

Grassroots Fundraising Journal

VOLUME 29 NUMBER 4 • JULY–AUGUST 2010

A PUBLICATION OF



Here to Stay Sustaining the Team

HIRING YOUR FIRST
DEVELOPMENT STAFF PERSON

CREATING NEW MODELS OF
MANAGEMENT

WHEN TO HIRE A FUNDRAISING
CONSULTANT



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On Our Cover

Our cover features a photo of board and staff members of the Chinook Fund in Denver, CO. A member of the Funding Exchange, the Chinook Fund provides grants, technical assistance, and long-term funding to grassroots organizations and community groups organizing for social change. Chinook is one of the groups profiled in Ruth Zerezghi's article on shared leadership models.



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Putting the “FUN” Back into Fundraising...

By Jennifer Emiko Boyden

TOO OFTEN, FUNDRAISING CAN BE A THANKLESS JOB, done in isolation with little or no involvement in other aspects of the organization’s work. Once you read this issue of the *Journal*, however, you’ll see that fundraising doesn’t have to be a “necessary evil” assigned to a single person, but can be a shared responsibility across board and staff that is fun, rewarding, and not only supports but actually furthers programmatic work.

How to move fundraising into its proper place in an organization is something we’ve thought a lot about at GIFT—for ourselves as well as to support other groups that want to create more sustainable organizational cultures. We’ve expanded our content to include information about creating a shared culture of fundraising, self-care and sustainability, and team building. In our own office, we build in support, training, reflection time, and accountability to help staff members with their fundraising responsibilities.

This issue of the *Journal* focuses on development staffing—how to attract the right people, how to keep them for the long haul, and when to seek the support and assistance of a consultant. We begin with a case study by consultant Ruth Herring describing how she worked with the Gay-Straight Alliance Network as they prepared to hire their first development staff person. Next, GIFT intern alumna Ruth Zerezghi describes three organizations with shared leadership structures and examines the effect of shared leadership on the groups’ fundraising efforts and development staff. Former *Journal* editor Stephanie Roth, of Klein & Roth Consulting, weighs in on when to hire a fundraising consultant and what to reasonably expect of them. And Nzinga Koné-Miller of Watershed Company brings back her “Tech Tips” column with questions to consider before moving your off-line auction online.

Although the kinks have been worked out with our electronic delivery and access to the *Journal* archive, we’re still missing email addresses for some of you. You really don’t want to miss out on the free articles from the *Journal* you can get through the online archive! Please include your email address with your next renewal or just email me directly: jennifer@grassrootsfundraising.org.

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We’re gearing up for Money for Our Movements: A Social Justice Fundraising Conference, August 12-13th in Oakland, CA. If you’re not already planning to come, I strongly urge you to reconsider! GIFT’s fundraising conferences are truly amazing spaces where social justice fundraisers and activists come together to learn new skills, build relationships, and strategize on how to build well-resourced social justice movements. Join the conversation about new ways of reaching out to our communities to raise money and build movement at the same time.

Register today at grassrootsfundraising.org/conference!



GSA Network's first paid development staff person, Jackie Downing (far left), stands with GSA Network youth board members at their 10th Anniversary celebration (that's apple cider in the youth's glasses!).

The GSA Network Experience

Steps to Hiring a First Development Staff Member

by Ruth Herring

IN 1998, CAROLYN LAUB founded the Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) in San Francisco. Its goal was to empower lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and straight student activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in middle schools and high schools. Since then, thanks to GSA Network, the number of GSA clubs in California middle schools and high schools has grown from 40 to more than 775, and the Network has trained and empowered more than 10,000 student activists and won pioneering laws to protect all students from harassment and discrimination at school. As a respected leader

in the national safe schools movement, GSA Network created and now coordinates a network of 26 statewide organizations dedicated to empowering youth to create GSA clubs. GSA Network now has ten staff members and a budget of \$850,000.

As the long-term fundraising consultant to GSA Network, I worked closely with Carolyn, now executive director, to lay the fundraising groundwork at the organization and to hire its first Development and Communications Manager in 2008. This article describes how the organization expanded to include a staff person devoted to fundraising.

Two Years of Preparation

The decision to create the first staff position devoted completely to fundraising grew out of a larger organizational commitment to capacity building. In its first eight years, GSA Network relied on foundations as its primary funding source. As the network matured and programs expanded, Carolyn and the board of directors—made up of high-school-aged GSA club leaders and adults—recognized that they must expand their fundraising by building a constituency of individual donors.

They mapped out a multi-year process that became the basis for a funding proposal. As part of a larger capacity building grant that included funds for program, the California Endowment awarded GSA Network \$48,000 over two years to put in place the communications and fundraising building blocks for their individual donor program.

Carolyn notes: “We decided to invest first in strengthening my skills in individual fundraising rather than creating a new staff position. I was confident in my foundation fundraising skills, but I knew the board and I had a lot to learn about individual donor fundraising and communications. So I hired expert consultants to help with both the communications and the fundraising aspects. Our communications, design, and branding consultants helped us communicate our mission and niche in the social justice, safe schools, and LGBT movements and create professional, compelling, and engaging materials that would inspire support. When it came to fundraising consultants, I wanted to hire someone with a track record of building individual fundraising capacity in LGBT movement organizations.”

Carolyn understood from the beginning of our consulting relationship that excellent individual fundraising starts at the top, with the executive director and the board chair. From 2006 to 2008 we worked on development strategy and planning, direct mail, email marketing, newsletters, special events, and a sustainer program, created a board development committee, and strengthened the partnership between Carolyn and the board chair.

Carolyn and the board chair stepped into their roles as major gifts solicitors and strengthened the culture of fundraising and giving on the board. They worked together to nurture a group of donors who gave \$500 to \$5,000 and to support other board members in their fundraising. These two years of consulting were an organizational investment of about \$36,000.

Creating and Structuring the New Position

By mid-2008, the organization was ready to hire its first development staff person. Carolyn explains: “GSA Network

was celebrating its 10th Anniversary, and our programs were well known. We had lost a large grant very suddenly, which forced us to cut staff. This was a scary reminder of the risks of over-reliance on foundation funding. I had learned what was required of me and of the organization to continue to develop our individual donor fundraising. We had laid the groundwork, and the board and I were in agreement that it was the right time to hire. In the 2008-09 budget process, we worked out how much we could afford to pay, which helped me frame my thinking about how I might structure the job. I consulted the wage and benefits survey for organizations of our budget size in the Bay Area to get an idea of what kinds of positions were within the salary range we could afford.”

Carolyn’s next step was to meet with other staff to get their input and ideas and to share hers. GSA Network had recently developed its long-term strategic direction, and staff discussed how their new colleague could help advance that vision and how this person might relate to them and their work. Informed by staff ideas, Carolyn decided that the organization needed a Development and Communications Manager.

“Even if we could have afforded a director-level person, I would not have hired one,” says Carolyn. “I was looking for someone with the aspirations to develop their own skills and fundraising leadership. I wanted a generalist with several years of individual fundraising experience, passion for our mission, and the maturity to manage up. Hiring an excellent writer was a bottom-line requirement; in my experience, good writing is not something you can learn on the job, and I needed a skilled writer I could depend on. I wanted someone who had at least some background in program work, but who did not want to do program work. I did not want to fall into the trap of silos—program work over here and development/communications work over there—so I hoped to find a person with the skills and experience to bridge those aspects of organizational life. I also needed someone to support me in doing my parts of the individual fundraising work.”

Thanks to a three-year award from the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund’s Flexible Leadership Awards program, GSA Network was deeply engaged in building its capacity as a leader in the national social justice, LGBT, and safe schools movements at that time. Central to this effort was a focus on building strong and effective individual staff leaders and leadership teams.

Carolyn wanted to structure the Communications and Development Manager job to make it one that would grow in leadership responsibilities and encourage someone to stay with GSA Network for many years. This goal, along with creating a smooth transition, raised several important questions:

Advertising the Position

CANDIDATES LOOK for strong organizations, executive directors who embrace their fundraising responsibilities, specific indicators of fundraising accomplishments, opportunities for leadership and career advancement, clear minimum requirements to apply, and a fair salary and benefits. We highlighted all of these in our brief and longer listings.

The 50-word listing:

Gay-Straight Alliance Network seeks Development & Communications Manager to build existing individual fundraising and communications programs in partnership with fundraising-savvy Executive Director. Pioneering leader in LGBT safe schools movement for 10 years, \$850,000 budget, individual giving \$110,000, diverse fundraising activities, growing board.

Full description/application info: gsanetwork.org.

Key parts of the job description:

GSA Network seeks a candidate with 3-5 years of experience who is eager to help us build our individual donor and communication programs to help position the organization for its second decade of growth and success. This will be our first Development/Communications staff position and will work very closely with Executive Director Carolyn Laub, who will continue to serve as the agency's chief fundraiser and spokesperson. Carolyn, with the participation of the

board and the assistance of a fundraising consultant, has built an individual fundraising program that raised \$110,000 in 2007 from 387 donors through direct mail, e-mail, a monthly sustainer program, small events, and face-to-face solicitations for major gifts of \$1,000 and above....

We seek a candidate who is eager to play a leadership role, partnering with the Executive Director, in building GSA Network's individual fundraising and communications capacity for the long-term benefit of LGBT youth and their allies in schools across the United States.

Minimum qualifications included:

At least 3 years of experience in a nonprofit development office with an individual donor program, demonstrated writing and organizational skills and experience, and demonstrated commitment to social justice, anti-oppression work, and LGBTQ rights.

The complete text of the Compensation and Benefits section:

Full-time, exempt position reporting to the Executive Director, salary commensurate with experience, excellent vacation and medical, dental, vision, and retirement benefits, mentoring by experienced fundraising consultants, professional development training opportunities, and opportunity for advancement.

The application required a cover letter, resume, and two brief donor-related writing samples.

- What would the partnership with her new staff member be like for both of them, and how would it differ from the partnership she and I had developed?
- How would Carolyn share leadership in fundraising and communications when she had been accustomed to doing all these tasks herself for so many years?
- Even though the new person would not be director level, what authority would she have?
- How would Carolyn ensure that the new manager would be able to grow as a leader, and what was her own role in nurturing that leadership?
- What kinds of learning opportunities, support and leadership development would the new person need in order to succeed?
- How would they both get the advice they might need in the coming years?
- How would the new person juggle both the fundraising and the communications aspects of the job?
- Since the new person would have a key role in supporting

board members in their fundraising, what qualities and skills were most important?

- Knowing that she could not expect the new person to “do it all,” what did Carolyn see as the top priorities for the first year, and were her expectations reasonable?

Carolyn grappled with all these questions—consulting with her board chair, her leadership consultant, and me—before we drafted the job description.

In writing the job listing and job description, we imagined what the ideal applicants would be looking for and how we could speak to their needs and aspirations. To reach job seekers interested in small, social justice LGBT organizations, Carolyn advertised on Craigslist, Idealist, the Foundation Center Philanthropy News Digest, and on LGBT job boards. Thirty people applied. (See the listing and key elements of the job description above.)

The job itself, and the announcement and description, were very appealing to Jackie Downing, who eventually was hired for the position. Says Jackie, “I wasn’t even looking for a job, but

when I happened to see the ad I knew I could not pass up this opportunity. I founded the GSA club at my high school and I have always dreamed of working at GSA Network. I was happy that the job was a combination of individual fundraising and communications, which was a perfect match for my skills and experience. I recognized that this would be a move that would give me a chance to pursue a career as a fundraising leader. I was attracted to GSA Network's strong emphasis on leadership, and I could see that they were very serious about developing effective teams."

Preparing for and Conducting the Interviews

Carolyn, two program staff members, and I reviewed the applicant resumes and developed interview questions designed to elicit information not only about candidates' skills and experience, but also about values, the ability to tell a compelling story and ask smart questions, the ability to connect with a variety of people, and interest in both leading and learning. Carolyn conducted an initial 20-minute telephone screening with 10 of the 30 applicants, then she and two staff members conducted first-round interviews of four applicants, and I joined them for interviews of the two final candidates. Carolyn checked Jackie Downing's references before she made the job offer. Through this collaborative process, Carolyn and her staff deepened their understanding of each other's perspectives and experiences in their various roles at GSA Network.

Carolyn notes, "It was not difficult to decide whom to move forward from telephone screenings to the interview stage. If someone had fundraising and communications skills we were looking for, but our mission and values didn't resonate with them, or they didn't seem to understand how to talk about LGBT issues in a social justice framework, they didn't move forward. If they were passionate about our mission but didn't have the solid fundraising skills and experience we needed, they didn't move forward. There were strong indicators that the candidates we interviewed could do the job and that they understood and could promote GSA Network's mission around youth empowerment and social justice organizing."

The process also made an impression on Jackie, who noted that both the first conversation and the interviews were crucial in helping her decide that this position was a good match for her. "In my first exploratory conversation with Carolyn we talked mostly about GSA Network's commitment to anti-oppression work and youth empowerment. I could see that these were not just words on paper, but deep organizational commitments they had embraced and worked on since the beginning. For me, these are core values. In the interviews people were

really friendly, and it was clear they were passionate about the work. That impressed me," she says.

The Next Stage

In the fall of 2008 my role changed from development consultant to GSA Network to coach for the new staff person. "It was very important that I would have consulting and coaching from outside experts," says Jackie. "I was confident that if I didn't know something I would have the support to learn it." She is also receiving support through the consultants provided to her and the management team through the Haas Flexible Leadership Awards program. Jackie regularly discusses issues with peers at other small nonprofit organizations, attends workshops, and reads articles in professional journals, including the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*.

What Matters Most to Fundraising Staff

When considering hiring your first development staff person, keep in mind the following principles, which are what matter most to fundraising staff:

- Structure the position to advance the mission and the organization's strategic direction
- In the search, communicate the benefits to applicants, not only the needs of the organization
- The executive director is your organization's chief staff fundraiser
- The executive director can and must learn how to fundraise from individuals
- The executive director-development staff leader team is core to fundraising success: developing this team requires time, energy and honest communication
- The executive director must give the development staff person real authority and support the person's leadership
- Demonstrate to program staff that fundraisers are their partners in advancing the mission and serving constituents
- Be clear about what is most important: don't expect someone to "do it all"
- Build in advice and support from professionals

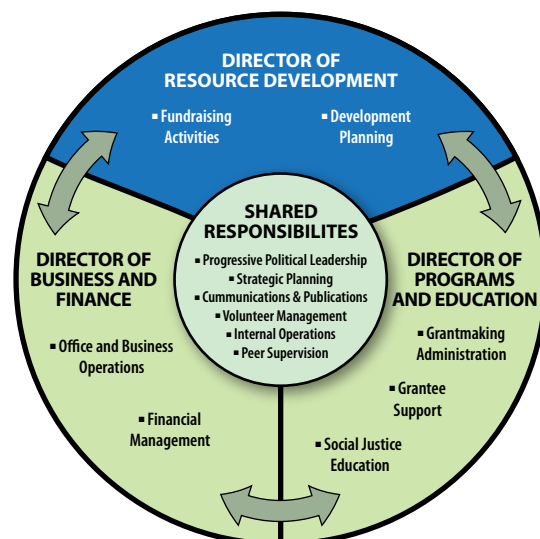
We all continue to learn from each other's stories. If you are thinking of hiring your first development staff person, I urge you to speak to colleagues, to ask questions, and to listen. ■

Ruth Herring is a fundraising consultant and coach. She has held a variety of development positions, including major gifts officer and development director. She can be reached at ruthemilyh@earthlink.net.

Shared Leadership

Creating New Models of Management

by Ruth Zerezghi



Chinook Fund's Collective Leadership Diagram

AT A TIME WHEN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR is challenged with looking for innovative responses to the economic downturn, shifting funding priorities, leadership transition, and many other organizational issues, some social justice organizations are developing leadership structures and organizational cultures that reflect and align with the values of our social movements—love, respect, fair and equal opportunity, anti-violence, equality, and anti-oppression.

Collective or shared leadership models are emerging more and more, but how do they affect the fundraising efforts of social justice organizations, and are these models contributing to happier and healthier development staff? To find out, I interviewed staff at El Centro Humanitario, Chinook Fund, and the Colorado Anti-Violence Program, three organizations based in Denver, Colorado that all have collective leadership models and budgets of less than \$500,000.

Moving to Collective Leadership

Various circumstances lead organizations to consider transitioning to a collective leadership model. One common trigger is around hiring. When a new executive director was needed at the Colorado Anti-Violence Program (CAVP), the hiring committee found itself analyzing what was being asked of potential executive directors and if the leadership model that was in place supported the principles of the organization.

Jerrilyn Page, director of sustainability at the organization, was part of the hiring committee that found itself saying, “One applicant has this piece, but not this other piece, another has that piece, but not that other piece. They need to be radical but be able to navigate the nonprofit sector, be compassionate but be fierce.” The committee realized that a huge laundry list of

skills was unfairly being asked of one person and, by placing those expectations on one person, they were actually setting the new hire up for failure and eventual burnout. Moreover, such an approach didn’t align with their values of building a supportive community, ending root causes of violence, self-care, and caring for each other.

As a result, CAVP took a year to intentionally develop a model that was properly resourced, that challenged traditional hierarchy, and that was representative of the organization’s values. It emerged with a “vision for liberation”—a values statement that is the basis for the leadership model and organizational culture they decided to create. Their collective leadership model, now in operation for a year, has three full-time co-directors, each with their own area of focus (advocacy, training and education, and sustainability) and three part-time staff (a grant writer, youth educator and advocate). Each co-director spends 60 percent time working on their specific area, 20 percent on shared responsibilities, and 20 percent on supporting each other. Additionally, each co-director supervises one of the part-time staff members.

The Chinook Fund set up a similar collective leadership model after the departure of their executive director. The vacancy of that position created an opportunity for the remaining staff, board and volunteers to engage in critical analysis of the organization’s practices and future direction. The entire Chinook community participated in an intentional process to create a leadership model that reflected Chinook’s values and new direction. In the end, a collective leadership model with three full-time co-executive directors (programs and education, resource development, and communications and development) emerged. Each co-executive director spends 50 percent of their

time on their specific area, 25 percent on shared responsibilities, and 25 percent on supporting each other.

At El Centro Humanitario, an organization of day laborers and labor organizers, it was fundamental that the organization be completely worker-led; therefore, a collective leadership model has been in place since its 2002 inception. El Centro Humanitario helps empower workers to become leaders of the organization by becoming speakers, organizers, and fundraisers. As a result, all decisions, programs, initiatives, and activities are determined and led by committees of workers from start to finish. The vision is that the entire staff and all committees will be totally comprised of workers in the near future; in the meantime, the current staff act as a bridge, supporting the implementation of programs determined by the constituents and empowering workers to be leaders.

Their structure has four full-time staff (executive director, organizing director, women's program director, and employment program director), two part-time staff (employment program assistant and office assistant), a board, and a number of committees that are made up almost entirely of day laborers. This dynamic ensures that the constituents are leaders of the organization and feel a sense of ownership.

Although the models at each of these organizations vary, they share these characteristics:

- An intentional process for creating and engaging in collective leadership
- A desire to move from a traditional, hierarchical model that didn't represent or honor their values, principles or identities to a model that did
- Engaging in work that leads to long-term, sustainable social change
- Not wanting to set staff up for failure, burnout or unhealthy expectations
- Creating real growth opportunities for young and emerging leadership

What About the Fundraising?

At all three organizations, there is a director/co-director who manages the overall development efforts of the organization, but the responsibilities do not sit solely with just that one person. Collaboration is key to getting the fundraising done. At CAVP, Jerrilyn develops the overall budget with assistance from the other directors and board, but each staff member, including the part-time staff, takes on various fundraising tasks; in the end, Jerrilyn has about the same number of donor visits as the other two co-directors. This has had a positive impact: in the first year of the new structure, CAVP raised \$25,000 from their individual donor

campaign, double what they raised the year before.

At the Chinook Fund, Katie Thiede, co-executive director of resource development, manages the overall fundraising efforts of the organization but has the assistance of the co-executive director of programs and education, the fundraising committee, the board, and volunteers. Various tasks, such as preparing and signing mail appeals, are shared. The collaborative nature of this model inspired Chinook to bring together its political education and fundraising programs to create Money & Justice, a series of workshops for donors and volunteers to learn about and discuss the relationship between money and social justice.

The collective leadership model has also benefitted fundraising by providing all staff with knowledge about finances. Neha Mahajan, co-executive director of programs and education at Chinook, says, "The ability to learn about the financials of the organization, the opportunity to take an active role in developing, analyzing and applying the organizational budget, and having that knowledge, helped me better participate in the fundraising efforts." Neha noted that this learning is especially important for people of color, who are underrepresented in nonprofit development and director positions. Opportunities like this help young leaders of color learn these skills and access economic power for their social movements.

Transparency and constituent ownership are indicators of successful collective leadership models as well. At El Centro Humanitario, the board, committees of constituents, and staff all have knowledge of the organization's financial health and help carry out the various fundraising tasks of the organization. El Centro has been extremely intentional and proactive about sharing information and knowledge with constituents and providing opportunities for them to contribute and be part of the work.

The sharing of fundraising responsibilities at El Centro has been hugely successful, especially after being hit with a big cut in grant funding last year. The cuts in funding provided an opportunity within the organization to develop a critical analysis of their fundraising model: that analysis noted their lack of diversification, the vulnerable position the organization could be in, and the lack of constituent participation. As a result, the workers stepped up to find new resources for the organization. Workers went to local markets and solicited in-kind donations; they raised more money through phone banking than non-constituent volunteers; they donated food and time for fundraising events; they contributed membership fees; and they paid for various services and products.

Through constituent ownership and transparency, collective discussions also emerged about how the organization can "create sustainable funding sources that align with who we

are and create jobs that go back to people in this community.” Those discussions led El Centro to the idea of social ventures: Green Cleaning for Life, a worker-owned green cleaning co-op, launched last winter. The true success for El Centro is that constituents stepped forward and took care of the organization despite their own limited personal finances because they truly saw El Centro as their own and wanted to see it continue to provide programs and services.

Other Strengths of Collective Leadership

In addition to creating space for creative fundraising strategies, the groups identified a number of other strengths and benefits of collective leadership models. CAVP’s model, influenced by a human rights framework, has benefitted from having the identities and cultures of its leaders honored. Says Jerrilyn, “The environment that has been created avoids setting any one person up for failure and feels really interconnected because it is based on trust and our shared values.”

At the Chinook Fund, Neha and Katie discussed how the collective model has led to increased capacity for the organization and increased confidence and empowerment for themselves as leaders, given the community support and feedback they received. After Chinook agreed to transition to a collective leadership model, all three co-executive directors spent months meeting with donors, grantees and community members to gather feedback and responses about the shift. At first, the new leadership team was concerned about how the community would respond, but they were quickly met with lots of support. “I think the community was looking forward to change and were open to alternative ways of doing things,” says Neha. One donor’s response to the non-traditional leadership model was encouraging: “[Chinook] has done something that I never could have envisioned,” she said, “you have reinvented the organization...I don’t want to get in the way of this growth.”

Minsun Ji, executive director of El Centro Humanitario, explained that the strength of their collective leadership model is the sense of community ownership that comes from it. She said, “I do not worry about El Centro’s future because I know that the workers will always take care of the organization.”

But that sense of ownership was not created overnight; it required genuine engagement of workers and the valuing of all people for all that they have to offer. “As a worker-run organization, it was important that everyone contribute financially. It took some time to get started and to break the myths about who should give, but now everyone gives,” says Minsun.

The organization looks for creative and participatory ways for workers to learn from, get involved with, and support the

sustainability and success of El Centro. As with the worker-owned green cleaning co-op, El Centro has been exploring other social ventures that promote the skills of workers, build confidence, and provide meaningful growth for workers and their families while putting power into the hands of the community. “At El Centro, workers really feel a lot of ownership,” says Minsun. “They are very proud of themselves and very proud of the contribution they make to the organization. Because they feel really proud, they take responsibility.”

Challenges

The primary challenge that all three organizations spoke about was that a collective model requires more time. Group discussions, idea sharing and processing, consensus decision-making, and meetings all take much longer in order to provide a space where people feel heard, honored, and valued.

In addition, to have fair and accessible participation in leadership, more time is needed for capacity building—skills training and knowledge and information sharing. An added challenge also arises when trying to find capacity builders when constituents are from marginalized communities, such as people who do not speak English and/or are rural, young, and low-income. In the case of El Centro, its leadership does not consist of professionally trained nonprofit experts but of mostly poor immigrant day laborers. When El Centro was unsuccessful in finding a grassroots fundraising trainer who could speak to its members and needs, they had to create their own trainings.

Another challenge is that, because of deeply engrained ideas about power and privilege, some funders do not believe that people in constituent-led organizations based in marginalized communities have the ability to lead their organizations, especially in a collective leadership model. Some foundations have even withdrawn funding from grassroots constituent-led groups in favor of funding national organizations using traditional models of leadership. This situation places a double burden on groups like El Centro, which then has to redouble its efforts at grassroots fundraising, but whose constituents do not have the resources to meet all the financial needs of the organization. Minsun of El Centro remarked that, given this situation, shared leadership can “sometimes feel a little fragile.”

Nonetheless, El Centro has responded by strengthening the fundraising and financial knowledge of its constituents rather than abandoning their belief that the organization should be owned and run by workers. In fact, it was in this very challenge that El Centro found the opportunity to discuss and explore creative and innovative fundraising models and strategies that reflect social justice values, such as the co-ops.

Sustainability

I asked the organizations if they thought their collective leadership models were sustainable and could survive after current staff departed. Although no one answered with a resounding “Yes!,” all stated that there is a commitment to ongoing evaluation and “tweaking” of the model so that it remains responsive and relevant to its constituency and organizational effectiveness as time passes. Replied Katie of Chinook, “I don’t know how long this particular model will be sustainable for the organization, but I also don’t think the 1950’s model of nonprofit management was necessarily sustainable either.” Despite concerns about sustainability, all of the organizations were very enthusiastic about their organizational structures. Says Jerrilyn at CAVP, “It feels amazing when you actually see the model applied and result in positive conflict resolution or achievement of goals.”

Implementing Shared Leadership at Your Organization

If you want to try shared leadership at your organization, here are several things the organizations profiled here recommend having in place for the sustainability, longevity and success of this model: team coaching; group supervision; peer coaching/peer supervision; exploration of individual leadership styles; intentional conversations about values, identities, backgrounds; individual mentors/supervisors; adequate time for communication; a commitment to the process; trust building; education, skills building, and training; and professional development opportunities.

In addition, they recommend these plans and processes:

- A clearly defined decision-making process
- A clear plan for conflict management
- A plan for supervision—one that promotes accountability as well as support and self-care
- Time and space for brainstorming, reflection, and problem solving
- Creation of a safe space to discuss insecurities or the need for skills building or education
- Opportunities to reevaluate goals and plans

- Knowing how to incorporate part-time staff in the collective leadership model

While collective leadership models may not yet be perfected, there is great support for and interest in shared leadership, especially from social justice organizations. Katie from Chinook admitted, “If it wasn’t for the collective leadership model, I couldn’t have seen myself staying this long.” Based upon my interviews, the interdependent, integrated nature of these models is helping development staff last longer in development positions, creating

Organizations with shared/collective leadership models

Colorado Anti-Violence Program	coavp.org
Chinook Fund	chinookfund.org
El Centro Humanitario	centrohumanitario.org
Spark	sparkrj.org
Southerners on New Ground	southernersonnewground.org
Project South	projectsouth.org
Sylvia Rivera Law Project	srhp.org
DataCenter	datacenter.org

openings for young people who previously would have been overlooked for director positions, and creating healthier and happier environments where social justice leaders can grow, avoid burn-out, and remain sustainable leaders working for social change.

In order to have sustainable movements, we must build our own sustainable models to support long-term work. We can no longer try to fit puzzle pieces into places where they just don’t fit. ■

Ruth Zerezghi is a GIFT trainer and GIFT internship graduate living in Denver, CO. For the last ten years, she has served the nonprofit sector in various capacities and is an active community and youth activist and organizer around issues of economic, racial, and social justice; human rights; the Horn of Africa; and her native country of Eritrea.

Resources

Center for Ethical Leadership	http://www.ethicalleadership.org
Innovation Center	http://www.theinnovationcenter.org
Leadership Style Assessment	http://leadershiplearning.org/system/files/Leadership+Style.pdf
Power Analysis (Types and Sources of Power)	http://leadershiplearning.org/system/files/Power%20Analysis%20Types%20and%20Sources%20of%20Power.pdf
Zapatista Principles & Practices	http://leadershiplearning.org/leadership-resources/resources-and-publications/some-zapatista-principles-practices



Should We Hire a Fundraising Consultant?

by Stephanie Roth

DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR? You're overwhelmed by the sheer volume of tasks in front of you—making sure your database can produce the information you need for your upcoming fundraising appeal, writing the appeal letter and producing a new remittance envelope, updating your website to reflect your current activities and make it easier for donors to give online, organizing your next major donor campaign, coordinating your annual dinner (which has its own mile-long task list).

You know you need help, and you're not sure where to turn. Hiring additional staff to take on some of the fundraising tasks is beyond your budget.

Here are some other options:

- Hire someone on a contract basis to take on one fundraising project—for example, producing your annual special event, coordinating your major donor campaign, or dealing with the annual appeal
- Hire someone to provide training to give your fundraising team additional skills and confidence
- Hire someone to review and analyze your fundraising program and help you develop a better fundraising plan

To accomplish any of these tasks—and, in fact, all of them—your best bet may be to hire a fundraising consultant. Whether you want someone to take on one of your big fundraising projects, expand the capacity of your team with training, or help you analyze and improve your fundraising planning, a consultant may be just the person you need.

Before deciding whether hiring a consultant is the route to

take, it's important to understand exactly what your needs are and what type of support will be most useful in getting you where you want to go. This article addresses key questions to consider when making the decision of whether to hire a fundraising consultant. It does not discuss the actual process of hiring a consultant. (For advice on choosing the right consultant, see Kim Klein's *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* article, "Hiring a Fundraising Consultant," available at grassrootsfundraising.org).

Key Questions

Do you have the capacity—among staff, board members and volunteers—to implement your fundraising plan?

I recently conducted a fundraising training for a group of organizations working on domestic violence. I recognized the name of one of the organizations because someone from their group had attended one of my trainings about 10 years earlier, though the participant in this latest training was their relatively new development director. It was clear from the information that this participant shared over the course of the day that donor fundraising at this organization had not grown much since the last time I had seen them.

The development director talked about the problem of not enough time to do the individual donor work because of the pressures of what felt like never-ending foundation deadlines for letters of inquiry, proposals and reports. She said that even though the executive director, board members, and even some of the program staff were willing to help with fundraising, it was hard to carve out the time to plan and coordinate their efforts.

I realized that all the training and consulting in the world would not help this organization. What they needed was the commitment of resources (including staff time) to their individual donor program in a way that enabled them to be less random and more focused and consistent in this aspect of their fundraising.

A consultant can provide advice, guidance, and expertise to create fundraising plans, oversee a capital campaign, train the board and/or staff in asking for money, and help address problems that come out in the course of implementing a plan (among other things), but the actual day-to-day work of carrying out fundraising strategies and building relationships with donors has to be done by the staff, board members and volunteers who make up your fundraising team.

Where a consultant can be helpful in such a situation is in addressing an organization's inability to form a fundraising team or even to conceptualize what such a team would do and who might be on it.

Do you have staff capacity but need help with strategy, planning and coaching?

Although a fundraising consultant does not usually take work off your plate (with some exceptions, described below), they can fulfill a critical function in helping you to be more strategic, better organized, and more effective in developing a strong fundraising program. Here are some of the things a fundraising consultant can do:

- Conduct an assessment of your fundraising program's strengths and challenges, and deliver a set of recommendations for how to improve your fundraising effectiveness
- Assist in the development of a fundraising plan
- Review fundraising materials, including fundraising appeals, case statements, annual reports, and so on
- Assist in the evaluation (and design) of your website, looking at it through the lens of a donor or other potential supporter for clear messages that make a compelling case for why someone should support the organization
- Provide fundraising training to board, staff, and other members of the fundraising team on how to ask for money
- Help you find the best fundraising database for your organization
- Help plan and coordinate a capital campaign
- Provide ongoing support and coaching as you implement your fundraising or campaign plan

- Provide problem-solving assistance for the challenges you encounter in trying to build a strong individual donor program
- Coordinate one or more elements of your fundraising plan, such as member appeals, a special event, or a donor campaign

Whether you hire a consultant to provide the most minimal advice and feedback or to work intensively to coordinate a major element of your fundraising plan, remember that you need to have the capacity on staff or among a group of very reliable volunteers to work closely with the consultant and to carry out many of the day-to-day activities. Many consulting relationships run aground because of unspoken (and then unmet) expectations about what a consultant can and can't do, or because of confusion about the role of the consultant and the role of the staff and/or volunteer team.

For example, years ago, I was hired to help coordinate a major donor campaign. I did not realize until about three weeks into the contract that the board and staff expected me to ask my own colleagues and contacts for money. They were surprised at my refusal to do that until I said, "How would you feel if I contacted your board members and donors for money for another group that I was working with?" Although they understood what I meant, they were still disappointed and the relationship was damaged. Now I clarify the boundaries of the relationship early on.

Do you just need extra help on a specific fundraising activity?

Consultants can do the more hands-on work involved in certain types of fundraising projects. This is often the best choice if you have a very small development department (or if the "department" consists of one person who has additional responsibilities beyond fundraising) and the fundraising activity is labor-intensive over a limited period of time.

Special events is a common area for such consultant involvement, as there are consultants who specialize in event production and who carry out activities such as finding a venue; dealing with all of the issues related to food, drink, stage managing, and working with the people who will be part of the program; helping create the program book; and designing and producing the invitation. Even when you hire someone in that capacity they should not be expected to solicit sponsors for the event, sell ads for your program book, or sell tickets. That will still be the responsibility of your staff, board, and volunteers, who are the ones, after all, with the contacts and relationships with potential supporters for your group or cause.

Another useful opportunity to use consultants is to coor-

When a Consultant is Not Enough: The Case for Fundraising Staff

FUNDRAISING HAS BECOME an increasingly complex component of an organization's work. As your fundraising activities grow, especially in the realm of individual donors, you will find that the need for dedicated fundraising staff will probably increase as well.

Many core principles about fundraising have remained the same over the years: the need for a strong and clear case for support; the importance of building relationships and seeing donors as more than the money they give; the importance of developing a systematic way of contacting, engaging, and soliciting donors; and the role of a team of people to carry out the work.

What has changed pretty dramatically in the last 20 years is the role of technology, from maintaining a high-quality website to using a database and working with four generations of donors who are very different in their giving habits—from some who don't have computers to others who give only online and have never written a check. New technology has also introduced the ability—and therefore the need—to communicate quickly and immediately in response to events that affect your issue or your organization. There is much more to keep in mind, and decisions must be made quickly.

Because development work involves so many seemingly endless details, you need to have at least one person (and for larger organizations, more than one) who is paying attention to the whole picture: the infrastructure needs, keeping the fundraising team on track and on task, and developing and making materials available to the team.

Whether it makes more sense to hire a dedicated development staff person to play this role or reconfigure current staff responsibilities to divide the fundraising work across more people is a decision your group will have to make. There isn't one perfect structure that we're all waiting to discover, one "best" way to organize fundraising roles and responsibilities that works for all time and all organizations. At different times in an organization's life, roles and structures change, depending on many factors, including the skill set of your current staff, your ability to recruit a team of people to be involved, the kind of work your organization does and to whom it appeals, and the kinds of technology you need to implement certain types of fundraising projects.

What is absolutely true is that fundraising cannot be assigned to just one person. Even with a development department of one, there should always be other staff members involved as well as board members and other volunteers.

dinate a time-limited individual donor campaign or an annual fundraising phone bank, or to assist volunteers in putting on a house party. In each of these situations, however, the consultant's time is best spent on overseeing the campaign; producing materials to assist the team of solicitors; providing support, coaching, and training; and dealing with other logistical needs. The consultant should not be expected to host the house party, solicit donors, or come up with her or his own list of people to ask.

Does your fundraising team need new skills or motivation?

Even with experienced fundraising staff, a willing board, and a good fundraising plan, you may find that there is something else your fundraising team needs—an opportunity to learn new skills, understand how fundraising fits into the rest of the organization's goals and strategies, and motivation to follow through on their fundraising commitments. Although training itself won't fix all of the fundraising challenges you face, it can inspire, encourage, and give clearer direction to your fundraising team, as they gain the tools they need to get out and start asking for money.

Fundraising training can be one of the most helpful things a consultant can provide if the organization is ready to put the people who have been trained to work immediately. For example, I did a training for a fundraising team the day before it was about to launch a \$75,000 annual fund campaign with calls to potential major donors. We practiced making the phone call, setting up the meeting, and asking for money. We reviewed how to know if someone is a true prospect, and we went over the process of asking and follow-up. When the team began their work the next day, the momentum and excitement of the training were still fresh.

Consultants are like anyone in any of the helping professions—they help you best when you and they are clear about what you need and what they can provide, and when you are willing to do the work required to make the project successful. Ultimately, the success of a consulting relationship is like that of any relationship: it works best when expectations are clear, questions are raised immediately, confusions are discussed and resolved thoroughly, and there is genuine respect between the consultant and the organization. ■

Stephanie Roth is a trainer and consultant with Klein and Roth Consulting (kleinandroth.com) and the former editor of the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*.

AUCTION



Should Your Online Fundraising Be Going, Going, Gone?

by Nzinga Koné Miller

AUCTIONS, A POPULAR WAY for many organizations to fundraise offline, are becoming an online favorite as more and more nonprofits shift focus around engagement and fundraising to their online programs. But is an online auction right for you? Here are some things to consider about running auctions online.

Are You Already Accepting—and Asking for—Donations Online?

If you are considering setting up an auction online but your organization isn't already accepting donations online and proactively reaching out to supporters to ask them to give, you're putting the cart before the horse. Start with the basics: make sure your supporters can easily give to you online. Then make sure to ask them to give through a dynamic online communications program that includes cultivation and advocacy messaging (if appropriate) in addition to online appeals. In most cases, making it possible for supporters to donate online anytime—rather than just within the window of an auction timeframe—is going to be better use of your time and energy when you're just getting started with online fundraising.

If you already have a basic online donation system set up along with messaging to your supporters to encourage them to give to your organization online, that's a good start. It may well be a sign that you're in a good position to diversify your online fundraising arsenal. If you already employ good baseline practices for reaching out to existing and prospective list members, then you have likely built a community of supporters—some of them already donors—to whom you can reach out to promote an auction or other alternative approaches.

Do You Have Time?

Don't underestimate the amount of time that any campaign

or event requiring fulfillment will require—whether it's an online auction or a premium-based gift drive. And in the case of an auction, you'll need to account for the additional time it will take to get commitments for the various services or goods you'll be auctioning.

Deciding what kinds of items you'll be auctioning, and then asking for them, can be a combination of a creative exercise and brainstorming. Items that have some sort of connection to your mission or outlook may be naturally more appealing to your audience. Does your organization focus on food justice issues? Seek out a month's worth of shares from a CSA, or a catered meal for six prepared by the chef on your board. Do you support youth with programs that teach technology and A/V skills? Consider auctioning 10-hour blocks of technical support, recording studio access and audio editing assistance, or a wireless router.

In addition to thinking creatively about the types of items that are most likely to appeal to your audience, you'll want to involve your staff and volunteers in the process of inventorying who your organization already has connections to. Think through how they might be able to help, and then involve the rest of the team in following up with your contacts to ask them if they're willing to donate the goods or services to your effort.

Implementing the auction takes several steps, including getting good-quality photographs of the items on auction and writing compelling descriptions of them to entice bidding. Then, of course, you'll need to promote the auction wherever you have built up a base of supporters: email, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and offline communications by board, volunteers, and staff.

For example, if your auction will be open over the course of two weeks, you might plan to send three messages, with each highlighting one or two particularly appealing items. The

Learning About Online Auctions

Idealware: A Few Good Online Auction Tools
idealware.org/articles/fgt_auctions.php

Nonprofit Technology News: Online Auctions as a Fundraising Tool
nptechnews.com/management-features/online-auctions-as-a-fundraising-tool.html

messages can be timed to go out when the bidding begins, then at the midway point to keep up the momentum, and a “last chance” message when there’s about a day left to bid.

A note on timing: you can leave your auction open for less time or for longer—but you’ll want to consider the volume of messaging necessary to drive people to the auction. Consider a timeline that allows enough room for three to five email messages (as well as updates to social networks) promoting the auction. If you squeeze that volume into too few weeks, you may get messaging burnout, but spread it over too long a period of time and you won’t have the benefit of sustaining interest and maintaining a sense of urgency.

Finally, don’t forget the fulfillment. You’ll need to plan for the time and expense involved in making sure the people who submitted the winning bids get their items.

Should the Auction Stay Offline?

I was recently at a well-attended daylong event hosted by a nonprofit. The event included an auction with a smorgasbord of compelling items, classes, and services. Oddly, the auction had been online for weeks leading up to the event. Even though I’m one to look for as many ways as possible to raise funds online, this seemed like a case of overkill that did not seem to take into consideration the experience of the offline participants. Because the event had been well promoted and the auction items were so appealing, naturally, most of the goods and services that had been featured online had already been bid on numerous times.

By the time the event happened, the starting bids on many of the items appeared to be deterring participation—relatively blank bidding sheets were in abundance at the end of an otherwise very busy day. Eager would-be participants, whose interest in attending may have been piqued, in part, by the exciting prospect of placing the winning bid on one of the items, were left out in the cold of already-high bids. The organization made money, of course—so perhaps it seemed the end justified the means. But as

in all things related to fundraising, it’s important to consider the experience of your supporters and prospective supporters.

This story leads us to another consideration—the geography of your supporters. Are you a small, locally focused organization with most of your supporters in the area? Or do you have a statewide, national, or international focus—and a list of supporters who are broadly distributed? If you’re a mostly local group, consider the possible drawbacks of duplicating your work online or of bypassing an opportunity for in-person contact in favor of running the auction only online.

I would typically favor doing as much online as possible, but in reality, sometimes the Internet just isn’t the right venue for an effort. If your organization hosts an offline event, such as an annual dinner, that event may be the ideal setting for your auction in terms of the opportunities for both fundraising and supporter engagement. Duplicating your efforts online may simply be unnecessary.

Can You Get the Tech Aspect?

If you do decide to run an auction online, you’ll need the technology to support it, which will take a little research. Your best bet for covering your bases on the technology front is to check out online resources (see box). In addition, talk to people who have already run their own online auctions. Find out what tool they used, how much it cost, what worked, what didn’t—and what they’d have done differently if only they’d known then what they know now.

Online auctions can certainly be effective, particularly for larger organizations—Oxfam’s auction of the dress worn by Keira Knightly to the 2006 Oscars not only brought in nearly \$8,000 from tens of thousands of site visits, it also raised awareness about the organization’s efforts in Eastern Africa. This is an exceptional case, of course, but from The Mimi Fishman Foundation to The Breast Cancer Fund, there are countless examples of organizations that successfully run auctions that tap into the offerings of unique supporters and inspire constituents to bid.

Still, as with many ways to cultivate and communicate with supporters online, make sure to do your homework. And above all else, answer the one crucial question: have you already put the most straightforward approaches for online fundraising to work for you? Before you dive in, make sure you’re prepared to put the virtual auction block to use for your organization. ■

Nzinga Koné-Miller is the account director at Watershed, a consulting and services firm designed to help organizations build, grow, and sustain relationships with constituents online.



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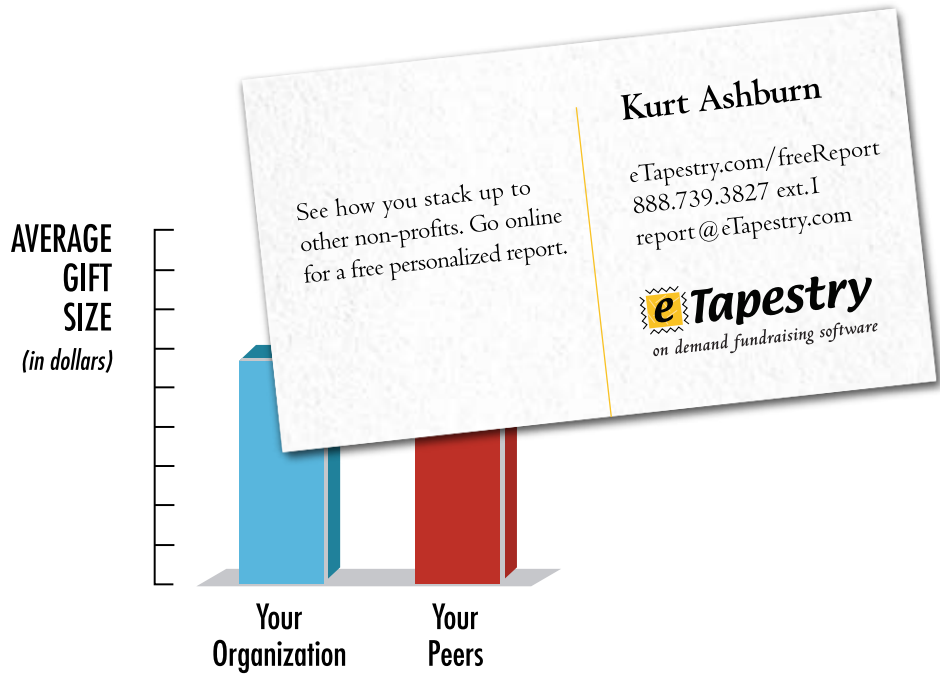


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