

## THE SECRET TO A MORE EFFECTIVE BOARD

Do these laments sound familiar? *"Our Board members check their brains at the door before a meeting."* Or, *"They don't give us much of their time or expertise."* Or, *"It's just not a fundraising Board!"* I've heard versions of these common complaints over and over again. Yet when I investigate, I often find that the Board members in question are willing and even eager to become more engaged in fundraising and other meaningful activities to support their chosen non-profit organizations.

So where is the disconnect?

The vast majority of Board members are talented, dedicated men and women. They are true community leaders, keenly interested in promoting the success of their organization's mission. However – and this is the unspoken but glaringly obvious truth – they seldom volunteer! They tend to remain "standing ready" until specifically and individually asked to take on meaningful tasks and assignments. If there's a secret formula for optimizing the participation and value of your Board, it's this: ASK!

As with potential major donors, Board members need to be asked – personally, precisely and persuasively. Some suggestions to assist you in encouraging your Board members to become more engaged:

- Articulate clearly and in writing the Board's roles and responsibilities, with meaningful goals and expectations. Periodically report on progress made toward meeting those objectives.
- Meet at least once a year with each Board member to determine what he/she is most able and willing to accomplish on behalf of the organization. Confirm those "understandings" in writing with periodic follow-up to encourage the Board member's efforts.
- View and solicit Board members as potential donors. Don't presume that they will be generous just because they are "on the Board." As with any potential major donor, they need to be persuaded by a compelling case, urgent funding priorities, appropriate donor recognition, and a personal "ask."
- Provide for annual self-evaluations by Board members, as well as evaluations of the Board as a whole.