

What is a Culture of Philanthropy? Four Core Components

#1 SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

In organizations with a culture of philanthropy, fundraising isn't just one person's job or the job of one department or board committee. Everyone—staff, executive director, constituents, board and volunteers—shares responsibility for fund development. A culture of philanthropy doesn't mean that everyone has to solicit funds, but they're expected to act as ambassadors and build relationships. Everyone also promotes philanthropy, can articulate a case for giving, and plays a role in helping to acquire all the resources needed (not just money) to do the organization's work. That can take the form of networking, making connections, building relationships, holding briefings, working on press events, and fostering relationships with constituencies.

#2 INTEGRATION AND ALIGNMENT WITH MISSION

In organizations with a culture of philanthropy, fund development is a valued and mission-aligned component of the organization's overall work, rather than a standalone function.

Organizations with a culture of philanthropy see fund development as more than just raising money or a management function; they see it as baked into everything they do, including their overall missions. As Simone Joyaux notes: "Organizations that operate with a culture of philanthropy understand three things: the value of organizational culture, the importance of philanthropy, and the inextricable link between philanthropy and fund development."

#3 A FOCUS ON FUNDRAISING AS ENGAGEMENT

In organizations with a culture of philanthropy, fund development is no longer separated from engagement. This reflects the fact that people today are connecting with nonprofits via multiple channels (e.g., social media, volunteering, blogs, meet ups, petitions) and engaging with them in multiple ways (e.g., as donors, volunteers, board members, constituents).

Increasingly, an organization's stakeholders and supporters want some kind of engagement with the organization and its mission that may not start with a financial contribution but, over time, may lead to that. As Pamela Grow and Sarah Mansberger observe, "that means organizations need to create environments where their entire community—donors, clients, staff and partners—have ample opportunities to engage with the mission in authentic and meaningful ways."

#4 STRONG DONOR RELATIONSHIPS

In organizations with a culture of philanthropy, donors are seen as authentic partners in the work, not simply as targets or dollar signs. These organizations establish systems to build strong relationships and support donors' connection to the work.

Building strong relationships with donors breaks the field's obsession with transactions and mechanics to focus on people's interests and values, says Simone Joyaux. Donors, as well as potential donors and others involved with the organization, are seen as partners who share its goals and aspirations and participate in achieving them. That means relationships, not money, are what matters most.

***Excerpted from "Beyond Fundraising: What Does it Mean to Build a Culture of Philanthropy?" A study by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund.*