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Collaborating with Program Staff: Philanthropy Geared to Today's Donors

By Jory Barrad, BS, theVillage

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Have you noticed the trend lately that donors today, particularly next generation and more savvy donors, are not as comfortable supporting your organization with unrestricted gifts? Today's educated donors often want to know exactly how their support will be used and they want to feel more connected to the outcomes. Negative press about outlier nonprofit organizations, as well as better access to information via the internet, has changed the dynamic with many donors. This has made it necessary for fundraisers to approach philanthropy differently than in the past. Ultimately, updating your approaches to philanthropy will better benefit your donors, your organization and your development efforts.

If you're like me, you may approach your role as fundraiser as being a sort of a "matchmaker". You know that your organization may not be a good fit for all donors. If you have made a good match, donors who are interested in your mission will probably connect more with some of your programs and less with others. The more you know about the ins and outs of your organization's programs, the easier it will be to match your donor's philanthropy to the programs and outcomes they feel most strongly about. You might even land major gifts, endowed gifts, or scholarships from donors to support important programs on a longer-term basis. By the way, this concept doesn't only apply to individual donors. This can also help you with grant applications and corporate supporters. Kevin Quinn, MBA, CFRE, a fellow AFP-GPC member with decades of fundraising experience, told me "As fundraisers, we work for the programs. Our whole reason for existence is to support programs

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and their work. Program staff own the work of the organization because they are living in it day in and day out. We can sometimes lose sight of this in light of our own fundraising goals."

Here are some pointers that can help you work more collaboratively with your organization's program staff:

- Meet regularly with key program staff. This will help you stay current on the programs - what has changed, who the beneficiaries are, and more.
- Attend the programs' staff meetings from time to time and/or attend conferences with your program staff to learn more about your programs and your sector.
- Understand what your program staff's needs are; ask them to dream aloud. If they had unlimited funds, how would they be able to enhance their programs and help more people?
- Take advantage of Amazon wish lists and load up your organization's needs in your organization's Amazon wish list. Ask your program staff to search out the items on Amazon and provide you with the links. In addition, don't forget to tell your donors to use Smile.Amazon.com when shopping on Amazon!
- Create a "pick-a-program" flyer that you can give to donors, businesses, and community organizations detailing what types of donations your programs need.
- Use your annual appeals and online giving pages to let your donors know how specific dollar amount donations benefit your programs, i.e. the UNICEF model.
- Bring key program staff into donor meetings, use them as program tour guides for important donors, and invite them to donor recognition and stewardship events. This really engages your program staff and helps the donors feel more connected to your programs.
- Ask program staff if you can interview clients or beneficiaries from their programs.

Doing some of these things will help you learn more about what your programs are doing, or want to be doing. This enhanced knowledge will benefit how you fundraise, what you raise money for, and will better support improving outcomes for those individuals that your organization serves. This will also lead to better working relationships with your colleagues. Let's face it - we're all in this together. Fulfillment of our organizations' missions depends on collaboration and all dots connecting. I know for me, when I get down into the trenches of my organization's programs, I feel more connected and more confident about "selling" the mission of my organization. This really does help you match your donor's need to make a difference with the outcomes your programs deliver.

Bio: Jory Barrad has over three decades of experience in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors and is focused on improving the lives of children and families in our community who have been impacted by trauma. He is Vice President of Development and Marketing for theVillage (www.Village1877.org). In his free time Jory serves on two boards of directors, enjoys long motorcycle rides with his wife on their Harley Davidson Heritage Softail Classic, and likes to hang out with their three awesome sons.

Follow Jory on Twitter (if you dare) @Barrad and connect with him

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