

Development CoP

Why Fundraising Fails: Exploring What Not to Do and Why

Guest: Herb Tobin

Facilitator: Jennifer Weinstock

Date: January 25, 2011

Goals of the Call

1. Understand what's included in the big picture
2. Determine how best to focus your time strategically
3. Have Herb answer your questions

Meet Herb Tobin



Herb Tobin is principal of Herb Tobin Consulting, a Boston-based firm dedicated to helping non-profit organizations reach their potential and maximize their financial resource base.

Currently, Herb's work is focused on helping organizations dedicated to Jewish education and identity building among children, teens and young adults secure adequate financial resources. He currently serves as a senior consultant to the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education; Hillel: the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life; Birthright Israel Foundation; and the Grinspoon Institute for Jewish Philanthropy dedicated to Jewish summer overnight camping.

Prior to his work with Hillel, Herb was an executive with two Boston-area medical centers, and with several Jewish federations. A Reconstructionist rabbi by training, Herb holds a doctorate in theology from Boston University.

Guiding Principle #1

You must get out of the office. Are you working hard enough? How often are you out of your office?

- Donors are not on vacation. What is getting in your way during the year?
- What challenges do you face?
 - Are you too busy that you can't get out of the office?
 - Are you setting priorities; setting boundaries?
 - Are you caught in an approach/avoidance syndrome where you keep making excuses?
- How do you get started?
 - Need to be self-motivated.
 - Make a 12 month plan.
- Stick to your plan, but be flexible, as needed.

Guiding Principle #2

Never say no for prospects and donors.

- We have a tendency to say” no” **for** the donor.
 - For example, “Last year they said no, so this year won’t be any different.”
- Don’t ever presume, it might be yes going forward.
- Follow through on your instinct regarding a donor.

Guiding Principle #3

Be strategic, have a plan, and visualize it in 3 dimensions.

- Plan how to be strategic. What is likely to be the reaction to this program?
- Decide how controversial you can be.
- After putting it down on paper, determine how is it going to happen in reality.
 - For example: Would I have been able to write the minutes of the meeting before the meeting takes place? Was I prepared? Were there surprises? Did we reach consensus?
- Stop being tactical and looking at things in 2 dimensions.
- Given that we live in an unpredictable world, try to get it right 80% of the time.
- If we aren't strategic enough, if we haven't thought through the next 6 moves.

Guiding Principle #4

“We need more staff.” Don’t simply add more people doing the wrong things.

- If you had more staff, what would they do? Are you deploying yourself as you should?
- What is currently ineffective? What are you working on?
- What are you trying to accomplish? Are you tackling the key issues?
- Do you have the right shared goal? Are you adding frivolous activities?
- How are you using volunteers? Are you using them effectively?

Guiding Principle #5

Assess risk; everything rarely goes well.
What would happen if you fall short of your goals? Is there a plan “B”?

- What are the consequences if you don't succeed. Its hard to accomplish every goal.
 - What happens if you don't make our goal? If you don't have an honoree for our dinner? If your lead donor doesn't make a gift at a timely moment?
- Can you give advice to the key volunteers and HoS to respond to this scenario?
- You need to set two goals:
 - Budget demands: what is necessary for the school's operating budget to be met.
 - Public goal: larger than bare bones, more aspirational, visionary, gets sights set higher, expectations are higher
- What is the risk factor of not achieving the “visionary” goal?
- 80% of dollars in aspirational goal are for existing budget items/ next 15% are necessary to stay cutting edge etc. How can you managing expectations?

Guiding Principle #6

Solicitations fail because you. . .

- ✓ were ill prepared
 - ✓ Why aren't you informed? It's OK to say you will get back to them. It guarantees follow-up. It shows your prospect you were listening and will continue the conversation.
- ✓ didn't listen
 - ✓ Let the pause linger; just sit and listen.
- ✓ only contacted donors when you wanted money
 - ✓ Make sure to stay in touch all year long. Relationship needs to be much deeper.
- ✓ didn't cultivate and deepen the relationship
 - ✓ Give the donor a chance to talk, act on their interests, come to the school, and have casual conversations with you.
- ✓ forgot that relationships-not transactions

Guiding Principle #7

You don't have a cohesive development team.

- You need a lay partnership.

Guiding Principle #8

Your primary responsibility as a professional is “the care and feeding” of the volunteer leadership. Remember the “naches” factor.

- You can't do the work alone.
- Who is raising the money? The professional stimulates the process; the donors are the ones who raised the money.
- Volunteers are well-intended. Maybe ½ are effective and that number can rise with more care and feeding.
- Get the volunteers into roles where they can succeed.
- How can you tailor an assignment that the volunteer is going to get pleasure out of having fulfilled?
- You need to listen to the volunteers in order to keep trying to find resources and volunteers who can do the work.

Guiding Principle #9

As volunteers, don't make the development professional the scapegoat. You can't off-load all responsibilities onto the director of development and expect them to be successful.

- It is a partnership between professionals and volunteers.
- The development professional does the care and feeding of the volunteers.
- Volunteers need to be supported by the professional.

Guiding Principle #10

Goal setting means setting the amount of an ask. Think big picture. Nobody wants to fund a deficit.

- How do you set a meaningful goal?
- Everyone wants to give to a winning team.
- Don't make a decision for others.
- Challenge gifts from alumni and parent body seem to be generating a great deal of interest.
- Look at the challenge grant as a great way of stimulating participation.
- Parent gifts are not dollar per dollar, but based on increased parent participation.

Q & A

- How do you know what relationship to pursue? When is the first time to ask?
- Thinking beyond amount, how long have you had the family as a donor?
- There's a mixed message about gap fundraising. Why don't you just charge what it costs? Is there a fundraising tool to make up the gap?
- Your message has to be modulated to the audience. Sharing good fortune with others works for the older generation.
- For today's young families? How can they afford it?
- Imagine planning a party, but asking someone else to pay the bills.
- Ask for advice and involvement; don't wait until the deficit is building.
- Get input from the community.
- Create a culture of philanthropy. What have you seen that has worked?
- We need to pay attention and resources to everybody who feels good about the work.
- 100% parent participation is key, even if it's a token gift.

Next CoP Call

Tuesday, February 15, 2011

2:00 pm EST

with special guest

Laurie Herrick,

Grinspoon Institute for Jewish
Philanthropy

Watch the Google Group for
upcoming call details.

New! CoP Office Hours

Join together with Jennifer and colleagues from the CoP for informal conversation

Thursday, February 24, 2011
12noon

Watch the Google Group details.

**Thank you to
Herb Tobin**

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