

Who Asks? Preliminary findings from a study of fundraisers

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The Formation of Fundraisers: the role of personal skills in asking for money

3 year study funded by The Leverhulme Trust.

In a nutshell...

How do the personal and social skills of fundraisers interact with their professional/technical skills to affect the amounts of money raised for good causes?

In an even smaller nutshell... Are fundraisers born or made?

Why does this question matter?

1. c.£10 billion of donations each year, raised by c.30,000 fundraisers.
2. Research has focused almost exclusively on givers – askers are essential yet invisible.
3. We know *what* fundraisers do, but we know next-to-nothing about *how* they do it.
4. There is “an inadequate and uneven talent pool”:
 - IoF finds shortage of fundraising skills, especially ‘asking for money’.
 - 53% of US charity leaders report attracting insufficient number of candidates for Development Director posts with the right mix of skills and experience (Bell & Cornelius 2013)
 - nearly 1 in 3 are dissatisfied with existing development directors (ibid)

The perfect fundraiser is...

“Bold but modest, aggressive but tactful, confident but prudent, alert without presenting the appearance of over-eagerness.

He must be resourceful, far-seeing, discriminating and wise.

He must make a fine personal appearance and convey the impression of being both a wonderful fellow to know and be with, and a man of dignity, poise and judgment.

A true conservative who is, at the same time, full of originality and invention.

He must carry instant appeal to old and young, man and woman, great and small”

(Carlton Ketchum 1965, cited in Cutlip p.xxvi)

The perfect fundraising organisation...

The key success factor is not embodied in a magical fundraiser, but rather involves having a '**culture of philanthropy**' across the organisation:

- The chief executive is committed and personally involved in fundraising.
- Most people in the organization (whatever their job title) act as ambassadors and engage in relationship-building.
- Everyone promotes philanthropy and can articulate a case for giving.
- Fundraising is viewed and valued as a mission-aligned program of the organisation.
- There is sufficient investment in fundraising, e.g. organisational systems are established to support donors.

Harold J. Seymour:

Seymour: Hallmarks of the Good Pro

1. Has **poise** – to generate an atmosphere of confidence in the cause.

“he knows the distinction between accomplishment and mere activity and apportions his time and energies accordingly” (1966, p.181)

2. Has **stability** – he gets his feet down on solid ground by having all the facts.

3. Has an **honest impulse**, but never acts on impulse alone.

4. Has **respect for the time factor**

“The good pro knows that every pickle has to soak a while...campaigns, like mice and elephants, have their own periods of gestation”

5. Has **a sense of perspective** based on experience

“he knows there is never enough staff or enough good volunteers, and doesn’t fret about it.”

6. He respects and admires **eloquence**... but what he seeks most of all is **action**.

7. He has **respect** for his vocation, his colleagues and all good work done in his field.

Jerold Panas: The 5 modern verities of fundraising

1. Passionate (about the cause and the organisation)
2. Persistence/Perseverance
3. Clear & compelling communicator
4. Understand the power of the personal touch
5. Willing to make the ask

“each [is] important, many a virtual strike of lightning.”

“Is there a ‘fundraising type’? Outgoing, people-oriented, backslapping, extremely well-organised, goal-oriented, brilliant. This magnificent creature probably doesn’t exist. It’s really hard, perhaps impossible, to know what makes an ideal fundraiser. What profound bits of wisdom explain why one person racks up one fundraising success after another... Why do some simply never make it?”

Jerold Panas (1988/2003) *Born to Raise: what makes a great fundraiser, what makes a fundraiser great?* Taylor Trade Publishing

Leverhulme study: some early findings of 'who asks?'

- Emotionally intelligent (Goleman 1995, 1996, 1999)
 - Self-awareness
 - Self-regulation
 - Motivation
 - Empathy
 - Social skills
- Formative experiences mean they are comfortable with asking.
- Avid readers – including popular psychology books.
- Have a hinterland beyond their day job.
- Can read people and can read situations.
- Experts in reciprocity, gift giving and gratitude.
- Willing to spend social capital, not just earn it.
- Laidback in front of donors, acute attention to detail behind the scenes.
- Enablers/scene-setters rather than visible leaders seeking recognition.
- Don't share general taboos around money, and think less about 'raising funds' than their job title suggests!

The New Fundraisers?

The '**New Philanthropists**' hit the scene in the early 2000s.

Has there been a parallel emergence of '**New Fundraisers**', who have the background, skills and aptitudes to raise funds from the new rich:

Then: ex-military or ex-marketing, always 'fell into fundraising by accident'

Now: if not a career goal, at least a conscious choice / career move

Then: male (at least for paid fundraisers)

Now: predominantly female profession

Then: amateur, voluntary, minimal/no training

Now: professionalised, evidence-based, life-long learning

Then: sufficient to have reach into 'the right set' ('little black book' is key)

Now: able to make connections with wealthy people from wide variety of backgrounds

Some final thoughts

“It’s a lot easier to be asked than to do the asking”

(Major donor recently interviewed by Beth)

“It is often said of fundraising that it is not what you know, but who you know. But in actual fact, it is much more about who you are.”

(Michael Norton, UK serial social entrepreneur, founded DSC, UnLtd, Youthbank etc)

“Fundraising is a beautiful responsibility for the human race and not a mere trade full of tricks”

(George Smith (1940-2012) UK fundraising pioneer & author of ‘Asking Properly’)

“I would leave this work immediately if I thought I were merely raising money. It is raising men that appeals to me”

(Charles Sumner Ward (1857-1929), US fundraising pioneer, cited in Cutlip 1965:43)

“Blessed are the money-raisers, for in heaven they shall stand next to the martyrs”

(John Mott (1865-1955) YMCA leader, Nobel peace prize winner 1946)



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