



Tom Romito

FACILITATOR

FACILITATION AND DEVELOPING A FUND-RAISING STRATEGY

I'm Tom Romito. I'm a facilitator and I work with organizations that want to improve themselves. This short paper is about how organizations can improve themselves by developing a fund-raising strategy with the help of a facilitator.

When I work with organizations for the first time, I make a diagnosis of their health. Very often, I find the following situation: Their money is gone, their leaders are all used up, they have no plan for future, and they are living under the false premise that if only they could get a grant, everything would be okay. I offer them a prescription for this malady. It's called capacity building. This involves several objectives, including team building, action planning, strategic planning, and developing a fund-raising strategy. Here, I'll discuss the last objective. My work in this area is based on my experience and the specific guidance I have derived from *Strategic Planning for Non-Profit Organizations* by Michael Allison and Judy Kaye.

Many organizations actually ask, "Why bother raising money?" Well, some have to pay the rent and keep the lights burning. Others want to publish a newsletter and pay for programs and activities. Most organizations don't need a lot of money to do these things, but they do need some money if they're going to survive and thrive. They need to develop a strategy for raising funds to carry them through the hard times. Here are the key steps for doing this:

- Study your organization's past performance in fund-raising. Look back to see how you have done in previous years. Find out if you raised enough money to accomplish your objectives.
- Evaluate the receptiveness of donors to your fund-raising techniques. Were they responsive to your requests?
- Assess your fund-raising methods. Examine your organization's history to see if you used traditional techniques often referred to as "earned income." They include things like annual appeals, fund drives, writing proposals for grants, and direct requests to big donors.
- Develop ways to maximize your methods. There may be ways to cut costs in the production and distribution of your annual appeal. Find people other than the president of the organization to champion and staff a fund drive. Identify someone in your organization who can write grant proposals, send someone to training to get that experience, or hire a professional to

do this for you. Develop relationships with wealthy potential donors before asking them to donate. During the time that I was president of the Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society, my chapter conducted a five-year breeding bird survey. We found ourselves short of funds to complete the last two years of the project. I asked several wealthy members of my organization to donate, but they declined to do so. I asked one more person, whom I had known for ten years and worked with in several organizations. This person said, "Tell me when and how much." This outcome was due to the trust and confidence we had developed over time with each other.

- Identify fund-raising targets. Determine what projects you need to fund, how much money you need to do them, and where you think you can get the money.

Developing a fund-raising strategy can help your organization get through the hard times!