

Whose Job is it to Raise Money?

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by John Biggins of member firm American City Bureau, Inc.

If you want to conduct a little social experiment, ask random staff members of any not-for-profit this simple question: *Whose job is it to raise money?*

If the leery look, cocked head, and slow backward retreat do not give it a way; the first audible response will. It is often a confused and distant, "Ummm, not my job." It's as if development should be the next reality show on the Discovery Channel; either a featured profession on Mike Rowe's *Dirty Jobs*; or perhaps because of its danger, a different take on the *Deadliest Catch*.

But sadly enough, development is often an afterthought that is simply not given much consideration by staffers responsible for delivering the mission and the vital day-to-day services of any non-profit. Organizations that thrive in development understand that fundraising can be just as important to build internally with staff and co-workers as it is externally with donors and volunteers.

I really believe that for donors and volunteer leaders to devote their time and energy to an organization's philanthropic effort, those within the organization must do so first. All of the organization's team members, regardless of job description, must serve as advocates of your development effort. Ownership of fundraising and belief in what it will accomplish must begin with the organization's chief executive, and then translated and reinforced internally through every program and every staff member.

As a 98-year old firm, we serve clients of every size, scale, location, and experience. However a core constituency of ours, Catholic institutions, is embracing development to such a level that many recognize it as the "ministry of fundraising." Feeding and clothing the poor... healing and comforting the sick... educating kids and spiritual development... And now, fundraising. Development will never be woven into the next Beatitude, but without it, the previous ministries may never happen.

Thus, fundraising within an organization is *everyone's* job. And yes, even I admit... easier said than done. But hey, I am a consultant, so that's my job J. However, let's not miss the opportunity to share development's true rewards with those administering the very services that fundraising provides. Since in many sectors staff members outside of development and administration are often in regular contact with donors, it is in our best interest to make sure they serve as advocates.

So what can be done? We need to emphasize to staff that development isn't just about asking for money. Internal communication that links donations to mission should be circulated regularly. Staff members need to be reminded that they, in combination with donors, are a part of the mission, and not just the means to get the mission done. Challenge everyone in your non-profit to be able to relay two-to-three meaningful stories that link funding to what they do. I am confident that involving staff will pay dividends for fundraising and will create a greater appreciation for what everyone does on a day-to-day basis.