



Mystery, Tragedy, Fantasy, Adventure. . . **Are You Telling Your Board the Right Fundraising Story?**

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Our Session Today

- Explore common board fundraising stories
- Identify elements that contribute to story formation
- Assess and identify your own board fundraising story
- Review tools to shift the narrative
- Identify and prioritize action steps you will take to change/strengthen your fundraising communication with the board



My Inspiration: Ancient History

“In the end, it is impossible not to become what others believe you are.”

Gabriel García Márquez (quoting Julius Caesar)



Is your board's story ancient history?

- Past successes or failures regularly brought up
- Something that happened long ago still colors the board's approach to fundraising
- Donors who haven't given in years are still on the prospect list
- Ideas and approaches that are familiar



Fantasy

“There is money, spend it, spend more.”

William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*



Is your board's story fantasy?

- Revenue numbers are unrealistic
- Revenue increases are not met with corresponding expense increases
- Budget to actuals have little/no relation to the flow of the fundraising year
- New initiatives are given outside importance
- Folks are considered prospects before they are qualified



Mystery

““In a world of diminishing mystery, the unknown persists.”
Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Lowland*”



Is your board's story mystery?

- The “contributed income” line is the extent of the fundraising report
- The development dashboard consists only of revenue numbers and no other metrics
- The development program is not regularly on the agenda
- There is no board member who represents development as a volunteer (i.e., committee chair)



Other types of stories. . .

- Horror: Don't open the door and let the fundraiser in. . .
- Thriller: How will it end?
- Tragedy: Never ends well!
- Western: Taming the Wild West
- Myth: A hero's journey

Other narratives?



Let's Assess!

"Poirot," I said. "I have been thinking."
"An admirable exercise, my friend. Continue it."
Agatha Christie, *Peril at End House*



Assessment

<i>Contributors to the Fundraising Narrative</i>	<i>Current Status and Board Awareness (Strong/Weak, Missing/Unknown, Ideal/In Development, etc.)</i>	<i>Tools I could deploy/develop to change or strengthen the narrative & facilitate understanding of my one-two things (Circle Priorities!)</i>
Organization's relationship to development (% of revenue budget, budgeting process, strategic plan presence, etc.)		
Current board communications about development (tools, resources, and presence)		
Development program history (development revenue history, campaigns, funding losses, etc.)		
Recent Events (staffing changes, recent funding losses/success, campaigns, etc.)		



Assessing Your Current Narrative

- Organization's relationship to development function
- Development communications at the board level
- History of the development program
- Recent events



Assess: Organizational Relationship

- Relative importance of development to overall organization
- Strategic Plan/Direction
- Budgeting



Assess: Board communications

- Board tools and resources
 - Onboarding
 - Board agreements
 - Board meetings/packets/agendas
- Board processes
 - Budgeting
 - Strategic plan
 - Executive evaluation



Assess: History and Recent Events

- Development Program over last three-five years
 - Revenue shifts
 - StaffingGo back further if you can!
- Recent events
 - Won or lost grants
 - Major gifts
 - Staff turnover



Please share!
What is your Board's Story?



Shifting your Narrative : Choose Your Own Adventure

“It isn’t what we say or think that defines us, but what we do.”
Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*



Review and Reflect:

What is the one (or two, max) thing that the board must understand about your development program?



Tools to Shift the Narrative

- Share the history
- Share the process
 - Dashboard that is more than just numbers
- Share the plan
- Enlist allies
- Give the board the choice in the adventure



The Board: Choosing Their Own Adventure

When it comes to fundraising:

- Where have they shown up in the past?
- Where have they not engaged?
- What are their strengths, collectively and individually?

What would they say if you asked them these questions?



Control the narrative

Narrative is one of the best intoxicants or tranquilizers.”

A.S. Byatt, *Still Life*



Prioritization, Patience and Persistence

- Don't try to deploy all the tools at once!

Stick to those that support your one or two things

- Be transparent
- Demonstrate excitement
- Meet them where they are

“Change requires intent and effort. It really is that simple.”

Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist*



Thank You



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