

# Breaking Down the Barriers: Making Fundraising as Ministry an Organizational Reality

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**H**ear it time and time again. The principles of fundraising as ministry resonate with the sense of call that many fundraisers feel. Yet when it comes to putting those principles into practice, barriers seem to pop up at every turn, including four commonly encountered obstacles to fundraising as ministry.

## 1. The competence vs. commitment myth.

Even within ministry-based organizations, there is a strongly held bias that professional competency and fervent faith simply aren't compatible. Throw in a tight financial situation, as is almost always the situation for nonprofits, and board members and CEOs can be loath to stray far from secular models of fundraising.

**Response:** This is not an either-or situation. For a true integration of faith and work, the work must be as solid and honorable as the faith. If you feel called to this work as ministry, it is the complete integration of the spiritual and professional toward which you must strive.

## 2. An unreceptive organizational culture.

A lot of board members, CEOs, and other staff fear that a ministry-centered approach to fundraising will limit the organization's ability to reach into new donor markets. For example, I often hear about that "non-Christian businessperson down on Main Street" who will be turned off if the organization appeals to its faith commitments.

**Response:** There's tremendous power in being true to what the organization believes it is called to be. In fact, those of us who work daily with donors know that 99.9 percent of the people who support our ministries do so because they appreciate the organizations' ministry focus. Donors want the organizations they support to be vocal about and true to founding convictions.

## 3. A bottom line mentality.

When an organization is lacking in leadership and mission-based goals, poor mouthing takes over. Scarcity dominates, confidence in God's abundance is in short supply, and pressure mounts to uncritically adopt the conventional wisdom of secular fundraising.

**Response:** The way to overcome this obstacle is good organizational planning, a "faith and money" study plan for staff and board leaders, watching what's said in the boardroom about the fundraising program, and taking care to set faith encouraging fundraising goals.

## 4. Never enough time.

Robert Banks, writing in *Redeeming the Routine: Bringing Theology to Life*, states: "We are whisked along through a kaleidoscope of situations, appointments, activities, and responsibilities for most of our waking hours. However much we try to catch up, the watch and the pocket planner regulate our time and help us ration it out." There's always more that can be done, and it is easy to get caught up by the tyranny of the immediate.

**Response:** Development staff, and especially those working in small shops, must work at trimming the program down to the essentials. That means matching fundraising goals to human power available to the organization. The key to breaking through the time barrier is to plan the work, and work the plan.

Regardless the barriers you may encounter in your quest to approach fundraising as ministry, you can't go wrong by focusing on

- Prayer
- Bible study
- Your theological tradition/roots
- The support of like-minded friends

And through it all, keep a check on your own attitude, cultivating a spirit of gratitude and taking every occasion for celebrating generosity.