.
- Give a piece of news, such as a legislative breakthrough or something that has happened that affects the reader's life.
- Use a quotation from a known person (Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Simone de Beauvoire, etc.).
- Use a story, such as about a client you have helped (a real story).

10. Let others brag for you. If you're trying to impress potential donors or supporters with the value of your services, use real testimonials from real people. Don't write an endorsement and then ask someone to put their name to it; it will undoubtedly sound "canned." Ask a few clients or a few volunteers to say in their own words what your service or organization has meant to them. GFJ

Useful Books & References on Writing Style

Theodore Bernstein, *Do's, Don'ts and Maybes of English Usage*, 1995, Random House ($6.99).

Casey Miller and Kate Swift, *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing*, 1980 (Print on demand, about $15).

William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th Edition, Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1999 ($6.95).

Francis-Noel Thomas and Mark Turner, *Clear and Simple as the Truth: Writing Classic Prose*, Princeton University Press, 1994 ($16.95).

Jan Venolia, *Write Right! A Desktop Digest of Punctuation, Grammar, and Style* 1995, Ten Speed Press ($6.95).

University of Chicago Press, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th Edition, 1993 ($45).

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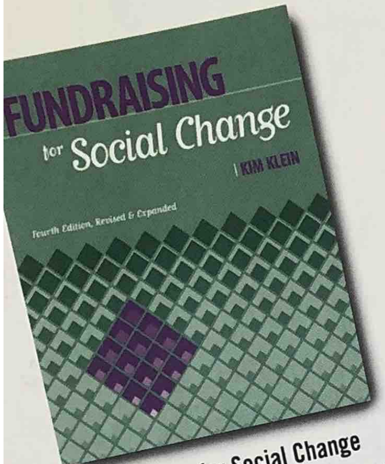

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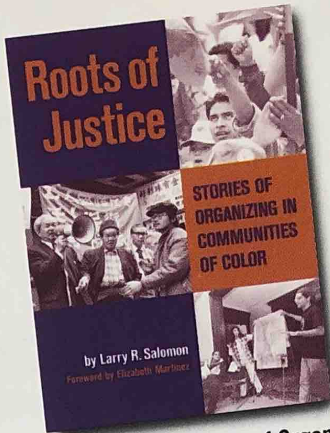

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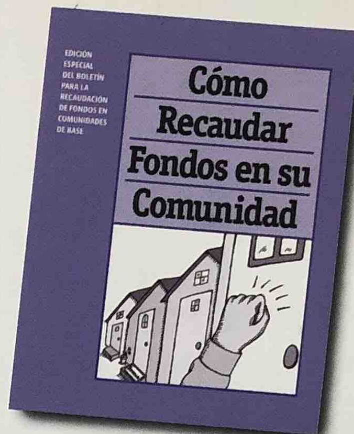

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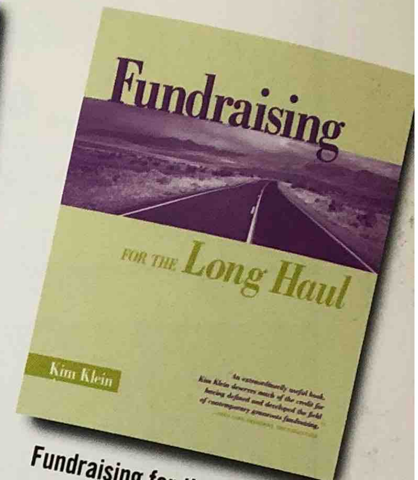

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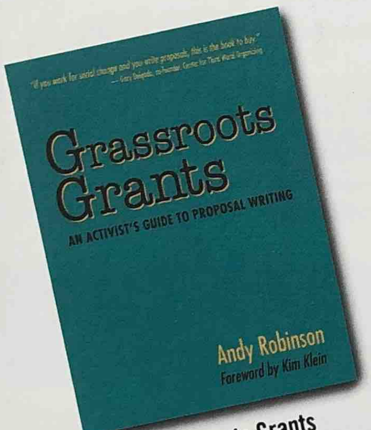

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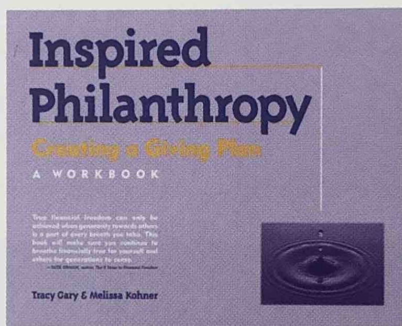

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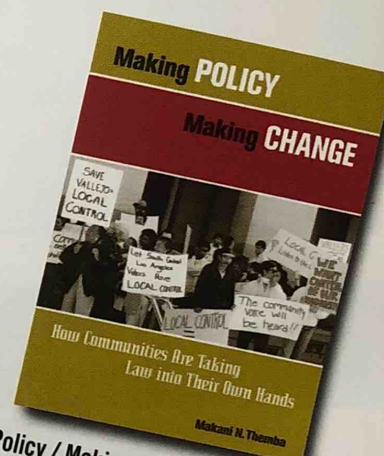

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