

How to Engage a Governing Board in Fundraising

Many governing boards play little or no role in fundraising. Traditionally, they have not had to do so, due to the manner in which much of public television fundraising is organized. Therefore, members have not been recruited with fundraising duties in mind.

Here are some tips for engaging a board unfamiliar or uncomfortable with a fundraising role:

- Be clear about the organization's fundraising needs and the importance of volunteers. Board members need to see major giving activity as part of a whole—as one important solution to the chronic shortage of resources for maintaining and extending the mission.
- Be clear about expectations. Fundraising does not necessarily mean asking for money. Some of the best fundraising volunteers provide contacts, evaluate giving potential, trumpet the station's mission to others in the community, and host small receptions—but never ask for money.
- Be clear about roles. Board members should be led to understand that they are not being asked to ease the burden on the staff, but to play a unique role that staff cannot play.
- Find a champion. Identify someone on the board who believes in the potential of major gift activity and is willing to lead it. It is more difficult for others to say no when one of their own is asking.
- Given the dynamics of a particular board, it may not be necessary or even feasible to engage the entire board. As long as there is a giving expectation, it may be sufficient to establish a board committee that may include non-board volunteer leadership.
- Bring in a peer from the board of another organization to explain his or her role in fundraising.

Some combination of these techniques may help you engage one or more board members who can lead by example and engage others.