

RISE

Results in Independent Schools E-newsletter
Shining a Light on Fundraising

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

First Things First



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www.fundraisingcounsel.com



from the desk of
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Building a Sustainable, Donor-Focused Development Program

Ask ten development officers, directors, and board members to define the term Development and you'll get 30 different answers, like "fundraising," "generating revenue" or "that department that asks for money." Yes, but these only scratch the surface of a complex process that can move an organization from constant financial struggle to a place of stability and aspiration.

The **Association of Fundraising Professionals** defines development as "the total process by which an organization increases public understanding of its mission and acquires financial support for its programs." But how about this more donor-focused alternative?

Development is a process through which an organization's donors and prospective donors are encouraged to participate financially in its mission, through a system that both maximizes the organization's internal capacity to deliver that mission and its donors' capacity for giving, both today and in the future.

What could we take from this? Here are a few thoughts to consider reinforcing in your program:

Don't Forget the "Why"

Philanthropy is too often reduced to a number on a spreadsheet, more focused on the "how much" than the "why." It may sound basic, but understanding your organization's relevance and communicating it effectively is the first step in building a strong development program. Not just the lofty statement from a board retreat, but the real-world story of why your organization and its programs matter.

Be in it for the Long Term

All organizations experience financial droughts or windfalls, but a sustainable program that survives these ups-and-downs is built on continuously cultivating and stewarding donors who will deepen their institutional relationship and give more

generously over time.

Fundraising is often compared to running a race, with everyone striving to reach the finish line of an annual budget or campaign goal. But a best-practices development program is more like running on a treadmill, preparing for the annual fund sprints and campaign marathons that come along.

Apart from the short-term gratification of reaching arbitrary goals, there can be great satisfaction in the daily work of building deep, lifelong relationships with your donors while reinforcing their commitment to your mission, celebrating the journey along the way through their gifts and those likely to come.

Both Today and in the Future

A strong annual giving program based on major gifts is the cornerstone on which a mature development program should be built. Planned gifts are important to securing an organization's legacy, but a successful planned giving program relies on an informed, committed constituency motivated to support the organization both during and after their lifetimes.

Donors who understand and are passionate about your work in the here-and-now are most likely to want for their support to continue. Remember that it is often the quiet, unassuming donor whose small but faithful annual gifts mask the depth of their commitment, which they immortalize through a transformative legacy bequest.

A culture of gratitude for all gifts, regardless of size, will reap tremendous benefits, both today and in the future.

As programming and budgets continue to grow and those of us responsible for philanthropic revenue face increasing pressure to produce, it is easy to be drawn into new initiatives that take our attention away from stewarding our donors. By reinforcing the importance of your institution's mission and facilitating opportunities for donors to support it, you are laying the groundwork for those who will benefit from your organization for generations to come. Plus, you'll be leaving a sustainable, donor-focused development program for the lucky person who inherits your seat someday.



Online Giving Flat in 2018

In anticipation of the release of **Giving USA** this month, a just released annual survey found that online fundraising revenue at U.S. nonprofits rose 1 percent in 2018, after recording 23 percent growth in 2017.

Based on data from 135 nonprofits, the **2019 M+R Benchmarks Study** found that overall online revenue was relatively flat on a year-over-year basis, while online revenue for "rights" organizations fell 14 percent - after seeing an 88 percent jump in 2017 - with smaller declines for health, international development,

and wildlife and animal welfare groups. According to the report, the flat growth in 2018 may be a natural reaction to the large increase in 2017, and 2019 may see a return to a more normal growth trendline.

Listen and *Learn*....

Need to Start a Fundraising Campaign?



Your nonprofit needs to start a fundraising campaign. Now what? Alexander Haas President & CEO, **David King** joins Laddering Works' Cynthia Hayes to explain the steps for selecting fundraising counsel. From initial interviews to RFP's to finding the right culture fit, David points out key factors to take into consideration.

[Podcast here.](#)



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A promotional banner for Alexander Haas. On the left, a yellow arrow points right with the text 'TAKE OUR READINESS ASSESSMENT' and 'CLICK HERE'. On the right, a dark grey background contains the text 'ARE YOU READY for a fundraising campaign?' in a mix of bold sans-serif and script fonts. At the bottom right is the Alexander Haas logo and tagline 'TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES'.

We'd Like You to *Know*...

Our Transforming *Fundraising Services*

You're just a jump away from learning about all the fundraising aids Alexander Haas has in its vault of Transforming Services.

[*Jump!*](#)

Transforming Institutions

For more than 30 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with some of the largest, and some of the smallest, independent schools that help transform our nations adolescents into our next leaders.

[Our Independent School Client Partners.](#)



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