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GOVERNANCE/VOICE

# Involving your board members in fund development

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It's your job to help board members do their job in fund development.

What's a board member's job in fund development?

First, every board member must give a personal financial contribution every single year. 100% participation. Yes, indeed!

You personalize the request to each board member, based on his or her financial capacity. For example, you might ask Bob for \$25. Bob is the single father of 6 kids. He works in the kitchen of the public school system. On the other hand, you ask Mary for more, lots more. Mary is the head of that big corporation in your town.

Board members do more than give money.

Every board member helps identify those who might be interested in the organization. Board members do this over and over forever.

For example: As a board member of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island, I identify women (and men) that I think might be interested in leveling the playing field for women and girls. I know what interests my friends. For those who care about women's rights, I help link them up to the Women's Fund. I pay attention to what my professional colleagues talk about, what they did over the weekend, what bothers them in the news. For those who seem to have some affinity to leveling the playing field for women and girls, I help link them up to the Women's Fund.

A big reminder: Do not ask (or expect) your board members to trespass on their personal and professional relationships. Sure, Mary the head of the big corporation, is on your board. Yes, she does business with corporations and corporate executives. But don't expect her to solicit them for gifts. Those corporations and executives may not be interested in your cause. And Mary should not use her connections to ask for a gift. That's a favor given to Mary, not a gift to your organization. What Mary should do is identify those corporations and executives that she knows who might be interested. This is a big deal! Don't ask board members to trespass on personal and professional relationships.

What else do board members do to help with fund development? Nurture relationships. There's lots of relationship building to be done. Just read my past columns.

Board members help nurture relationships with those who might be interested, with those who are qualified prospects, and with donors. For example: Board members attend your organization's programs and fundraising events. When there, Board members schmooze with guests. Board members do not hang out with their friends and dates. Board members mingle and greet people and have conversations and learn about people.

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Invite a board member to visit a foundation with you and share stories. Ask a board member to join you at lunch with a donor.

And there's more! Some board members are great strategic thinkers and may be good candidates for your Fund Development Committee. Other board members could help plan the next fundraising event.

Every board member can call donors to thank them for their gifts. This is just a thank-you call, not a prelude to another request. Board members call and say thanks for the gift. Research shows that the result is better when a board member calls.

And finally, board members can help solicit gifts. For example, board members can write personal notes on direct mail solicitation. The board member doesn't even have to know the letter recipient. Just write a note that says "Thank you for your support. I hope you'll consider giving again." And sign it Mary Smith, board member.

Board members can help sell tickets and recruit sponsors for your fundraising event. And some board members – a few – can personally solicit, face-to-face, prospects and donors.

It's your job to help board members do this. It's your job to anticipate and remove the barriers to board member participation. It's your job to remind board members about the importance of relationship building, not just asking.

Their job. Your job. Together the work gets done.

P.S. I use the term "enabling" to define the role of the development officer working effectively with board members and other fundraising volunteers. I use the same term, "enabling," to describe the role of the executive director and her relationship with the board. Read more about enabling in my next column.

Terms: [Opinion](#), [Unraveling Development](#)

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