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Get on Top of Your Game: Top Ten List of Successful Development Tips by Davis Allen, CFRE

Resolve to follow one or more of these ten tips and you're sure to put your non-profit organization ahead of the game.

1. Our organization will determine what it needs for the next two or three years and, if our goals require additional funding, we will develop an expansion initiative to solicit those funds from our supporters. We will no longer put off until tomorrow what we should be doing today.
2. We will develop a case for support that is forward-thinking, mission-centered, merit-based, and realistic. This brief profile of our plans will be the centerpiece of our presentation to people who want to help us.
3. Our organization will adopt a practice of strengthening its ability to maintain good managers and directors. Board members and staff will interact; they will have numerous opportunities to talk candidly about their roles within the organization, and they will be given opportunities to learn and apply new skills.
4. Our board and staff will team up to raise funds. We have discovered that there is increasing (and enormous) pressure for fund raising to become completely staff-driven. However, very few staff people maintain the kind of peer relationships with prospective donors that are so crucial to effective fund raising. We must work together.
5. Our organization will include in its fund-raising strategy the time-honored method of one-on-one solicitation, carried out, whenever possible, by an individual who has a personal peer relationship with the prospective donor.



6. We will talk with our most loyal, long-standing supporters. If someone has given our organization only \$25 a year, but they have done so for, say, 10 years or more, that suggests that we are doing something important for them. We should listen to them and learn what their interests are.

7. We will resist using direct mail or phone calls as the primary methods for soliciting annual renewals. The mail and phones are useful in prospecting for new friends and donors. However, once we have a donor with a track record of giving (5 years or more), we will personalize our contacts, e.g., "Dear John and Mary" letters.

8. We will not subordinate our organization's mission and goals merely to accommodate donors trying to achieve their own purposes. We will look for win-win situations - where the goals of both the donor and our organization are achieved.

9. We will manage our technological resources; they will not manage us. We spend too much attention on servicing our automated data software, office equipment, website, and internet prospect research services. Either we will gain control over these tools or we will find better ones.

10. We will find qualified help to achieve our expansion plans. We will be smart, creative, and enterprising about building our resources, even if we have to spend money to make money. Good ideas are always worth investing money on, even when (or especially when) money is tight.