The Stresses and Strains of Fundraising

Stresses and strains come with fundraising, whether we engage in fundraising as professionals or volunteers. Just as there are stresses and strains with all forms of work, so, too, are there in the business of fundraising. Work creates pressure and there is certainly pressure with fundraising, even if we are doing what we love to do. After all we want to excel and succeed for the good of others and for our organizations. Here are three considerations and three suggestions for you.

First Consideration: Your Motivations

Fundraising pressures, stresses and strains are produced or intensified by our own internal motivations. Successful fundraisers are goal oriented. We have a drive to succeed. We desire to do everything we can for the benefit of the organizations we represent. Along with our organizations, we set high standards for ourselves and we work hard to meet and exceed them. What we expect from ourselves matters to us and it manifests our impact upon the world. This has so much t0o do with self-identity! If you aren't highly driven, fundraising isn't the career for you.

Further, how we behave and what we achieve today has a bearing on our future as we create long-term goals for ourselves. We strive to excel in the work we do today, knowing that success builds upon itself as we reach to have the greatest impact and be of the most service to the world. Our efforts today have a direct bearing upon what the future holds for us, so each day we experience the pressure of the tomorrow we hope to obtain.

Second Consideration: External Expectations

Consider the external expectations that come with fundraising. Our organizations assign goals and set expectations for us that we strive to exceed. This creates pressure, stress and strain. Sometimes the very goals that we are given to by our organizations are actually goals that we had proposed to the organization in the first place, requiring us to shoulder them to a significant degree. Sometimes we are assigned a fundraising objective that seems unachievable and makes little sense to us. Nevertheless, we are asked to raise funds for it.

Third Consideration: The Nature of Work

Consider the nature of work itself. Whatever the line of work one is engaged in, it fatigues us. It is why they call it work! And work that is meaningful work, can be exceptionally fatiguing because it matters so much to us.

The pressure of fundraising goals and deadlines are burdensome. There are financial consequences if we are unable to raise the necessary funds for great dreams to be pursued and achieved. This puts significant pressure on us. Still, it is the nature of work. It is the burden of our responsibilities. We work for organizations that matter and we are committed to helping them fulfill their missions. This increases the pressure. We work with donors to help donors achieve their dreams and to have the greatest impact in the world possible for themselves and for the organizations we serve. That's fatiguing, that's demanding, that's challenging, is it not?

First Suggestion: Acknowledge It

Acknowledge that there is pressure, stresses, and strains in the work that you do. Acknowledge it to yourself. Your work is demanding and stressful. Work can be very daunting and feel overwhelming at times. Discuss this with your colleagues. Their experience of work is likely similar to your own. We are all in this together and can be mutually supportive. Let's not forget that our work can be remarkably rewarding, too.

Second Suggestion: Celebrate Victories

Yes, celebrate the victories! When you have a great win, celebrate it. All too often we set our sights on the ultimate victory to reach an overall goal and we miss celebrating the victories along the way. Celebrate victories both great and small with your colleagues and loved ones. What it takes to close a gift that's been difficult to finalize deserves to be celebrated just as a sizable gift commitment. Mark the accomplishments that you had a significant part of bringing to fruition. Be sure to celebrate the accomplishments of fellow fundraisers when they reach certain goals and milestones as well. Celebrating victories along the way reinforces the importance of our efforts and encourages and strengthens us to continue to press on.

Third Suggestion: Manage Stress

Positively manage your stress so that your stress doesn't manage you. Fundraising is like running a marathon – we have to keep ourselves in peak condition to be successful over the long run. Eat well, exercise sufficiently, sleep enough, use your time wisely, organize yourself at the beginning of the day, meditate, journal, draw upon your higher power. Take advantage of all the resources you can to manage your stress. Finally, take time to appreciate your hard work and be grateful for your donors.