



Museum Results

Alexander-Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

Your Monthly Resource for Philanthropic News
from Alexander Haas

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from the desk of
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The ROI of Cultivating Your Own Professional Relationships

Cultivating donor relationships is at the core of successful fundraising. Different kinds of donors (i.e., Annual Fund, Major Gift, Principal Gift, etc.) warrant different levels of investment to cultivate and connect them to an institution.

At the end of a campaign (or a fiscal year), you should be able to calculate the return on investment (ROI) based on your total expenditures and overall fundraising results. This gives you one way to evaluate if the effort (and resources) you and your team are putting into cultivating donors is yielding the results you need to be successful.

That's a high-level look at the ROI of cultivating donor relationships. **But how often do you allow yourself time to cultivate your own professional relationships?** My guess is not often enough. Yet professional relationships are some of the very best resources we have at our disposal.

During the 26 years I served in institutional roles in higher education advancement, there never seemed to be enough time to get to what needed to be done. When time was short and I saw a peer or networking meeting on my calendar, it was very tempting to reschedule the meeting. Yet, every single time I participated in such a meeting (in-person or virtual), I walked away feeling smarter, deeply inspired and markedly saner than I did before the meeting.

With that in mind, I encourage you to be intentional about how you are cultivating your own professional relationships. When is the last time you:

- Called your mentor or a former colleague?
- Gathered with peers at similar institutions?
- Checked in on someone who used to report to you?

While I hope your answer is "yesterday" or "last week", my point is that the time you invest in cultivating these mutually beneficial relationships should be a priority. And this applies to those just starting out as well as seasoned veterans.

One of the very best things about the Advancement field is how willing we are to

share good ideas and successful programs with each other. Advancement professionals do what they do to make the world a better place and so we love helping each other out. But how can we help each other if we don't connect with each other?

At the beginning of January 2023, there was a **[New York Times article about the power of the 8-minute phone call.](#)** The basic premise was that even busy people can spare eight minutes for a phone call. I agree and think the time you spend connecting with your professional network, whether it is eight minutes or more, will be time well invested. What might that ROI look like for you? Below are a few possible outcomes:

- Getting candidate referrals or recruitment ideas for a job search you are conducting.
- Thinking differently about your organizational structure.
- Hearing about different ways to quantify and analyze productivity and success.
- Discovering a new idea or program you might bring to your team.
- Evaluating the benefit of NOT doing something anymore.
- Shoring up a reference you might need down the line.
- *Learning that you are not alone in the professional challenges you face.

*This validation might be the most important benefit of all. It's so easy to fall into the trap of thinking that professional challenges or frustrations only apply to your institution. Learning that my peers faced similar challenges at their institutions has always been invaluable to me... as was the brainstorming we did to think through ways to overcome those challenges.

Time will always be a finite resource. But the resources that come from your professional network are limitless. So double down and commit to intentionally investing time to cultivate your professional relationships. Your ROI will be something you can tap into for years and years to come.

Please welcome Jaci to our team.

[Read all about our new Partner here.](#)

Our Team

Have You Dipped Your Toe in Threads?

No need to be shy. **The Whitney Museum** quickly attracted 104,000 followers on Threads with funny, irreverent posts. Experts share four strategies nonprofits can try as they get started on the new platform.

Caitlin McShane, principal at EMC Communications, encourages nonprofits to test out a new tone on Threads. The Whitney's posts have amassed likes and appreciative comments from the museum's followers, some of whom are pleasantly surprised by the account's tone. "Omg

guys I'm not an intern," the museum's senior social media manager, who handles the Threads account, wrote to followers wondering if inexperience explained the account's lack of self-seriousness.

"Threads is in this place where there's kind of not a ton to do there yet other than just to talk to people," says Thom Josephson, director of media for Blue State. That helps make a nonprofit more approachable to an audience that is largely familiar with its work, as well as new followers.

Question-and-answer sessions – similar to an "Ask Me Anything" on the social media platform Reddit – work well in these moments, he says. "It's an opportunity for nonprofits, NGOs to peel back that curtain a little bit and to be something more than just a name and maybe some white papers and reports." *COP, 7-25*



Southeastern Museums Conference Nov 13-15

Early Bird Registration is open for the **2023 SEMC Conference**. Purposefully developed by a local team in Louisville, this year's theme is Truth Builds Community. Louisville, along with many cities across our country, experienced much social unrest during the past several years, and the cultural community and institutions have taken an active role in creating programs and exhibits that shed light, lift up underserved and underrepresented peoples, and create space for community engagement for healing and open dialogue. Sessions will share, examine, and promote this work in cultural institutions and the diverse communities they represent. SEMC also offers attendees direct dialogue, networking, and professional growth and development. Will you be in Louisville?

Alexander Haas is proud to be a Corporate Sponsor of SEMC.

[More information here.](#)

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Code of Conduct...For a Donor?

Some fundraising observers believe donor codes of conduct reduce sexual and other types of harassment, something more than a quarter of fundraisers say they encounter, according to 2022 research. Experts say nonprofits need to make donors more accountable and set limits to reduce problematic donor behavior – including donors pushing organizations to take on projects that are outside their mission or trying to involve themselves in nonprofits’ day-to-day operations.

Many nonprofits are reluctant to confront bad behavior by donors because they don’t want to endanger gifts.

“A donor code just sets a tone for what the organization is willing to tolerate,” says one fundraiser. “At so many organizations, nobody wants to do anything that will endanger the gift. That’s a real shame because it’s hard to work in an organization where the gift is the most important thing.”

This spring, Rogare, an international fundraising think tank, called on nonprofits to implement codes to reduce sexual harassment. A code helps remind donors this is a professional relationship. Codes also signal to fundraising staff that the organization recognizes harassment as a problem.

Nonprofits hope donor codes of conduct will also curb other types of problematic behavior: donors who try to fund passion projects that don’t align with an organization’s goals or who want to micromanage a project they’ve helped fund.

Sue Cunningham, CEO of the *Council for Advancement and Support of Education*, says accepting money from donors whose passion projects don’t align with the organization’s mission is a mistake but that she understands the temptation.

“When a college or university is relatively early in their journey around encouraging philanthropic engagement, it’s really, really hard to say no,” Cunningham says. “Yet having that rigor is critically important because it really doesn’t do yourself any favors in the medium to long term if you don’t show rigor.” Accepting such donations sometimes leads to students openly disparaging a gift as unnecessary, leaving both the donor and the college unhappy. CASE offers guidance on curbing donor influence through its Global Reporting Standards, but not on donor codes of conduct.

Does your development department have a Code of Conduct? Have you thought about one?

[Read more here.](#) COP, 7-31

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Is it Time to Embrace A.I.?

Public interest in A.I. has exploded in recent months, thanks to the power – and potential – of expansive new tools like [ChatGPT](#), which can write and process commands in a way that mimics the complexity of human thought. Yet A.I. has been quietly transforming nonprofit operations for years, driven largely by an influx of corporate philanthropy from major tech companies. While not all nonprofits have been as eager to adopt the new technology, experts agree that A.I. is here to stay – and that organizations ought to start thinking about their next steps.

“The barriers to access are coming down and will continue to come down” for A.I. tools, says **Brigitte Gosselink**, director of product impact at *Google.org*, the philanthropic arm of tech

giant Google, which has given over \$100 million in cash grants and 160,000 hours in pro bono consulting to a total of more than 150 organizations for A.I.-related projects over the past several years.

The organizations that Google.org supports say their A.I. projects have helped achieve their goals in a third of the time and half the cost, according to surveys Google has conducted. A study by Stanford University and the National Bureau of Economic Research found that A.I. increased workers' productivity by 14%; another released by MIT researchers in March found that ChatGPT improved workers' efficiency by 37%.

Before every project, Gosselink recommends that nonprofits ask themselves if A.I. will advance the organization's mission. Many nonprofits could benefit from starting with smaller-scale data projects to improve their operations, she says.

"You don't need to be all the way there. You don't need to be programming a robot or developing some profound new algorithm," says Gosselink. "Most of what we're doing here is really thinking about how to have more data-driven insights." *COP, 8-25*

We Know Museums

For more than 35 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with leading museums and cultural organizations across the country that help communities be a better place to live. Just ask our clients.

[Our Museum Clients](#)

Face It: Museums are Different

Our services aren't cookie cutter. We don't operate with a boilerplate, merely changing names and locations. We craft each and every service we provide to match your museum's unique needs, wants and abilities. We work hard and expect you to do the same. Together we can help you transform your museum, your fundraising, and the community you serve.

Whether your need is in Capital Campaign, Annual Fund Campaign, Major Gifts, Leadership Annual Giving, Planned Giving or all of the above, we take a fresh approach to nonprofit fundraising.

[Our Services](#)



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