

FIELD NOTES



ORIENTING YOUR NEW CDO

One of the most critical choices a non-profit leader can make is the selection of a development officer. Equally as important is the retention of this key employee. Considering the average tenure for development directors is 18 months, it's worth it to invest the time on the front end to ensure you have set your new hire up for success. When there is high turnover in that position, the organization's ability to connect with donors and raise money suffers.

WHY ARE THEY LEAVING?

Rarely are CDOs leaving for more money, prestige or job advancement. According to a study in The NonProfit Times, they leave because of:

- unrealistic expectations (75%)
- lack of understanding (cooperation) in development (28%)

Both of these reasons can likely be traced to the beginning of the CDO's tenure at an organization and how the relationship began. So how can you ensure you are not one of these statistics?

Orienting your new CDO is so much more than a benefits introduction or a tour of the office supply closet.

WHERE TO START

Allow time for catch-up: Often a CDO is stepping in to the position after it's been vacant for some time. While your organization may be eager to have them hit the ground running, there is often a fair amount of backlog to work through. Provide time during the first few critical months to allow your new employee to catch up and take care of unfinished business.

Share your vision: As a CEO, it is critical that you share your vision for the next five to 10 years. Communicate where you are today and where you want to go. Related, clearly state your role and willingness to invest (time and resources) in philanthropy to achieve this vision.

Set a plan: Create a 30-60-90 day plan to give clear focus for the first few months. Check in regularly and when the end of 90 days nears, set a plan for the next year, two years and three years. Remember to set the plans together and be realistic about expectations (see "Why are they leaving?").

Make the introductions: Development is all about relationships. These first few months are the best time to take your new CDO on key donor, foundation and board member visits. It's the perfect excuse to get in front of your biggest supporters and

your CDO is in a unique position to ask, listen and learn with fresh ears. The CEO must own this part of the orientation, giving access and making introductions to these key individuals.

Visiting board and trustees is another opportunity to reinforce their role in philanthropy and that the entire responsibility does not fall on the CDO's shoulders.

See the work in action: Whatever your mission, your CDO should experience it first hand. Attend a program; walk through the facilities; talk to staff and constituents. The faster and deeper they can get to know your mission, the better they will be in understanding your needs.

SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS

A CDO needs to know they are not alone. Fundraising and philanthropy is not a one-man/woman show. The senior leadership and board must be engaged in helping to connect, cultivate and solicit. Staff should be able to articulate why you are an organization worth supporting.

Need help in getting your CDO started on a path to success?
Donor By Design can help.

Contact us at
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