



The Role of Staff in Fundraising

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Successful fundraising usually rests on a foundation of collaboration, that of the staff and volunteers. Both have their roles to play but for each to be successful and use their time to maximum advantage, each needs to know what the other is responsible for doing.

Staff needs to provide the structure for volunteers to be successful. The ten tips that follow include suggestions as to what that might look like.

1. Staff set the direction.

Volunteers need to have a goal, whether they participate in setting that goal or not. The goal provides a road map to the final destination.

2. Staff should provide all the necessary resources.

Staff should work closely with volunteers to ensure they have the resources they need and that those resources are flexible enough to be used in a variety of settings. For instance, in a mail campaign, staff should provide letters that can be personalized to add the volunteer's name and personal message.

3. Staff should help to encourage relationship building with the volunteers.

The more staff know about the volunteers, their aspirations, their strengths and weaknesses, the easier it will be to assign specific tasks that the volunteers will find more rewarding.

4. Staff needs to provide volunteers with opportunities to develop relationships with other volunteers.

Again, knowing your volunteers and why they volunteer can be essential to the success or failure of your fundraising project. Give the volunteers who want it time to socialize with their peers and you can expect happier, more satisfied volunteers.

5. Staff should provide opportunities for volunteers to “own” their work.

Just like a great manager, great staff task out pieces of the fundraising project, delegating the work to the most qualified volunteers. This gives the volunteers a more hands-on sense of accomplishment and frees up staff time as well.



6. Staff needs to set the mood and be consistently upbeat with volunteers.

Good will is contagious and staff should be conscious of setting the tone when working with volunteers. Although staff and volunteers often become very friendly, staff should always remember that volunteers can sign out as easily as they sign in. Volunteering should be a pleasant and rewarding experience and staff should do what they can to ensure this.

7. Staff should strive to create a culture of accomplishment among the volunteers, as well as the staff.

Sharing outcomes with staff and volunteers as they become available is one way to achieve this. Follow-up after completion of a project is essential as well. For instance, if you have asked volunteers to send out personalized letters, make sure you get back to them when you have the results from those letters.

8. Staff should provide and prepare all materials and research needed for the success of the project.

Having the proper tools can make all the difference. Prior planning before beginning a fundraising project will ensure that staff has done the research and prepared the materials needed so that they can be distributed in a timely manner.

9. Staff is responsible for creating and maintaining accurate and detailed records.

Often the volunteers responsible for a specific project will change so staff becomes the consistent factor, particularly in special event planning that takes place year after year. Detailed records of the prior years will help the volunteers greatly by not forcing them to “recreate the wheel” each year the same event takes place. Accurate records are also essential to the following year’s planning process and can influence the probable success of future events.

10. Staff is responsible for keeping all meetings organized and on task.

For each meeting with volunteers, staff should prepare an agenda that is shared prior to the meeting, as well as a calendar of future meetings and deadlines. Always mindful of using time productively, staff should help direct the volunteers by gently keeping them on task and on time during meetings. Everyone appreciates well-run meetings.