

## Top 12 Development Pitfalls

- 1. Too much talking – not enough listening.** “You will accomplish more by showing interest in 2 people than by convincing 2 people to show interest in you,” says Tim Sanders, senior executive of Yahoo! and author of *Love Is The Killer App*. To get to know your donors, slow down and ask them open ended questions. Listen and show genuine interest. You’ll gain exactly what you need and probably more than you expected.
- 2. Raising money to meet urgent fund raising goals.** You’ll inspire greater giving by consistently communicating the good work of your organization and its impact in the community instead of emphasizing internal deadlines.
- 3. Taking annual fund donors for granted.** An executive I know calls 2 annual fund donors every week to thank them for their gift. Annual donors are capable of making non-cash gifts like bequests and retirement funds and may not advise you of these estate plans. So, treat everyone like your next million dollar donor and invite possibilities.
- 4. It’s not about how much you get, it’s about what the donor gives.** It doesn’t matter how much money you think the donor has or how much they gave another organization. Focus on the connection between your mission and the donor’s heart. By cultivating a strong connection between the donor’s heart and the impact of their gift, magic happens!
- 5. Stopping and starting** – Inconsistency is the kiss of death for a development effort. Starting over takes longer each time and it raises questions about leadership, stability, motivation and direction. Continuity in development activities amidst personnel changes and shifts in organizational priorities maintains momentum.
- 6. Fundraising that functions in a vacuum** – is ineffective and unhealthy. Everyone, from board members, to staff, to volunteers, can contribute to the development effort in their own special way. It’s all good. Share program and growth plans with all of your stakeholders so that they can pass along exciting news with others and keep the resource network expanding.

- 7. If you think of fundraising as distasteful business, it will become that.** What you are really doing is giving someone the chance to make a difference, to connect with a larger group of like-minded people to affect positive change in the world. Ask your own donors why they support your organization.
- 8. The Executive /CEO foregoes donor interaction** in favor of administrative work. No matter how complex the nonprofits' infrastructure, the executive must spend time with donors, preferably everyday. It takes planning – and maybe some outside coaching – and you don't have to change personalities to do it well.
- 9. Gifts are not entitlements.** Express your appreciation sincerely and go the extra mile with direct personal contact as often as possible. Members of the board are particularly effective with this, too.
- 10. Insisting that volunteers do it your way.** They might do more if you let them do it their way. When a volunteer is ineffective, consider their strengths to see if it leads to a more productive fit doing something else.
- 11. Assuming you know why a donor delays** or what they're thinking. There can be many different reasons why a donor does not return your call and too often, we automatically assume the negative. (Ex: "I didn't do it right." "I should have done/not done something." "I've offended them.") Remember #12.
- 12. Taking it personally is a common default attitude.** It's not personal at all. Human behavior really is interesting, isn't it? At the end of a long day, review your mission and remember why you do this work in the first place. Find enjoyment in what you do.