

30+ Relatively Painless Activities for Board Members

Not every board member is willing or able to visit a prospect or donor in person to ask for a contribution. However, there are many other important things you can do, in partnership with staff, to help with the cultivation and fund raising process. Here are some suggestions:

1. Make your own gift or upgrade your current giving.
2. Provide 10-20 new names for the mailing list annually, especially for invitations for special events and mailing of the annual report.
3. Provide entrée for staff to visit two or three close friends or colleagues – no solicitation.
4. Help research grant opportunities; review lists of boards of foundations to see if you have any connections.
5. Help identify major gifts prospects and create individualized cultivation plans.
6. Participate in the cultivation efforts (taking donors or prospects to lunch, giving tours, sending birthday greetings, etc.).
7. Attend workshops/seminars on fund raising.
8. Learn how to advocate for your organization's mission on a political level.
9. Update and reorganize the board orientation process – do one every year and request all board members, new and current, to attend. Each board member should say why he or she serves.
10. Ask staff to train you to speak about the organization. Then join the organization's speaker's bureau.
11. Call donors and thank them for their gifts and interest. Ask them why they support the organization. Tell them why you do.
12. Put the organization in your will, sign over an unneeded life insurance policy or create some other type of planned gift.
13. Help your organization create a legacy society to recognize donors who have made a bequest or crafted some other type of planned gift. Keep on the look-out all year long for potential board members who could add value to your board.
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15. Help create a welcome package for new donors.
16. Create your own “community rap” or “elevator speech” to be able to quickly tell your organization's story in any given situation.
17. Help create gift acceptance and donor recognition policies for your organization.
18. Attend your organization's special events and invite your friends and colleagues. Continue to cultivate them post-event.
19. Invite the executive director and/or development professional from your organization to a community function as your guests.
20. Add your organization's website as a link on your identification information for email, and on your letterhead.
21. Share your passion for your organization's mission with people in your day-to-day life.
22. Ask friends and family to honor you for a birthday or anniversary by making a contribution in your name.
23. Hold a “parlor party” at your home for a special, targeted group of prospects or donors.
24. Ask community groups in which you hold membership to sponsor events to benefit your organization.
25. Be sure that fund raising is included in your annual retreat/strategic planning meetings.
26. Support an adequate budget for continuing education for development staff.
27. Help write a case for support for your organization.
28. Hand-deliver thank you letters with your appreciation to those who make a contribution at a designated level.
29. Call donors just to update them on the organization's accomplishments.
30. Take pictures of the program in action and send them with a hand-written note to donors and potential donors (be sure that any confidentiality issues are respected).
31. Volunteer to “work” a fund raising event.

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