

Museum Results

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from Alexander Haas

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TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

First Things First



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from the frozen-no-more Texas desk of
Carl G. Hamm | Managing Partner

Navigating Greener Pastures in Challenging Times

Despite the pandemic, development officers continue to leave relatively secure positions to take on new chief development roles, amidst the upheaval in the institutions they are joining. Over the past few months, several colleagues and friends have reached out for advice on how to navigate such an important life change, wanting to make sure they're as successful as possible given the increased pressure on fundraising in these unusual times.

Even in stable circumstances, accepting such an important new role can be challenging, both for the hiring CEO or director and for the development officers themselves, evidenced by the continued high turnover rate among new development directors. Several factors contribute to why new chief development officers often stay such as short time, leading both the development officers and organizations into a cycle of frustration and disappointment.

By focusing on three key ideas, both candidates and their organizations are likely to find more productive success over the long-term during these challenging times.

Common Expectations. Development professionals take new jobs for a variety of reasons – more money, additional responsibility, prestige, or sometimes just to leave an unpleasant situation. Organizations hire new development directors with great expectations, often with the idea that a new person is going to somehow boost the institution's fundraising overnight or meet unreachable goals by doing things a new way. Between the new employee's ambition and desire to do a good job without complaining and the organization's unrealistic expectations, the new staff member is often cast prematurely into a no-win situation, even before they've had time to understand the challenges and opportunities of the job. Clear and open communication about expectations from the beginning is the key to success, both for the person taking on a new position and the one hiring.

Appropriate Acclimation. To be successful, a new chief development officer must have time to understand the organization's mission, budget, culture, and development operation. This acclimation that would usually take place naturally around the water cooler or other casual interactions around the office are even more elusive in this era of working from home and meetings by Zoom. Despite the financial pressures to immediately produce, new staff should expect and be given the opportunity to get to know their new organization's nuances and opportunities and to onboard through a deliberate, thoughtful process to be successful over the long-term, without just stepping into the expectation of immediate results.

Build the Plan – Work the Plan. This may be the most important reminder for new development directors and hiring CEOs alike. Development is a disciplined, systematic process that engages an organization's current and prospective donors in providing financial support, both in the short-term and over the long haul. As such, a new development director must have the time to both develop and gain consensus on a strong strategy and plan to accomplish these goals. Effective fundraising is more than a series of ad hoc tactics – it's the establishment of a solid plan that is well executed and modified along the way. Especially in these times of heightened expectations for fundraising, this principle should continue to guide new chief development officers and their organizations, rather than a knee-jerk reaction to current circumstances.

Given the important financial challenges that have emerged over the past year, recruiting and maintaining effective chief development officers will become even more valuable for hiring organizations and those seeking greener pastures. For both, this can be an exciting time for new beginnings and the opportunity to create new fundraising strategies responsive to our post-pandemic environment. Perhaps this can be the moment we break the cycle of such rapid turnover in the development field? As always, all of us at Alexander Haas welcome the opportunity to help your organization should you find yourself in such an important time of transition.

News You Should Know

Online Giving Exploded While Overall Giving Ticked Up Slightly

Donations to charities increased 2% in 2020, while gifts made online grew 21% over 2019, according to **Blackbaud Institute's** latest annual report on charitable giving, released Tuesday.

Donations to big organizations, those that raise \$10 million or more a year, were up 5.3% in 2020. Medium-size nonprofits, those with total annual donations of \$1 million to \$10 million, saw a 1.2% increase. But small nonprofits, those that raise less than \$1 million, saw a 7.2% decrease in contributions.

The picture was rosier for digital giving, with small groups faring far better than other nonprofits. Large organizations saw a 15% increase in online fundraising hauls in 2020 compared with the year before. Midsize nonprofits saw online fundraising increase nearly 25%. Small groups expanded their online fundraising by 22.3%.

As donors turned to digital donations, the share of total charitable revenue from online giving jumped sharply, from less than 10% in 2019 to roughly 13% in 2020. In another sign of how digital fundraising is shifting, more donors are using their smartphones to make gifts. The report estimates 28% of all contributions made online were from mobile devices.

Arts & Culture Organizations Data

- The **average donation** amount to arts & culture\ organizations was **\$540**.
- This sector received **9.9%** of their total fundraising from **online giving**.
- In the past 12 months ending in December 2020, arts organizations experienced a **9.5% decrease** in **overall fundraising** and a **7.0% increase in online** fundraising.
- The largest months for gifts to arts organizations: **19.4% of gifts in December**, followed by **8.7% in June**.

Go [here to read the report](#).

Movers & Shakers

Artist Amy Sherald's now-iconic painting of *Breonna Taylor* has become the nexus for a partnership of foundations and museums that will support social justice causes. Originally painted for the cover of *Vanity Fair* last year, the portrait will be shared between the **Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture** and the **Speed Museum** in Taylor's hometown of Louisville, thanks to \$1 million donated by the **Ford** and **Hearthland** foundations. Hearthland is a new philanthropy run by actress **Kate Capshaw** and her husband, **Steven Spielberg**. Sherald will use the proceeds of the sale to start a program for young people "pursuing higher education who have an interest in social justice," according to the Times. **The Ford Foundation** will give another \$1.2 million to support an exhibition at the Speed inspired by Taylor. *NYTimes*, 3-8

The **National WWI Museum and Memorial** (Kansas City, MO) received a gift of nearly \$10 million from the **Sunderland Foundation** in support of renovations to the main gallery, public spaces, and courtyard. *PND*, 3-6

Andrew Rodgers, executive director of the Denver Film Society, has been appointed executive director and CEO of the **Albuquerque Museum Foundation**. *COP*, 3-5

Months after the **Baltimore Museum of Art** abandoned plans to sell major pieces to fund diversity and inclusion efforts, it raised \$1.5 million for that purpose. Two-thirds of that money comes from a new supporter, art collector **Eileen Harris Norton**. The donations will go toward an endowment, a new committee on diversity, higher salaries for hourly workers, and longer opening hours. *Artnet News*, 3-3

The **Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum** received a \$10 million gift from the **Kislak Family Foundation** in support of an exhibition aimed at exploring the changes to flight and culture that developed during World War II. *PND*, 3-2

The **Seattle Art Museum** received a gift of 19 Abstract Expressionist works from the collection of the late **Richard E. Lang and Jane Lang Davis** worth an estimated \$400 million, made through the Friday Foundation. The foundation also awarded \$10.5 million in dedicated funds in support various items, including an endowment for the museum's chief conservator position and \$200,000 to launch an acquisition fund. *Seattle Times*, 2-24

The **California African American Museum** (Los Angeles) named **Carmen Shaw** executive director. Shaw has been deputy director and chief curator since 2019. *LATimes*, 2-23

Christopher Woods was named the new director of the **Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology** — the first Black director to head the institution. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2-21

The **Wisconsin Historical Society** received a \$10 million gift from philanthropist W. **Jerome Frautsch**. Awarded to the **Wisconsin Historical Foundation**, the gift will help fund construction of a new building in downtown Madison to replace the outdated, undersized **Wisconsin Historical Museum**. *PND*, 2-20

Steven Y. Wong will be the next director of the **Vincent Price Art Museum** at East Los Angeles College (Monterey Park), effective immediately. He succeeds **Pilar Tompkins Rivas**, who left last summer to become chief curator and deputy director of curatorial and collections at the forthcoming **Lucas Museum of Narrative Art**. *ARTnews*, 2-19

After the **Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields** faced controversy over a job listing seeking a director who could maintain its “traditional, core, white art audience,” the institution’s president, **Charles Venable**, has resigned. “We are sorry. We have made mistakes. We have let you down,” the museum’s board of trustees and board of governors wrote in a notice posted to the museum’s website. *ARTnews*, 2-17

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News You Should Know

Get in on PPP #2 by March 31

Museums and other cultural organization can apply for **PPP 2.0** loans through the **Southeastern Museum Conference** and other regional associations partners, including the **Association of Midwest Museums**, **Western Museums Association**, **New England Museums Association**, and the **MidAtlantic Museums Associations**.

Many museums have already been successfully funded in this second round! Review eligibility requirements and register by [going here](#).

Fundraisers More Confident at Year End but Worried About 2021

In late November and early December, the *Association of Fundraising Professionals* asked its members how optimistic they were in various aspects of their fundraising and what trends and challenges they see ahead. They conducted the same survey in September. As 2020 came to a close, fundraisers were increasingly confident they would reach their year-end goals — even as many expressed uncertainty about 2021.

Key Highlights

- Fundraisers **grew in optimism** from an average of 6.52 in September to 6.98 in December (out of 10). They also became increasingly confident they would raise more money in 2020 than in 2019.

- Confidence levels that **donors would be receptive to their communications** grew from 6.75 in September to 7.38. When asked about their confidence in finding fundraising success in 2021, respondents were generally optimistic, recording an average of 6.47.
- More respondents **cited donor retention and stewardship than any other option** — an average of 60% selected it as the most important area over all three time frames — as the area they would devote increased effort over the next three, six, and 12 months.
- **More fundraisers prioritized big-gift fundraising** in the latest survey than in September. More than half of respondents selected major gifts as a priority over the next three months, 61% over the next six months, and 64% over the next year.
- **Online and email solicitations were another top priority** for fundraisers, although respondents were less likely to say they would remain so as 2021 progressed.

COP, 2-5

We Want You to Know

Happy Anniversary Channa!

A year ago, a week before the Coronavirus slowed us all down, **Channa Childs** walked into our office, bringing with her efficiency, productivity, diligence, commitment, and a quiet yet astounding intelligence that helps support our firm to provide quality fundraising services. Thanks to Channa, we didn't slow down. Wish her a happy 1st Anniversary. **You should know her too.**



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, cultural organizations that help make our country a better place to live.

[Take a look at all of our past and present museum Client Partners.](#)

Face It: Museums are Different **Our Transformational Museum Services**

Alexander Haas serves a cross section of museums throughout the country. We specialize (and delight in) what makes you distinctive. As a museum, you have different needs at different times. We can help you create real results.

[Read all about them!](#)



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