



*"In the end, the success of fund-raising campaigns hinges on leadership, and that leadership starts with the board. Board members are the campaign solicitors of first and last resort. They are the most important fund-raising resource an organization has. There is no greater strength in a fund-raising campaign than a board ready and willing to lead, and no greater weakness than one which sees fund-raising as someone else's job."*

- Tony Poderis, author of *It's a Great Day to Fund-Raise*

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## **Engaging your Board of Directors in Fundraising**

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Effective boards can help nonprofit organizations with many things, including determining organizational strategy, guiding the executive director and enhancing the organization's public standing. However, one of the most crucial responsibilities of a board is to ensure that their organization has adequate financial resources to carry out their mission. One way they can help to accomplish this is through fundraising, and board members can be excellent resources in this area. This whitepaper will focus on the importance of engaging your board in fundraising activities, and ways to accomplish this. While not every organization has a board of directors, many of these same principles can be applied to other leadership structures, such as elders, deacons, steering committees or other governing bodies. Furthermore, it is up to each organization to decide who the appropriate person is to spur the board into action (executive director, board chair, etc.).

The first step in pursuing a further fundraising agenda is to get board members to contribute themselves financially. There are a number of important reasons for asking board members to put the organization high in their philanthropic priorities, even if there is no minimum. They include:<sup>1</sup>

- Board member giving is a public commitment to the organization's work;
- Board members might pay increased attention to the nonprofit's mission and financial health when their own money is engaged;
- Many other donors and institutional funders will not give to organizations that don't have 100 percent board participation as current donors.

### **3 Ways to Turn Board Members into Fundraisers<sup>2</sup>**

1. **Change Your Board's Culture:** If the culture of your board is one of non-giving and not helping with fundraising, it's time for a culture change. Your board members were likely recruited without the expectation of giving and getting (i.e., helping with

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<sup>1</sup> Nonprofit Research Collaborative. "Special Report: Engaging Board Members in Fundraising." <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412673-The-Nonprofit-Research-Collaborative-Special-Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Amy Eisenstein, ACFRE, Author, Speaker, Consultant, Coach. Tri Point Fundraising. "3 Ways to Turn Board Members into Fundraising Fanatics." <http://www.tripointfundraising.com/3-ways-to-turn-board-members-into-fundraising-fanatics/>. Visit her website for a free ebook.

fundraising), so turning things around will take some time and effort. Here are three steps to steer you in the right direction: Start by identifying one or two board members who understand the need for change. Speak with them in private and ask them to bring up the issue at the next board meeting. Next, institute a policy of 100% participation. One hundred percent means that every board member contributes financially. If you have board members who don't want to contribute, let them know that they are hurting your chances of raising money from others. If they continue to resist, offer them other opportunities to volunteer at your organization as non-board members. Finally, make sure your bylaws include term limits. If all else fails, any resistant board members will rotate off eventually.

2. **Recruit and Train Your Board:** In order to truly change the culture of your board, you'll want to recruit new board members with the understanding that they are responsible for giving and helping with fundraising. This new wave of board members will ultimately become the leaders of your organization. Create a written board member job description. Include specific expectations, including giving and fundraising. Training is an important part of engaging board members. Hold an annual board retreat and include fundraising, not only planning, on the agenda. Also plan to include fifteen minutes of fundraising training as part of each board meeting.
3. **Keep it Simple:** It's important to remember that your board members have other priorities in addition to your organization, including family and career. If you want them to help with fundraising, you need to make it easy. Give board members a small number of specific tasks and provide them with tools they need to accomplish those tasks. Here are some examples of easy tasks they can accomplish:
  - Ask your board members to call five donors to thank them. Provide them with a sample script with key bullet points. Also give them the name and contact information of the people you would like them to call.
  - Ask them to join meetings with (potential) major donors.
  - Give them an opportunity to share at meetings their fundraising successes, and conversations with donors. This will give them some acknowledgement for their work, help guide other board members, and show that the process is not as intimidating as they may think.

### Additional Resources

- Nonprofit Hub, "15 Ways to Transform Your Board of Directors into Fundraising Champions." <http://www.nonprofithub.org/featured/transform-your-board-of-directors-into-fundraising-champions/>
- Third Sector Online, "10 Practical Ways to Engage Board in Fundraising." <http://www.thirdsectoronline.com/page.cfm?pageid=14225>
- US Social Forum, "Fifty-Three Ways for Board Members to Raise \$1000." [http://www.ussocialforum.net/sites/default/files/53\\_ways\\_to\\_FR.pdf](http://www.ussocialforum.net/sites/default/files/53_ways_to_FR.pdf)
- Dennis G. McMillian. *Focus on Sustainability: A Nonprofit's Journey*. The Foraker Group, 2013.

- Jeanne Bell and Elizabeth Schaffer. *Financial Leadership for Nonprofit Executives: Guiding Your Organization to Long-term Success*. CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, 2005.

*Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available online:*

<http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml>

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