

## *Search for a Chief Development Officer (Fund Raiser)*

By Bruce Dingman

Doing a fair amount of searches in the world of education and non-profits, we are often asked to undertake a search for a Chief Development Officer. However, the search can be tough to do successfully so we carefully evaluate each situation before accepting such an assignment.

While there are many development professionals available, a large portion don't remain in a development position for any length of time for one of two reasons: There may be a lack of alignment with the development professional and the Board and/or CEO concerning expectations or approach to fund raising. Or the development person may not be effective. A common reason for ineffectiveness, assuming the person has adequate resources to do the job, is that many don't have the professional self-discipline to be successful. They lack a focus on making sales calls, or as fund raising professionals would call it, "friend raising."

*Why are the searches so difficult?*

It can be hard to attract an excellent development professional because the person may be reluctant to leave for one or more of the following reasons: They believe whole heartedly in their present organization and/or its mission; they are aligned with the CEO and the Board's fundraising expectations; if they leave, they forfeit existing relationships with donors; and/or they are already well compensated.

*So ... why would a good development professional change jobs?*

There are several factors that may attract a development professional to a new organization:

- It may include moving fund raising or ministry impact from a regional focus to a national or international focus or be a larger organization with greater potential.
- Higher compensation or a promotion may be a factor. As altruistic as one might be, there is still a family to consider, so personal income can be a factor.
- There may be a new CEO or Board composition that doesn't understand what to expect from a good development officer. Or perhaps when the development officer sets up the opportunity with a major donor, the new CEO does not feel comfortable participating in "the ask."
- For family reasons. The new opportunity may be closer to grandparents or in a warmer climate. Or, if the opportunity is in higher education, there may be tuition assistance for college age kids.

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CONSULTANTS FOR EXECUTIVE SELECTION

Over the span of 20 plus years, The Dingman Company has conducted a number of development officer searches. One development officer has been in place for 15 years, another for 13 years, a third moved on after five years when a new CEO came. In the last two years, we have filled three chief development officer positions with a university, a seminary and a missions organization.

*What might an organization do to find a development officer on its own?*

- Search among donors or friends connected with the organization to find a proven, successful sales professional (coming from some type of relationship-based sales like financial planning, insurance or real estate). Look for someone ready to make a career change and support that person for six months with a fund raising consultant to train him or her.
- Network within the professional fund raising associations.
- Run an ad in association magazines, job bulletin boards, or the Chronicle of Philanthropy.
- Use a search firm.

*What must be present for us to accept a chief development officer search?*

We only accept searches in which the organization, the mission and the expected results of this position have an attractive opportunity for candidates. Other considerations are the location and the compensation.

*There are search firms that do far more development searches than we do.*

They are likely to have a database of potential development candidates that exceeds our own. However, given the lower rate of successful completion of development searches, it is important to do sufficient due diligence—ask the recruiter about uncompleted searches and talk with his or her prior clients.

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