



Are You a Great Fundraiser?

By Duke Haddad

For more than 40 years, I have been a fundraiser. The complexity of the concept of a fundraiser is amazing. There are many functions, behaviors, qualities and attributes needed for an individual to be a good fundraiser, much less a great fundraiser. Have you looked in the mirror recently? Would you consider yourself a great fundraiser?

Fundraisers may have a title of development officer, major gift officer, development director or rainmaker, according to Nonprofit Hub, but they all generate significant sums of revenue for the institutions they represent. Five qualities that make a good fundraiser great are humility; enthusiasm for the ask; excellent oral, written and listening skills; a broad set of interests; and moxie.

Fundraisers must seek to continuously improve their craft. They must practice asking for the gift and enjoy the thrill of this adventure. They need to understand that in a productive solicitation, it will involve 75% listening and 25% talking. Fundraisers, who exchange with prospects about a variety of subjects, must believe in their cause and expect every ask to be successful.

Fundraisers Vincent Duckworth, Sarah Lyon, and Harvey McKinnon shared five significant qualities great fundraisers possess.

1. Have passion and empathy toward others.
2. Always be prepared to have humor as events continually change and evolve.

3. Continually learn by going to conferences and online seminars, as well as discovering knowledge from colleagues.
4. Bring yourself as a person and personality to work each day and be consistent.
5. Have integrity, be enthusiastic and be open to any possibility.

Additional qualities include having curiosity, creativity, empathy, upward mobility, credibility, a balanced perspective, a game face; understanding donor passions and timing; being humble; employing discretion; and knowing donors want a giving impact. Fundraising professionals that are great move a short-time transactional gift to a transformational long-term engagement scenario with donors. Resource development professionals seek to help people with their search for meaningful involvement with nonprofits.

A stellar professional can help take a nonprofit's fundraising program to a higher level, but not everyone has the attributes to be an extraordinarily successful fundraising professional. Some top fundraising skills every professional should have include great interpersonal skills, commitment to a cause, determination, perseverance, honesty, adaptability and storytelling skills.

Individuals must also show research capability, ability to motivate and creative thinking. It is imperative that individuals in our profession have excellent listening skills. They must constantly seek ways to improve performance. Goal setting and placing donor interests first are necessary. Professionals must show innovation and understand how to communicate with their donors. Self-improvement over time is necessary, too.

If someone aspires to be an excellent generator of private revenue in the nonprofit arena, individuals must determine if they have the personality and attributes that make them a good fit for the field.

Here are core personality traits of effective fundraisers, according to TWB Fundraising:

1. Highly organized and wears many hats.
2. Has effective communication skills in addition to being a strong writer and public speaker.
3. Good listener to understand donors' needs and interests.
4. Genuinely interested in people to build trust and rapport with them.
5. Strong instincts about people to determine when to ask for a gift.
6. Able to work with many types of people — from volunteers, prospects and donors.
7. Integrity and follow-through to build trust over time.
8. Emotional intelligence by having a sense of timing.
9. Optimistic despite refusals from asks.
10. Numbers-driven and results-oriented to achieve and surpass financial goals.

Are you a great fundraiser or want to be one? Constantly seek to grow and improve your performance over time. Do a personal SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of yourself. See where additional training and education can make a difference. Strive to go on joint solicitation calls from time to time. Always strive to achieve a higher level of success. "Great" can be variable in scope, so always have the desire to be an excellent fundraiser. Your performance will enhance the reputation of your organization, profession, and yourself.

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