

14

The right people in place

Project 14. Getting the right people as fundraisers

Helena Sharpstone and Caryn Skinner, March 2017
Reviewed by Kath Abrahams

The original brief

As in a small number of other professions, public comfort and confidence in fundraising depends upon donors having contact with people who have specific qualities and characteristics. For fundraising what's needed are qualities that inspire empathy, trust, compassion and confidence. So recruiting and retaining the right people are essential to fundraising success. This project will consider the attributes that donors expect to see in the fundraisers they deal with and how recruiting specifically with those attributes in mind will significantly improve the donor experience.

For donors, this project will:

- Explain the benefits of investing in staff retention and having inspiring induction programmes that emphasise the importance of the donor experience.
- Help them understand the attributes that make a great, donor-focused fundraiser. Additionally, they will also learn the attributes required to be successful in the main fundraising disciplines.
- Introduce them to a range of ideas of how the recruitment process can be improved to increase the quality of fundraisers working for their organisation.

For donors, this project will:

- Reassure them that fundraisers are well trained and care about the experience the donor has.
- Increase the competence and donor focus that fundraisers will bring to their job.
- Reduce the chances of experiencing poor fundraising via untrained, unmotivated and unengaged fundraisers.

Summary of findings

At the heart of every fundraiser, regardless of the discipline, is a relationship builder. To be donor-focused is to communicate the urgency and importance of a cause and to provide the donor with a clear way to make an impact based on their abilities, skills and resources. But how do we attract these donor-focused fundraisers? Where do we find them? What recruitment processes help or hinder us? And when we have these donors, how do we keep them?

Our report will provide you with thoughts about the key attributes of such fundraisers in general and about fundraising techniques. We outline tweaks and changes to your recruitment and selection processes, as well as highlighting what keeps these fundraisers developing, growing and staying with you.

We have used our experience and professional background, together with examples from across the sector. We have also been talking to people – fundraisers, managers of fundraisers and directors of fundraising – to obtain their views and experiences too.

How to use the findings

We recommend you use the information to have a bit of a spring clean. What is your mind-set when looking for fundraisers? Are you describing the job in a way that attracts the people you want? Do you have a highly robust person spec that really gets to the heart of what you are looking for so you can test it out in a competence-based interview? How good are your interviewing skills and those of others around you?

Use this report to review all these processes and your behaviours and skills related to attracting, recruiting and retaining donor-focused fundraisers. Have a chat to your HR/Recruitment colleagues and refresh your strategy for recruitment. With your managers, discuss ways of creating a high-performance environment in which your fundraisers can thrive using the information we have consolidated. Have a look at your induction programmes and on-going learning and development plans: Are they supporting your fundraisers to become donor-focused, and are you rewarding that behaviour through feedback and tangible recognition?

Our findings are not exhaustive and are more pointers and prompts than a blueprint; however, we believe they will help you to stand back and take a good look at the how and the what of recruiting and retaining donor-focused fundraisers.

Broad scope

To define the personal qualities, characteristics, skills, attitudes and behaviours of high-performing donor-focused fundraisers so they may be found, attracted, recruited and retained.

Key objectives

- To define what a high-performing donor-focused fundraiser looks like and sounds like, and how s/he behaves.
- To identify patterns in the personal style of a high-performing donor-focused fundraiser.
- To establish whether different skills and behaviours are needed in different FR disciplines.
- To identify the climate in which high-performing donor-focused fundraisers can thrive.
- To outline top-line guidance regarding how to find people, recruit them, train those already in the position as well as newbies, and ways of retaining all of them to establish consistency and results.

Top ten attributes of donor-focused fundraisers

These are ranked by how frequently the attribute was mentioned in all our feedback. A donor-focused fundraiser:

1. Has excellent people skills, able to establish and build relationships with donors.
2. Connects to the cause, communicating its urgency and importance in a captivating and compelling way.
3. Adapts his/her style and approach to the person and situation.
4. Listens and respond to donor needs.
5. Is genuine and authentic, demonstrating integrity at all times.
6. Thinks quickly.
7. Has drive and resilience.
8. Organises his/her time and resources.
9. Builds his/her technical skills and keeps updated.
10. Is numerate.

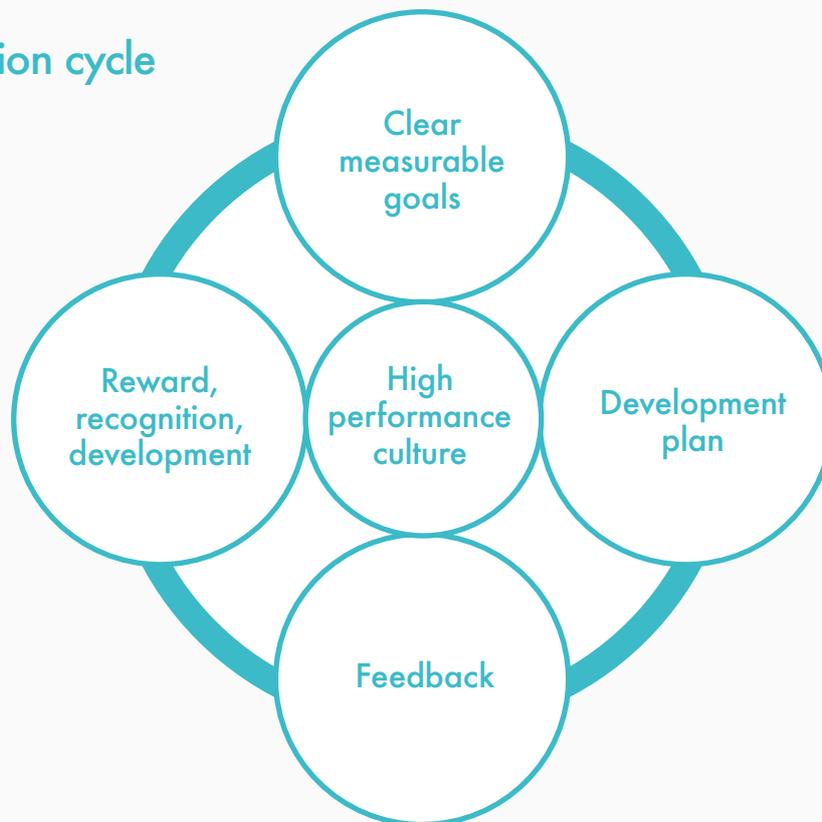
These skills are a combination of people and process skills, most of which can be learned and developed - this is important when it comes to recruitment.

Top ten attributes of donor-focused fundraisers

<p>Individual Giving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative problem solver • Adaptable • Collaborative 	<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection with people as individuals • Passion • Multi-tasker
<p>DM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of statistics • Understands donor groups • Knows how to direct a message 	<p>Major Donors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapport-building skills • Establishing common ground • Speaks the donor's language
<p>Corporate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenacity • Energy • Rapport-building skills 	<p>Trusts and Foundations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing skills • Can interpret scientific reports • Attention to detail
<p>Events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience • Networking skills • Team workers 	<p>Digital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of digital audience and channels • Marketing capability • Financial literacy
<p>Legacies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to handle sensitive issues skilfully • Calm • Compassion 	<p>Supporter Care/Admin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loves supporters • Is an advocate for them • Can be in their heads

Full lists can be found in Appendix one

The retention cycle



Your retention checklist

Immediate implementation – retention

1. Sign up to an annual salary survey to check you are paying the market rate for your fundraising jobs.
2. Make sure your induction programme helps your fundraisers to orientate themselves to their role and confirm the donor-focused attitude you want.
3. Talk about the donor as well as the beneficiary.
4. Agree on clear and explicit objectives linked to the fundraising and organisational strategy.
5. Establish regular one-to-one and team meetings to create a two-way communication channel to keep you and your fundraiser on track and involved.

Longer term – retention

1. Include donor-centred behaviour in your objective setting – then you can reward it.
2. Establish development programmes for your fundraisers – personal and professional. Consider the opportunities to accomplish this development plan on the job and from working with other people, as well as formal classroom-based learning.
3. Open doors to other parts of your organisation – get your fundraisers out and about, talking to people close to the cause to increase understanding and commitment.
4. Be flexible in your style as a manager – move with your fundraisers – what do they need from me now to develop and become enabled?

Longer term – retention (*continued*)

5. Consider cross-functional moves – events fundraisers have a lot in common with community fundraisers, corporate fundraisers and major donor fundraisers share similar skills – can you second people to gain wider experience?
6. Build strong, cohesive teams that are focussed, committed, accountable and enjoy healthy debate to create the best donor-centred relationships.
7. Create a trust culture, not a blame culture, to allow mistakes to be learned from and to allow taking risks.
8. Build your relationships around the organisation to educate everyone about fundraising – get fundraising valued alongside other functions.
9. Develop great fundraisers for the sector, and take pride in that - you cannot hold onto them forever, as they need to grow and progress.