

INTERIM MANAGEMENT

WHEN **WAITING** CAN BE YOUR BEST STRATEGY

Consider Interim Development Management

When the leadership of an organization's development operations is in transition, the best strategy may be to step back and assess. But how can you afford to do that? Excelling in your organization's operations and providing the highest quality care to your donors and supporters is something your constituents have grown accustomed to and expect. Naturally, your utmost concern is that this commitment will most certainly be compromised without continuity in your development operations. How can you afford not to replace your development director as soon as possible?

By Oliver Welty, CFRE – Senior Consultant and Regional Director - California

According to CompassPoint's recent study "Underdeveloped: A National Study of Challenges Facing Nonprofit Fundraising",ⁱ there is a lack of consistent leadership of development programs across nonprofit organizations. Not only have development director positions been vacant for a median of 6 months, half of the current directors are planning to leave their position in the next two years or sooner – or the field altogether. When your development director departs their position, it affects more than just your organization; it disrupts the relationship with your donors.

Interim Development Management

Interim development management helps to keep the fundraising plan on track and the development team motivated and productive. It helps to maintain communications with your constituents and keep your key donors engaged and informed. Equally important, interim development management's design helps your organization avoid significant revenue gaps and lost time.

When there is a loss of development direction, the CEO and Board are typically concerned about:

- Grant proposals and reports being prepared and submitted on time
- Direct mail campaigns that need strategy and oversight
- Continuity of donor communications and stewardship, including donor acknowledgements
- Publications and media communications such as the newsletter being completed in a timely manner
- Board members and other volunteers being supported with their development role

- Other development matters that need focus
- And, most importantly, contributions continuing to come in the door

Interim development management can assure these functions of a development operation are addressed. It affords executive and Board leadership sufficient time to evaluate their current and future needs and to develop an accurate profile of the right person for the permanent job.

An accomplished interim development consultant has the knowledge and experience to quickly assess and understand an organization's development and fundraising priorities. The consultant can provide the leadership and essential services necessary to keep revenue coming in and an organization's development team and operations on track. Another added value is care and attention for the remaining development staff, as well as hands-on coaching to address concerns that will help to ensure a successful experience when the new development director comes onboard.

Development Planning Before Searching

Sometimes the last development director's performance is the reason behind a transition in an organization's development operations – when both parties recognize it is no longer a good fit. But it takes more than just one person – skilled or not – to effectively fundraise in a nonprofit organization. Even a highly skilled development officer cannot be successful when there is insufficient investment in the very fundraising tools and resources that contribute to greater return on effort.

The aforementioned CompassPoint report reveals that a surprising number of organizations lack the fundamental conditions for fundraising success – basic tools such as a development plan and database, essential Board and executive leadership and development skills, and a shared culture of philanthropy across the organization.

There are key questions to consider under such circumstances before beginning the search for a new development officer, including:

- Does your organization need to improve its major giving program and increase major giving revenue?
- Does your development program integrate planned giving opportunities?
- Is your organization currently on track to exceed annual revenue projections?
- Is your organization confident that the current staffing / organization structure is the best one to obtain optimal results?
- Does your organization need guidance in determining what changes might be necessary regarding the skill requirements of the new development director?
- Does your organization need to reconsider the development director's job description?
- Does your organization need to rethink the development director role in the organization before beginning the search process?

If you are uneasy with the answers to even a third of these questions, a concurrent assessment of your development operations and fundraising potential is something to consider, and results can be fashioned into a detailed operational development plan.

An accomplished interim development consultant can guide an organization in determining the number of days this will require with consideration given to your organization's particular development program and unique circumstances. A comprehensive operational development plan will include:

- Prospect identification, research, screening, tracking, and management
- Donor relations such as acknowledgement, tracking, recognition, stewardship, reporting, and accountability
- Data and information management, interpretation, and reporting
- Operations and financial management
- Fundraising policies, procedures, and compliance

A combination of interim development management and development planning is particularly beneficial for organizations that have operated without a development officer for an extended period of time.

Another crucial component of a successful development director tenure is getting the lay of the organizational land as quickly as possible. Organizations taking the route of interim development management should consider extending the consultant relationship in a limited capacity for several months after the new hire to help guide the onboarding process and ensure a smooth transition.

When partnered with the right consultants in an interim role, sometimes waiting can be your best strategy.

At The Phoenix Philanthropy Group we often say that we can help propel our clients forward further, faster – and interim management and development planning is a prime example of how that can be true.

“We used interim management consultants during a time of change in the organization. Our work together helped us understand the needs of our development infrastructure, build an appropriate staffing plan, and position us to hire our first Chief Development Officer. The result has been significant growth in the philanthropic contributions and greater connections to our volunteers and donors.”

- Darlene Newsom, CEO, UMOM New Day Centers

To learn more about interim development management, as well as our broad range of other nonprofit and philanthropy consulting services, contact The Phoenix Philanthropy Group at 1-877-524-8774, or visit us at www.phoenixphilanthropy.com.

Oliver Welty is Senior Consultant and Regional Director – California of The Phoenix Philanthropy Group. He can be reached at 619-709-2379, or by email at Welty@PhoenixPhilanthropy.com

¹ <http://www.compasspoint.org/underdeveloped>