

Top Ten Ways Board Members Support Fundraising

In today's tough economy for fundraising, individual Board members can no longer sit on the sidelines assuming someone else on the Board or staff is working on raising funds for their organization. Every Board member can make a real impact on the organization's ability to raise meaningful, significant gifts to the organization, even if they never directly ask for a gift themselves. This article provides the top ten ways that every Board member can actively support fundraising (and only one of them is "asking").

10. **Thank:** Help write thank you notes to donors. Send thank you emails. Make thank you calls. You'll be surprised by how much a personal, heartfelt "thank you" from a Board member means to a donor, since you're not paid to do it. Nothing is more important to future giving than timely recognition and thoughtful gratitude.
9. **Show-up:** Become an ambassador by attending organization events and reunions, and represent the organization as a Board member. Talk with people you don't know. Better yet, be willing to take a special list of two or three names of people to connect with at events. Keep in mind three things the organization is doing and share it with the people you meet.
8. **Listen:** Really listen to everyone who has a connection to the organization, and find out why the organization is important to them. Ask questions that help them see what is so valuable about the creek or watershed in their lives today, listen to what people are passionate about, and learn what inspires them about the creek or watershed. People remember what they said more than what they hear, so the better you are at listening and encouraging others to talk about the creek, the better the results for fundraising.
7. **Learn:** ...about fundraising. The lingo can be confusing... "Prospects," "Cultivate," "Steward," "Campaign," "LYBUNTS," "Gift Pyramid," "Annual Fund"what does it all mean? The more you learn about fundraising and Environmental Philanthropy in general, the more comfortable you will be with your role in raising funds for the organization. Join an email newsletter, if you haven't already done so.
6. **Tell your story:** Tell the story of what makes Cabin John Creek so special – don't take it for granted that everyone knows or remembers. Share your story of how the creek touched your life or your children's lives, and why you now support FoCJC. Telling your story will inspire others. Write your story down for a newsletter. Don't be afraid to talk about the benefits of a watershed group, and listen to others tell their stories, too.
5. **Lead:** As a Board member, you hold the highest leadership role in the organization. You provide the organization with a clear future direction by ensuring that a strategic plan is in place. Use the strategic plan as a governing tool to work on and resolve difficult problems that might be of concern to donors. When a Board consistently focuses on the organization's mission, actively works on resolving problems, plans for the future, and communicates a shared vision, it truly inspires the confidence of donors.
4. **Give:** Make your own meaningful, significant gift to the organization and consider a Legacy pledge. Share your story of your giving with the rest of the Board, and explain the need for 100% participation of the Board in giving. Seek different opportunities to give in-kind resources or services (computer equipment, office supplies, transportation, furniture, professional services, etc.). Give generously of your time on the Board, on committees, attending organization events, and volunteering. Try this: in addition to your annual gift, ask the organization professional staff what is most wanted but currently unfunded, and fulfill an unmet need at the organization. Seeing the impact of all your gifts (time, talent, and treasure) is a wonderful, rewarding, and deeply satisfying experience.
3. **Volunteer:** Support the organization staff in the "behind the scenes" work of fundraising by volunteering to help organize events, solicit auction items, write notes on donor solicitation letters, serve on the fundraising committee, help host donor visits to camp, provide tech help for the Facebook page, track down long-lost Alumni, edit newsletters, and so on. Find out where you are needed and where you can make the biggest difference in support of fundraising – then get involved.
2. **Share:** In a confidential setting, review a list of donors and/or potential donors, and share what you know about them and their interest in supporting the organizations now or in the future. Make sure the information is incorporated in the organization's donor database. If you know someone well, offer to set up a meeting to talk about the organization. You are an important bridge between an impersonal database and a human connection and relationship to a donor. You can help identify with whom the organization should plan on reaching out to and re-connect.
1. **Ask:** INVITE someone to JOIN you in supporting the organization. As you (and your fellow Board members) are actively participating in numbers 10 through 2 above, the last step, "asking," is really transformed into a personal invitation, as in: *"Would you consider joining me in making a meaningful and lasting gift to the organization at this time?"* With careful planning, asking isn't as hard as you might think.

Every Board member has an important role to play in supporting fundraising, and the organization is depending on your special leadership to make fundraising strong and successful. You may or may not agree with all the items on this TOP TEN list, or you may have other ideas to add. Hopefully, you have identified at least one action you are inspired to try after reading this list.