THE FOCUS GROUP
SYMPOSIUM

Healthy Boards, Healthy Fundraising

Integrating a Culture of Philanthropy Into Your Board

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- Introductions

- Quick Poll: How healthy is your board's fundraising culture?

- Goal: Shift the mindset from f*undraising as a task* to *philanthropy as a shared culture*.

What we will cover today:

- How to define and articulate a “culture of philanthropy” for your board.
- Common barriers to board fundraising engagement—and how to overcome them.
- How to train, equip, and inspire board members to participate meaningfully in fundraising.
- Practical roles board members can play beyond asking for money.
- Questions to ask your board to help transform its culture.

A healthy board culture of philanthropy

A healthy fundraising culture among a board is one in which members personally give in a way that reflects their commitment to the mission and understand that people give to people they know and trust. Board members take donors seriously by prioritizing relationships, actively supporting and sharing the case for support, engaging in asking when appropriate, and celebrating institutional fundraising successes with gratitude and joy.

5 Keys to encouraging a “culture of philanthropy” in your board

Key #1

Boards often disengage because expectations are unclear from the start. A culture of philanthropy must begin with a clear job description that states board members are expected to give at a personally meaningful level and help connect their networks to the mission of the organization.

Key #2

Another barrier is that board members possess different experience levels. Clarifying the three types of fundraising roles—Advocate, Facilitator, and Asker—helps board members understand where they naturally fit.

Key #3

Immerse board members in the mission directly—site visits, shadowing programs, meeting beneficiaries. When they personally experience the impact, their advocacy becomes authentic and powerful.

Key #4

Offer role-specific training (Advocate, Facilitator, Asker), including role-playing exercises that build comfort and confidence.

Key #5

Make fundraising a standing topic and celebrate successes; encourage members to share their experiences. Use board meetings to spotlight progress and keep excitement alive.

Barriers Boards Face

- Fear of asking for money
- Lack of clarity on expectations
- Poor onboarding and inconsistent training
- Absence of mission ownership
- Leadership (staff or board) that models avoidance
- Misconception: “Fundraising is the staff’s job”

Building a Healthy Fundraising Culture

1. Set clear expectations from the beginning

- 100% board participation
- Board agreement and understanding of their role as advocates
- Share the organization's giving policies

2. Embed philanthropy into every meeting

- Mission moments
- Donor stories
- Short training segments

3. Equip them with the WHY and the WORDS

- Provide talking points
- Offer training
- Give practice opportunities (i.e. role playing)

4. Give them multiple ways to contribute– not just solicitation

- Hosting
- Storytelling
- Prospect identification
- Thanking donors
- Networking and advocacy

5. Celebrate wins & model the behavior

- Highlight examples of successful board engagement
- Thank and celebrate with Development Team for their results.

6. Partner with them; don’t rush them

- Collaborative goal-setting
- Avoid guilt-driven appeals
- Emphasize shared ownership

Conduct a brief interview with your board member:

- “What shifted in your board’s culture?”
- “What helped your board feel more confident/engaged?”
- “Which of the Advocate/Facilitator/Asker roles did most board members gravitate toward?”
- “What advice would you give other board members?”

The Challenge

- One is one simple step you will implement at your next board meeting?
- One of the most meaningful ways board members can contribute is by thanking donors directly – often the most impactful “fundraising” activity of all.

Questions?

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