



LOTS of Ways Board Members Can Help to Raise Money

In order for organizations to survive and thrive, it is essential that board members fulfill their responsibility to "give and get" for their organization. This means first and foremost that every board member must make a financial contribution appropriate to his or her means and ability.

It is critical to do this, since in order to solicit others effectively, board members must also have made a gift of their own. Foundations and individual prospects often look closely at board giving as a measure of a board's commitment and effectiveness. Using a business analogy: Would you buy stock in a company where none of the Board of Directors was a shareholder?

In addition to giving, all board members should help with the "getting" in some way. Fundraising cannot be delegated to one board member or even a board committee. Every board member can and should help (and will feel good about contributing to the financial well-being of an organization they are committed to). "Getting" does not substitute for personal giving, however. As part of their legal and fiduciary responsibility for the financial sustainability of their organization, 100% of all board members must personally contribute to their organization each year.

The best way to ask for a personal gift is to accompany your executive director on "an ask." Your primary responsibility is to TELL YOUR STORY. Show your passion, celebrate the good work your organization does, give examples of how a gift to your organization can directly make lives better in your community.

Recognizing, however, that many board members would prefer having a root canal over asking someone "face to face" for an individual gift, here are alternative ways board members can raise money, depending on each person's talents, skills, and special resources. And many techniques also help to bring visibility to your organization so the benefit is on multiple layers.

Access

1. Board members who are trustees of foundations, or know trustees of foundations, can work with staff to develop and present a proposal to the foundation or trustee for a suitable project. The board member should set up an appointment with the trustee and accompany staff on the visit – and passionately tell his/her story of why they support the organization.
2. Board members who own or know owners of retail establishments, restaurants, sports outfitters can arrange to do a "pass-through" or "cause-related marketing" contribution for your group. A dollar amount from each sale goes to the organization. This raises visibility as well as money.



3. Board members who own a restaurant, a catering service, or a pub can put on a dinner or wine-tasting at their establishment and donate all, or a large percentage, of the proceeds. Such events can be repeated year after year, and usually do better each time they are held.
4. Board members can improve organizational membership by setting a goal and recruiting two (or more) new members a month from among their friends, family, neighbors, business associates, etc. This one-on-one member recruiting is excellent practice for soliciting major gifts.
5. Board members who belong to a church or service club, or have friends who do, can solicit the church or club for a donation for your organization. Many churches and clubs have small pools of money available which often are overlooked by fundraisers. Sometimes, simply writing a letter will free up money and often such donations are renewable if requested yearly. The letter should tell a compelling story and connect why the church or service organization should invest in the effort as an investment in their community. If a board member is successful with her own club, she may be willing to research and solicit other clubs in the area.
6. Board members who work for banks, law firms, or other large companies can ask their firms to buy a table or at least several tickets to an event and make these available as a fringe benefit for their employees.
7. Board members with good corporate contacts can convince corporations to make donations to the organization. Board members can set up meetings or set up a luncheon with the CEO of the corporation and the executive director of your organization to "make the pitch". At these kinds of meetings, board members not only open the door for the executive director, but also are in a position to say complimentary things about your organization in a way that is more compelling than when it comes from a paid staff member.
8. Board members can do individual giving campaigns, reaching out to their family, friends and professional colleagues. They can draft the letter (reviewed by the ED for message consistency) and pay the postage for the mailing.

Special Talents or Visibility

1. Board members who are good organizers can put together fundraising events, such as concerts, festivals, or film benefits. Or, use their connections to get an interesting venue donated for an evening with music, food, drink, a silent auction, live action and t-shirt sales, which can net that organization from \$5,000 to \$25,000 or more in one evening.
2. Board members who have special skills such as cooking, kayaking, publishing, etc. can do "How To" workshops and charge admission. For instance, a local author of some renown might put on a "How to Write" workshop and raise significant money for the organization.
3. Board members who are very good writers can prepare and send out proposals to foundations or agree to edit the work of a staff member. This works best when the board member is very involved with the program and knows it intimately.



4. Board members who are comfortable with social media can build a social media plan and policy and make Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter available on the website.
5. Board members who are celebrities can lend their name or presence to market the organization, to appear at events, etc., guaranteeing a good turnout and sometimes justifying a higher admission fee.
6. Artist board members can donate a piece of their work to an auction or raffle. If the item is a photograph or drawing, perhaps it can be reproduced and used as a gift to recognize major gifts, or turned into note cards to sell for additional revenue.
7. Board members with expertise in media relations or marketing can get involved in planning events, membership campaigns, and other fundraising activities. Good marketing is often the key to doing well on a fundraising effort.

Financial Wherewithal

1. Board members who are particularly generous can propose a board match. For example, if an organization needs to raise \$9,000 quickly, a board member can offer to challenge the rest of the board by saying, "I'll donate \$3,000 if the rest of you will match it 2-to-1." This is a particularly good strategy in times of urgent need.
2. Board members with well-to-do family or friends can ask them, in person or by mail, to make significant gifts to the organization. Usually, this works best if the board member can say, "There is this great group whose board I serve on that is doing wonderful work (give pertinent details). I just contributed \$1,000. Would you consider giving \$1,000, too?" Staff must supply the board member with appropriate materials and go over the pitch.
3. Board members who own manufacturing companies or stores can donate items to your organization to be used in fundraising. For example, a canoe manufacturer can donate a canoe for a raffle or auction, a clothing manufacturer can donate hats for use as membership premiums, etc.
4. Board members can open their homes to host "house parties." This works best if the board member takes on most of the work involved, including preparing the food (or hiring a caterer), securing entertainment, if any, and addressing and mailing the invitations. Plan creative ways with staff to talk about and promote your organization to this captive audience. This can be an event of the board member's friends or others the member is willing to host in his/her home. This is one way they can ask their friends for money that is less threatening (because they are giving their friends something in return), and it is an opportunity to talk about your organization.
5. Board members can donate such items as office supplies, filing cabinets, computers, and office furniture to the organization. Staff must be specific about what the organization's needs are, and obviously, board members should not saddle the organization with badly outdated or nonfunctional equipment.



6. Board members can put the organization in their will, make it the beneficiary of their insurance policy, or consider other planned giving options. Once they have learned about the benefits of planned giving, they will also become advocates for this form of giving with their family and friends. This is helpful to educate the board that they should be considering the long-term sustainability of the organization as well as immediate needs.

7. An affluent board member can loan the organization a fairly large amount of money for a year, interest free. The organization invests the money, uses the interest generated, and returns the principal to the board member at year's end. In some cases, the board member may agree to leave the money on loan with the organization for several years (and may decide to leave it there as a gift).

All Board Members

1. Board members can take on 10 -20 donors or prospects each year with the responsibility of stewardship, and write to each one quarterly. These can be Christmas or Thanksgiving letters, letters about what is happening at the organization, letters with a good story. The letter can be short – 1 to 2 paragraphs. The important thing is the continuing contact WITHOUT asking for a gift. This is a great way to keep the prospect connected to the organization so he/she is more inclined to make a gift when asked.

2. Board members can ask each one of their 10 – 20 donors or prospects for advice once a year, regarding some issue facing the organization, keeping in mind the old saying: “If you want money, ask for advice; if you want advice, ask for money.”

3. Board members should sign a contract annually stating what fundraising-related tasks they will undertake and a time-line for doing them.

4. Board members can help solicit new members, sell raffle tickets, or ask members to renew as part of a telephone campaign. Such campaigns are often more successful if done by a group of board members rather than staff. Board members can do this together as a “phonathon” at a board member’s work place.

5. Board members should make a personal, “stretch” gift to the Annual Fund each year. The gift should be one of the top three largest charitable contributions they make each year.

6. Board members can use their company matching gift program to enhance the size of their gift.

7. Board members can commit 15-30 minutes to each meeting to sign solicitation, thank you, or membership letters and write personal notes.

8. Board members can add something on their email signature to promote the organization: “I am a fan of Organization X”; I am a proud board member of Organization X”; I am a proud donor to Organization X” – all with a link to the organization’s website.



9. Board members should attend (as paying participants) ALL the organization's fundraising events, AND invite their colleagues, neighbors and friends to do likewise. If your organization holds a raffle or auction, board members can sell tickets, donate and bid on auction items, and participate in every way possible.

10. Board members should attend the Annual Meeting, Donor or Volunteer Recognition events, stewardship or cultivation events.

11. Board members should add ten (10) new contact names to the organization's database each year.

12. All Board members should know the organization's mission verbatim, understand the fundraising initiatives and clearly articulate the organization's funding needs.

Staff should supply the board with a 30-second "elevator speech" that each Board Member can share with their network.

13. Be a mentor and role model to new board members.

Document developed by CONFR of New Hampshire, adapted from "26 Ways to Get Your Board to Raise Money", originally compiled by Pat Munoz, River Network (inspired by Kim Klein's article, 29 Ways for Board Members to Raise \$500).