



## Leadership Is the Greatest Predictor of Fundraising Success



Fundraising success is not guaranteed. It is earned. The greatest predictor is not the age of the institution. It is not the size of the development department.

The greatest predictor of fundraising success is leadership.

Leaders move beyond the status quo and cast a bold vision. They take strategic risks and remain courageous. They do what is necessary and what matters. They inspire and motivate their team to accomplish goals. Here are a few essentials to consider:

### Evaluate your current efforts.

Any organization with a worthy mission, and the courage to ask, can raise money. The important question is, “Are you raising the most money possible?” Ask yourself: “Do we have a strategic solicitation plan for our fundraising activities?” “What is our cost of donor acquisition or retention?” “What were the net proceeds from our fundraising events (and is that what we had in mind when we planned these events)?” “How do our measures compare to previous years and our potential?” And most importantly: “How can our strategies be improved?” For an honest assessment, include staff and follow-up time—tie activities directly to each fundraising activity or goal.

### Set a goal and make it happen.

No one sets out to be a mediocre fundraiser. We all want to do well. Most of us are capable of setting goals, but the challenge is how to achieve them. “Make it happen!” is easier said than done—especially, if you’re not sure what needs to be done. It takes good information and lots of experience: reading, training, research and doing—celebrating success and making mistakes, learning from both and always moving your team forward.

### Seek outside expertise.

Knowing what you know, and what you are good at, are key characteristics of a true leader. An honest assessment can save an organization thousands of dollars and gain them millions more. Leaders surround themselves with a skilled and talented team, and seek the expertise of those who already have the experience and know-how.

Leaders don’t make excuses. Start with what you have, and be resourceful. If you need guidance and smart strategies for setting higher goals and achieving them, seek expert counsel. Being a successful fundraising leader doesn’t mean knowing and doing everything yourself. Sometimes, it means casting a vision, assessing your team and knowing who and when to ask for help.

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