



## ***ARE YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW? Is Your Organization Ready to Raise Money?***

### **GET READY...**

Let's begin by assessing your organization's "PPT" Factor (People/Planning/Tools).

**People** are key to raising funds. First, the board must reach consensus with regard to launching a fundraising program. Begin this process by obtaining the board's opinions by conducting individual interviews, focus groups or distributing a survey. Do the same for staff and volunteers. Their understanding of the need to raise funds and their attitudes towards raising those funds is primary. It is at this stage that you need to begin to determine who will be primarily responsible for raising funds...board, executive director, a new staff person, other volunteer? Also consider engaging the services of a knowledgeable consultant to jump start this work.

**Planning** comes next. Create an annual resource development plan (see [8 Steps for Creating a Resource Development Plan Now!](#)). This will help to focus attention on financial issues -- How much "start-up" money can be committed during the first year? How can seed money be obtained...from a foundation or a committed board member? Ask yourselves ---In which fundraising activities will we engage -- annual appeal, special event, planned giving (brain-storming with board/staff is helpful here)? How can we create a well-balance calendar of development activities to provide cash flow year round? Who is most likely to respond positively to our appeals (who are our constituents? How will know if we are successful? (Quantitative and qualitative measurements help you to measure outcomes.)

**Tools** and technology must also be part of this initial assessment.

- Do we have the necessary logistics to handle this -- office space or desk, telephone, computer/fundraising software, a decent copier, mailing equipment such as a postage meter and scale, clerical support, bulk rate permit?
- Is the "legal stuff" in place -- IRS tax determination letter (a.k.a. 501 (c)(3)), state or local licenses to conduct charitable solicitations (if required), copies of standards and guidelines regarding ethical considerations and fundraising issues from professional organizations?

- Do we have expertise lined-up to handle legal (lawyer) and financial (banker, accountant, stockbroker) issues?
- Do we have access to needed reference materials through the public library and memberships in professional organizations dedicated to nonprofits?

## **GET SET...**

**Create a Case for Support** - a comprehensive overview of the organization, which tells its story. This document, if done in a thoughtful and thorough manner will serve you well for all your fundraising endeavors -- mailed appeals, grant writing, personal solicitations, etc. The case should include the following:

- Values, philosophy or core beliefs of the organization
- Mission and Vision Statements
- Historical Overview
- Programs and Services
- Recent Accomplishments and Future Aspirations (goals and objectives)
- Demographics of Constituents served
- Key People (staff, board, volunteers)
- Funding sources
- The need for funding: What is the significance of your agency/its programs and/or services? Who does it impact? How does your agency make a difference? What outcomes have been accomplished?

**Establish policies and procedures** - to create workable parameters for all engaged in fundraising activities. Policies may include who, when and how gifts will be acknowledged, how anonymous donor records will be kept, what gifts may not be acceptable, etc. How the annual appeal will be conducted, data entry and the Grantseeking process are examples of procedures, which need to be documented.

## **GO...**

**Recruit and train volunteers** - This is important to do since most nonprofits cannot afford to hire all the help needed to engage in fundraising endeavors. First determine how volunteers can best assist you (writing invitations, bulk mail, answering phones, data entry). Next, create job descriptions for each volunteer position identified and create a volunteer manual outlining the agency, job expectations, etc. Then recruit volunteers for specific jobs and develop and conduct volunteer training programs on an as needed basis.

**Develop solicitation materials** - These should be developed in a timely manner based on your resource development plans. Key steps to remember here include:

- developing drafts of appeal letters, donation remittance envelopes, invitations, etc.

- reviewing drafts with selected thoughtful people - staff and board;
- developing specifications (“specs”) for different materials - paper (size, type, color), ink color(s), layout, quantity, etc.;
- obtaining design and/or printing quotes (three of each will help you to decide);
- testing different solicitation “packages” for annual giving appeals.

**Start Raising \$\$\$** -- Finally!! - Remember to follow your plan ... but be flexible, develop means to communicate with your constituency on an ongoing basis,

### **FINAL THOUGHTS...**

**Resource Development is a process.** This is often depicted by professionals in the field as “The Five I Continuum”:

- IDENTIFY potential, prospective donors.
- INFORM them of your agency’s work through communications/marketing activities.
- INTEREST them in your work through cultivation activities and special events.
- INVOLVE these people by seeking their opinions and/or recruiting them as volunteers.
- INVESTment in your agency will follow.

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