



**First Things First**



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[www.fundraisingcounsel.com](http://www.fundraisingcounsel.com)



from the standing-desk of  
**David H. King** | President & CEO

## **Common Mistakes Emerging Nonprofits Make, And How You Can Avoid Them**

A new nonprofit organization almost always comes into being when a good-hearted, smart person sees a need that is not being met and sets out to address it.

There are many challenges of starting a nonprofit, beyond getting 501 (c)(3) status, just as there are challenges in starting any for-profit business. But, there are also many more resources - books, seminars, college courses - that provide guidance for those starting a for-profit than for those starting a nonprofit, making it all the more challenging for a nonprofit to successfully navigate those early years.

However, there are common mistakes that we see new and emerging nonprofits routinely make, and how you can avoid them.

### **Putting Any Warm Body On The Board Of Directors**

We have a saying at our firm: "No organization can rise above the level of its board." The makeup and commitment of a nonprofit board is its lifeblood. A great board can propel an organization to unimagined heights, and, conversely, a poor board will mire it in quicksand until it finally sinks.

All too often, young nonprofits are more concerned with filling all their board seats than with making sure the people they are recruiting are going to be good, dedicated, supportive, hard-working board members who can really lead the organization to success.

It's much better to have a small board of all the right people than a large board full of the wrong people. Nonprofits need to look for people who have a shared passion for the cause they are addressing, along with another needed characteristic. Perhaps you need a lawyer or a real estate expert or someone with a background in social

services on your board - these candidates also need to really care about the issue. And it does not hurt if they have the ability and desire to make a significant financial contribution!

## Telling Board Members They Will Not Have To Fundraise For The Organization

Time and time again, we encounter organizations that, in their zeal to get someone to say yes to joining the board, have promised them they will not be asked to help raise funds for the organization. The No. 1 responsibility of a nonprofit's board is the fiscal health of the organization, and in a nonprofit setting, that is going to mean fundraising.

[There's more mistakes...Have you made them?](#)



### Communication: What's Your Agenda?

"The biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." - George Bernard Shaw

When soliciting gifts or when cultivating donors, you may think your communication is clear, but often that's not the case.

You can be so intent on telling YOUR story, talking about YOUR organization's mission, and sharing YOUR organizational needs that you miss the point of clear communication and that is this: It's a two-way street.

A recent study found when patients go in for a checkup and begin talking, the doctor usually interrupts the conversation within 8-10 seconds so they can get right to business. Time constrains can prevent the doctor from listening. The patient, on the other hand, wants to share background information in an effort to reduce anxiety and to make sure the doctor has all the information.

This is similar to what occurs during the donor solicitation process. The solicitor comes wanting to secure a gift while the prospective donor comes ready to receive information, share advice, or hold on to money!

[Here are some basic steps that will help you improve your communication with prospective donors:](#)

## Listen and Learn....

### How to Navigate Change in Your Organization



As your organization adapts to a new vision, your donors come along for the journey. And as your donors change, how they think about money and philanthropy may also change.

In this podcast, Alexander Haas President and CEO, **David King** is joined by **Jennifer Jones**, Assistant Professor of Nonprofit Management and Leadership at the **University of Florida** and **David Daniel**, Director of Field Operations for **The Nature Conservancy**. The two share recent research and specific steps your organization can take to maintain strong relationships with donors.



## Are You Listening to Our Podcast?



**NonprofitNews.com** thinks you should! The website's **Donorbox Blog** lists our podcast **Futures in Fundraising #4** on a list of **8 Podcasts for Nonprofit Founders (in 2018)** [sic].

Catch a new episode of Futures in Fundraising each month on Tuesdays at 10:00 am (EST) on Facebook Live.

To download this show and catch up on others, find us on iTunes.

[Listen up this is good stuff....](#)

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presentation  
and Q&A  
session

# Giving USA 2018: Results

*What do the findings mean for your subsector? David King, President & CEO of Alexander Haas, explains in this live recording.*

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During the solicitation, the solicitor should be skilled enough to negotiate the amount of the ask and to ensure that the prospect feels respected and integral to the success of the campaign.

NANCY PETERMAN  
PARTNER



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

### Transforming Institutions

For more than 30 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the Atlanta nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with some of the largest, and some of the smallest, organizations that help make Atlanta a better place to live.

[Our Metro Atlanta Client Partners](#)

### Our Transformational Services

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

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Piedmont Place  
3520 Piedmont Road NE Suite 300  
Atlanta GA 30305-1512  
(404) 832-9200 [info@fundraisingcounsel.com](mailto:info@fundraisingcounsel.com)



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