



CAREERS IN FUNDRAISING

by Phillip E. Perdue, CFRE

NOW INCLUDES

Preachy and Dull
Micro-Book
for Managers!

Copyright © 2014 by Phillip E. Perdue, CFRE

May I Cultivate You?

Petar Publishing

Norfolk, Virginia, USA

ISBN: 978-0-9912877-1-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013923566

1. Reference Book 2. Wit and Humor

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any written, electronic, recording, or photocopying without written permission of the publisher or author. The exception would be in the case of brief quotations embodied in the critical articles and reviews and pages where permission is specifically granted by the publisher or author.

No liability is assumed by the author for damages that may result from the use of information contained within.

Cover and Book design by Ailsa Long | Long Creations International LLC

Edited by Chris Hart

Second Edition

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Available at all major on-line booksellers.

For information on purchasing additional copies:

www.petarpublishing.com

publisher@petarpublishing.com

1-804-683-9833

Contents

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTERS

- 1 [Career Daze](#)
- 2 [Development vs. Advancement vs. Fundraising vs. Friendraising vs. Funraising](#)
- 3 [Art vs. Science](#)
- 4 [You Are Not in Control](#)
- 5 [Leadership Means “Money”](#)
- 6 [The Vast Ocean of Indifference](#)
- 7 [Special Event Is An Oxymoron](#)
- 8 [“I Know Just What You Mean!” or Major Gift Attitude](#)
- 9 [Planned Giving is an Accident](#)
- 10 [Leavership](#)
- 11 [Loving Your New Job](#)
- 12 [Your Fundraising Software Is The Worst](#)
- 13 [Consultants Are Smarter Than You](#)
- 14 [The Y Chromosome](#)
- 15 [Office Snacks](#)
- 16 [You Are the Real Philanthropists](#)

SPECIAL BONUS:

PREACHY AND DULL MICRO-BOOK FOR MANAGERS

- 1 [Hiring Great Former Staff Members](#)
- 2 [Creating a Great Place to Work, Part I: Building Loyalty](#)
- 3 [Creating a Great Place to Work, Part II: Motivate with Meaning](#)
- 4 [Building a Great Operation](#)
- 5 [Strategic Planning](#)
- 6 [ENDING ON A HIGH NOTE \(TOO LATE FOR THAT...\)](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PLANNING YOUR NEXT AFFAIR?

ORDER INFORMATION

Chapter One

CAREER DAZE

We do not select this career, we just reject all others.

There is a flashback scene in the TV series *King of the Hill* where a boyhood Hank Hill says, “When I grow up, I want to sell propane and propane accessories, if my grades are good enough...” Part of the joke is that he has grown up to do just that.

But to Hank this is not a joke. He set out to sell propane and considers it a calling. He proudly says things like, “I’m in the propane game.” We fundraisers are a different breed. I meet very few of us who set out with this career as their mission in life. If we are to be honest with ourselves, we would admit that most of us found this profession after we went out into the world, college degrees in hand and started weighing our surprisingly limited career options. I could have titled this chapter, “Study the Liberal Arts!”

Truth is, we might as well call fundraising one of the liberal arts.

We need to be more like Hank and say what we do with self-confidence and an air of destiny. Of course, that is hard to do when we meet new people and the conversation usually goes something like:

Them: “So what do you do?”

Us: “I am a fundraiser. I ask people for money.”

Them: “...”

Silence and a look of confusion. That is what we usually get. No one has ever said to me, “That must be interesting,” or “I’ll bet you get to meet a lot of fascinating people,” or “How can I become a fundraiser, too?” Often it’s, “Yeah, I could never do that.” I was once asked by a corporate prospect, “Do you get paid to do this?” After a while you begin to imagine that right now there is someone cleaning up zebra droppings at a zoo thinking, “It could be worse. At least I didn’t have to ask someone for the money to buy this shovel...”

The blank reactions we get are especially strange when you consider that, if you calculate the famously high turnover in our profession - not the transfers among non-profits but the number of people who routinely enter and flee the profession and the rapidity with which this happens - it is hard to believe there are many people left in America who have not taken a turn in development at some time in their lives.

Mathematically, every third person you meet must have run a special event at least once in his or her life. And yet... where are all those former fundraisers now? They must be like ex-smokers. No one wants to admit they did it. Next time you are in a crowded movie theatre, yell, “Your big donor is on the phone!” Count how many people instinctively jump up.

So, we fundraisers did not set out for this career. That’s OK. Most people don’t know what they want to do when they grow up. And it is fine that most don’t want to do this work.

That is why you and I have jobs.

On Turnover: In the future everyone will have been a fundraiser for 15 minutes!

Coordinator, Andy Warhol Foundation Annual Franks & Beans Dinner.

But - always think of it as more than a job. You have a career. You have ethical standards. You owe allegiance to the profession before your employer. That is what it means to be a professional, after all.

What you do has value. They pay you, don't they? Sort of. •

Chapter Two

DEVELOPMENT VS. ADVANCEMENT VS. FUNDRAISING VS. FRIENDRAISING VS. FUNRAISING

You are in sales. Trust me.

Development, advancement, fundraising.

Friendraising, funraising. Really? Really.

And don't forget *fund raising*! That's right. We haven't even settled on whether our profession is one word or two. I don't see similar confusion among doctors and lawyers.

Let's start with *development, advancement and fundraising*.

We use all three of these words. Why different words?

One reason is that it helps us concoct goofy titles. Scarcely a month goes by that there isn't someone out on the listservs trying to mash together a few words for some new position. "We already have a Director for Corporate Development so we thought this one could be Manager of Advancement Relations, Corporations. What does everyone think!?"

Of course, you rarely see *fundraiser* in a job title. That is too direct. We need some code here since many in the profession don't like to say they are fundraisers. The use of development and advancement in titles helps create distance from the emotionally uncomfortable part of the job, i.e. that asking for money thing.

Also, there is a slight difference between *development* and *advancement*.

Typically development encompasses only fundraising.

Advancement usually includes fundraising and at least one other function like marketing, communications, alumni affairs or ticket sales.

But this job, at its core, is really all about the funds raised. So when people ask me what I do, I say I am a fundraiser, not an Advancement Engineer or Manager of Development Relationship Systems¹ or whatever the hot phrase is that month.

I wish our profession would come to grips with another term - *sales*. What we do is sales or is so akin to sales that it is hard to distinguish. But *sales* has some negative connotations causing many fundraisers to recoil at any use of the word.

However you feel about it, I strongly recommend that you include some of the excellent books on sales in your personal education and training. It is not unethical to do a better job of understanding the needs, wants and expectations of your prospects. Sales literature can help you do that. It is also not unethical to have a better understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses and what you may be doing wrong. Sales literature can help with that, too.

I have found the literature on salesmanship to be as useful in my career as the fundraising literature - and it is often more motivating. The sales literature has more of a can-do feel to it and appeals to the ego and self-interest of the reader. There is nothing wrong with that.

It's OK to act like a real person!

Then there is this: You hear *friendraising* and *funraising* used both exultantly and pejoratively. I never use them because I started out in special events where the terms are code for "miserable failure." I admit it is true that sometimes you need to have social activities to spark energy and interest in your organization and its mission.

You also won't hear too many interviewers ask you how many friends you raised at your last job.

But keep in mind that you'll never hear anyone say, "We just had a great fundraiser! We counted up all the fun and deposited it in our bank account and used the fun to pay our bills. The best part is we can use all that fun to support our mission and reward our staff and buy better office furniture." •

[1](#) I kind of like that one.

Chapter Three

ART VS. SCIENCE

All of us at one time or another have listened to some expert who boils down development to a formula. They'll say something like:

“Send this many letters to get this many responses to get this many appointments to get this many solicitations to get this many gifts at this average gift. Using our methods you can hire every major gift officer within 250 miles and each one will raise 15 times their annual salary forever and ever.”

This is the science of fundraising, the effort to find outcomes that are proven to be repeatable. But as you know, most of what we do is not repeatable. Some things do operate with fairly reliable outcomes. Broad, low-dollar sources like direct mail, tele-funding and auto dealers, for instance, can be counted on to be pretty consistent.

But the more complicated work that we do, stuff like planned gifts, usually doesn't fit into any model. Human beings are not consistent or predictable and that makes projecting big donations impossible.

If you work in a big, corporate-like non-profit, you are going to hear terms like Return on Investment (ROI) and Cost Per Dollar Raised. These are fine measures of *outcomes*. The trouble starts in development when people ask you (or you decide!) to use these measurements as *predictors* of outcomes going forward. See the difference? One looks back and evaluates. The other looks forward and potentially hangs your posterior out to dry.

Lots of math here. Keep skipping down.

Let's whine about ROI for a minute. We in fundraising are expected to return our costs many times over. That is a ROI in the hundreds of percent. In most of the corporate world, a project with an anticipated ROI of 20% annually would almost always get the go ahead. As I write this, the highest annualized quarterly ROI for Apple Computers in the last 12 years was 39.48%. How do you think your annual review would go if your score was as bad as Apple's? Chances are good a non-profit would have cut Steve Job's staff or sent him packing to the United Way, even as Apple was introducing the iPad.

“Um, is there any way you can get some volunteers to build those iPads, Steve?”

And take a look at Cost Per Dollar Raised. Somehow, somewhere a standard of 20 cents has developed. That result means your operation spent 20 cents to raise a dollar. I am not saying that the 20 cents per dollar standard is low or high but compared to the for-profit sector it is a ridiculously daunting hurdle.

Why does this matter? Cost Per Dollar Raised and similar lofty standards have kept our organizations underfunded and weak. It has kept our technology ancient, made us unable to compete for the best talent, and has given us a lot of uncomfortable office furniture. Does your neck or back hurt right now from using desks and chairs from the Truman-era? Blame the standard for Cost Per Dollar Raised.

So there is a taste of the science. Now, I know what we do is not much about science because most of you glazed over and stopped reading this chapter long ago. You are bored. So very, very bored.

Science. You are bored. So very, very bored.

You know that statistics and models and formulas and efficiency measures only matter so much. Ultimately, success comes from your ability to get people to like you. You know, human relationships. That is an art. Not everyone appreciates art.

No one ever asks how big the Mona Lisa is.

Throughout your career, you will encounter certain types who want development's success to be like clockwork. They will not like you or what you do because it is too unreliable. They distrust "variation" and that is you! They want reliable outputs from the resources invested in your area. They don't like surprises. They want the science and anything else is mumbo jumbo. In short, they can't accept that humanity is too crazy to be predictable!

You are a Jackson Pollock - and they want a Norman Rockwell. You are jazz - they like classical. You are a fundraiser, and they are a fund-*reducer*.

Reducer as in "Let's reduce your budget!" if they don't like what they see. They do this because they see you as a cost center, not as a revenue center.

Accept this: You will need to make nice with these people. Take notice if they wear a spiffy tie or change their wig. Leave them half of the last donut. Acknowledge their concerns. Read their memos. (Not all the way through. There are some limits.) Try to help them understand the chaos of your job.

Also, resist the urge to ask, "If you are so clear about how to do this job why didn't you apply for it one of the last three times it was vacant?"

Finally, if this person has total power over you and your budget, skip ahead to the information in Chapter 10 on looking for a new job. •

Chapter Four

YOU ARE NOT IN CONTROL

Power corrupts ... so you need not fear becoming corrupt.

We humans all like to think we can impact the world. And fundraisers can. Absolutely. But not as much as we think we can. Why not? There are a LOT of things out of our control that have a great bearing on our likelihood of fundraising success.

Donors are definitely out of your control, and I will cover them in later chapters.

The Board is definitely out of your control. I have a whole chapter later about volunteer boards (Chapter 5: Leadership Means “Money”). For now, I will just say that if the board is not composed of affluent, influential people who are interested in development, that will hamper you.

The organization around you is out of your control, especially the senior leadership. If the senior leadership is not engaged with fundraising (which usually means they plumb don't like it) or they are bad at it (which is usually why they don't like it), your success is going to be limited. Know that.

Finally, in most cases the nature of your organization and the projects you are trying to raise money for are out of your control. If what your non-profit does is not emotionally compelling or if you don't have well-defined, easily understood projects, it is going to be hard to raise money.

So these are the three legs of the stool on which philanthropy parks it. Leadership, the Board, and the Projects. For good development, you must have all three legs of the stool - or the effort collapses. As the fundraiser, you are the seat of the stool holding all this together. That's why it always feels like someone is sitting on you.

The three legs of the fundraising stool are Leadership, the Board and the Funding Projects. You are the seat.

Relax your ego. As much as we would like to think that we are the Winston Churchill of Major Gifts, the George Washington of Direct Mail and the Alexander the Great of the Annual Fund, intrepidly leading our organizations to untold greatness in new lands, in many ways we are that girl in your high school class who was in charge of the prom committee but no one would listen to her during the set up, so she just kept screaming in the gym until the English teacher called her mom to come and get her.

Don't Be That Girl.

Of course, we fundraisers bring some of this heat on ourselves. When we first apply for a job, we want the interviewers to believe we can solve all their problems. You want them to think you will be a miracle worker.

If they hire you (good for you!), that means they fell for your line and are now expecting those miracles you promised (bad for you!). They will not be keen on hearing the honest

truth, which is that if the organization stunk at fundraising before you got there, chances are you will not deodorize it.

Odds are, no matter how incompetent your predecessor was (see Chapter 11: Loving Your New Job) he or she was not the only thing wrong around there. The organization is simply not adept at development. Remember, the people who hired you probably hired the person before you and kept them around - so how astute can they really be about fundraising?

Accept that you alone can't advance the organization. You definitely can't do it any faster than the rest of organization wants you to move, so stop pushing so hard. You will just make everyone mad and careful to avoid you.

Besides, you can't lead people who are not moving or interested in moving.

Never over-estimate how eager people are for change.

Sometimes you will hear an overly hopeful development officer say of upper leadership (and the board), "We just need to get them comfortable with fundraising." Right. Guess what? Chances are everyone you will be dealing with in this category is a man 55+ years of age. This is not a demographic renowned throughout the world for its eagerness to embrace change. They are half a century old and getting more conservative with every breath. Also, they are used to being in control and don't like to do anything that makes them feel powerless. You are asking them to assume a role that goes against the very core of their being. You know it must, or they would already be out there fundraising. Do you really think they were standing around waiting for you on your white horse? No, you are the liver on their plate. You are what's good for them. Good luck with that.

So if your boss doesn't like fundraising, he probably never will and that is not your fault. However, if your situation is good, if the leaders and the board want to participate and succeed, you have a great opportunity and an important responsibility. Think of yourself as a cheerleader and a coach. Build other people's confidence, laud their success, and then enjoy the credit!!

Make a list of everything in your control. Now spray paint a big red "X" on everything else. Or their cars.

So be sure to know what is in your control. Really think about it. Maybe make a list. And then try to relax about things that aren't on your list. •

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

Enjoyed the preview?

Buy: <http://www.ebooks2go.com>