

Rob's Big 25 +1 "Fundraising from Mission" Principles

1. Be able to answer clearly, concisely and convincingly "Why should donors and organizations give to our nonprofit?"
2. Accomplishing nonprofit mission and running incredible programs are the greatest long-term fundraising strategy with the greatest return. They are visible and indisputable.
3. Make it easy for donors to give. A frustrated donor is one likely not to return but a happy donor most likely will.
4. Desperate appeals are not a long-term strategy. Nothing worse than a sinking ship (year after year) to make the crew abandon ship. Don't become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If your organization is struggling, it's probably not money that's the issue.
5. Dig new wells instead of complaining that the well has run dry or there are too many people at the same well. No one, especially donors, like a complainer.
6. Expend money on fancy fundraising tools and publications at your own risk.
7. There is a difference between "No" and a "Forever No." All "rejections" are opportunities for reflection and growth.
8. Chasing dollars from sources that aren't a good fit is . . . exhausting.
9. Behind all good data is a good story. Behind all good stories is good data. Have both.
10. Demonstrate donor and funder appreciation in a variety of ways and over a period of time.
11. Overreliance on one type of funding source or single funder is a recipe for disaster.
12. Asking for money is a noble cause and should be pursued with gusto . . . if your cause is worthy.
13. Don't make newsletters, letters and emails that - - -! Who is your audience and how will the correspondence deepen your donors' and supporters' knowledge of your nonprofit?
14. Don't forget the "average" donor.
15. Understand and cultivate the best/most appropriate income streams to meet the needs and challenges of your organization.
16. An unethical dollar raised is a dollar your organization will regret accepting.
17. Raise what is needed today, tomorrow and for rainy days – not a dollar more, not a dollar less.
18. Ask donors, "Why do you give to our nonprofit organization?" and ask follow-up questions.
19. Do not lie on your 990 about overhead costs and do not lie to your donors either. Be radically transparent with your critical donors and funders to deepen relationships.
20. Segment your donors through – size, longevity, and frequency. (Kim Klein)
21. Anticipate funding "storms" on the horizon – changes in policy, demographics, personnel, boards, etc.
22. Beware of events (galas, 'thons, raffles, etc.) and examine the time, energy and resources needed for the target ROI. Are they "energy vampires" or "tank fillers?"
23. If you can't ask directly and confidently, you don't believe. "Feel the fear and do it anyway."
24. Some years donors and funders give, some years they don't. Accept it, don't resent it.
25. Simple gestures can create big results – being authentic and a thank you are still underrated!
26. Have fun, don't take fundraising too seriously – it's a process and a journey so be patient, cultivate, demonstrate value and play the "long game."