

Ten Trends in Fundraising That Can Lead to a Successful 2010! ***By STELLAR Fundraising Executives, Inc.***

Savvy economic and community development executives are preparing for and securing their organization's place in 2010 local corporate "giving budgets" NOW! They know a fundraising Feasibility Study conducted in the fall of 2009 will place their organization "on the budget radar screen of local corporate giving budgets for 2010 and beyond!" Here are ten trends in fundraising that can lead to a successful 2010.

- 1. Bigger Initiatives – Think “Address all community needs, opportunities & threats”**
It may seem counter-intuitive, but bigger initiatives, backed by a comprehensive Strategic Action Plan, actually can be easier to fund than a one-off or "warm & fuzzy" event(s). Potential investors are tired of being nicked and dimed, asked to fund poorly planned events that can't demonstrate any contribution or ROI to the long-term health of the community. That's why communities are thinking big - even if they're small.
- 2. Bolder Plans - Think “BUNDLE strategies into one, overarching plan”**
An increasing number of organizations are “bundling” multiple program and facility needs, aligning them to a single, bold initiative. The resulting four or five-year Strategic Action Plan becomes an effective way to garner strong community attention and support. (If you go to the well, DRAW DEEP, and cover all your needs with one, bold, overarching campaign!)
- 3. Broader Scope – Think “It’s not just business recruitment & retention anymore!”**
The scope of what investors consider important in economic/community development has broadened to include such diverse initiatives as workforce development, K-12 education, retention of college graduates and small business/entrepreneurship development, government affairs, international recruitment, business incubator, etc. Of course business attraction, retention & expansion remain critically important as well.
- 4. Public-private Partnerships – Think “Public funding should be no more than 1/3rd of your budget; 45% for small or rural organizations.”**
The public sector has been “holding the line,” and only investing in focused public-private partnerships in response to the private sector's leadership of economic/community development issues.
- 5. Demonstrable Returns - Think “What’s in it for them; show them their ROI!”**
As with any investor, businesses (and the public sector) demand to know, "what's in it for me?" before investing in a program/Strategic Action Plan. To answer that question, fundraisers need definitive impact data and a measurable Return-On-Investment. This often requires a very astute investigation of “best practices” & “benchmarking” of peer communities/organizations to set strong, yet attainable, performance measures.
- 6. Over-reliance on Volunteers and Staff – Think “Well-intentioned volunteers hate fundraising; staff are too busy, and shouldn’t have to ‘sing for their supper!’”**
The traditional tactic of relying on volunteers for fundraising is no longer effective. Volunteers have very little desire or time to roll up their sleeves and raise funds by themselves. Often, they lack the expertise to target and execute an effective request for funds. Staff, who are faced with trying to do more with less — and must make wise use of their volunteers, may also lack the time and experience to solicit funds effectively. The organization CEO should never be placed in a position of asking for funding where there may be a perceived “quid-pro-quo” by the potential investor. Conflicts like this in ED are commonplace.
- 7. A New Breed of Outsource Resource – Think “Outsource to the pros and raise more than 8 to 10+ times their fee!”**
A new breed of outsource resource is easing the burden on volunteers and staff. Firms like STELLAR Fundraising Executives are emerging to fill this critical need. These firms can never replace a volunteer's peer-to-peer leverage and influence. But, by placing an

experienced fundraiser on-site, these consultancies can organize and manage an entire campaign. Often raising many times over what staff or volunteer efforts could alone.

8. **Volunteer and Professional Integration – Think “Consultants bring campaign process, packaging & ROI, support, insulation and ticking-clock-urgency!”**

The choice is not between community volunteers and an outside resource. The key is to integrate the contribution of each. For example, the community leaders who volunteer to help with a fundraising initiative have the connections and influence. The consultant knows how to package, position, sell and show the ROI for the request for funds. Working together becomes far more effective than trying to “go-it-alone” or “get-it-as-you-need-it”. Be skeptical of over-enthusiastic, well-intentioned volunteers who say; “we can raise this money in-house!” They’re quick to pick the low-hanging fruit and tire out; then “in-house” becomes in-house and right on top of the President’s desk! A failed campaign can set an organization back years, and the negative press devastating to its image. Sadly, volunteers are like Teflon, and as such, failure only sticks to staff who can wind up being fired! Consultants work to insure that the campaign succeeds and to insulate staff from negativity or failures along the way. They also work to create a real sense of urgency, otherwise, a staff-driven campaign can go on for what feels like forever.

9. **Appropriate Action - Think and bring that DRAFT plan to this facilitation; “The ‘CLEAN SHEET’ days are over, volunteers expect your best thinking in DRAFT form, for their input!”**

Developing and executing a Strategic Action Plan can require a commitment and ability beyond some staff and most volunteers. However, proper facilitation from an “outsider,” or “3rd-party,” or an “experienced fundraising consultancy” like STELLAR can provide the solid framework that results in a completed Strategic Action Plan (DRAFT for Study use) and proposed budget, along with goals, objectives and benchmarks.

10. **Feasibility Assessment – Think “Do your due diligence, just have a 3rd-party who’ll get to the truth, do it for you!”**

The testing of a bold, new Strategic Action Plan community-wide through a professionally run Feasibility Study, conducted by an objective 3rd-party (Interviewees will tell you what you want to hear; they’ll tell a 3rd-party the truth!), is absolutely critical to any successful campaign! A Study helps to build and gauge community & organizational leadership, and investor support and can answer a host of highly relevant key questions and perceptions. A professional Feasibility Study will help establish an ATTAINABLE campaign goal, and the volunteer leadership needed, the timing required to reach the stated goal, the proper positioning of the campaign, which program elements are important to interviewees, and which were not, and who should Chair the campaign and its various campaign divisions. Obviously, the Study will indicate who is supportive of the effort over-all, and who is not, and IF, or IF NOT, a campaign should even be launched in the first place!