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from the desk of
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A Better World, One Day At A Time

One of the benefits of working with organizations across the country is the opportunity to see and comment on common issues and trends we observe across the field, drawing from our diverse experiences over the years.

In this moment, optimism and ambition abound for many organizations, with strategic planning and major campaigns in the works or underway and donors making significant philanthropic investments in causes they support. Now that we've passed the fourth anniversary of COVID-19 entering our lives, most institutions have finally found a new operating norm. The professional landscape for employees, however, is still very much a work in progress.

The practice of development is increasingly challenging and complex, with staff balancing administrative and managerial responsibilities, face-to-face relationship building with donors, and the ongoing need for professional development to stay technically proficient. A full slate of tasks, pressures, and demands compete for priority on a day-to-day basis.

Employee turnover and the problem of finding quality candidates for development roles at all levels is perhaps the most difficult challenge facing nonprofits today. Practically every organization I've encountered has continually been in some stage of the hiring process for several years, a reaction in part to realigned priorities among development professionals and unrealistic expectations by leadership. This culture of instability, competing priorities, and increased workload has naturally led to frustration and burnout among many of those who have remained.

When each of us chose a life in nonprofit development, at least in the beginning, we accepted a higher calling to improve the quality of life for those who would benefit from our work. It's baked into our DNA that we should be spending our days making the world a better place, but that idealism is too often overtaken by the realities of daily life.

Our organizations' ambitions and ongoing efforts to strengthen society will only be possible through a healthy, sustainable work culture for employees. But likewise, all of us who work on the front lines of philanthropy should also strive to rise above the functional, often unglamorous, daily tasks of our jobs in the service of a collective

outcome that transcends any of our individual roles.

Such a shared, renewed commitment to our higher calling will surely lead to a better world for all of us, working together one day at a time. It is a cause worthy of our life's work, indeed.

[Our Team](#)

Donations by the Top 50 US Donors Declined in 2023

The top 50 American individuals and couples who gave or pledged the most to charity in 2023 committed \$12 billion to nonprofit organizations. According to the Chronicle of Philanthropy's latest annual tally of these donations, that total was 28% below an inflation-adjusted \$16.5 billion in 2022.

- As was the case in 2022, **more than one-third of these big gifts—\$4.4 billion—went to donors' personal foundations.** Another \$764.3 million flowed into donor-advised funds.
- The list doesn't include some billionaires known to give significant amounts of money to charity, and it **doesn't reflect all the ways that the wealthiest Americans seek to do good aside from giving** to charitable organizations.
- The list also **leaves out MacKenzie Scott** and anonymous donors.
- Only 23 of the top givers are from the *Forbes 400* list of the wealthiest Americans. Only 13 of the year's top donors have signed the Giving Pledge, a "promise by the world's wealthiest individuals and families to dedicate the majority of their wealth to charitable causes."

Arts Donor on the List

- **#32 Charles Munger**, Berkshire Hathaway vice chairman, died at 99 in November 2023. His largest gift in 2023 of \$40.3 million, was to the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.

[More here.](#)

[Our LinkedIn](#)

Midlevel Donors Offer Huge Opportunity

According to a new report, donors, who give \$1,000 to \$10,000 annually, are extremely loyal. While they're unlikely to move into the ranks of major donors, they are good prospects to increase their giving within that range and help organizations through lean times.

The report found a variety of shared characteristics that can help fundraisers court midlevel donors, retain them, and increase their giving.

Key Findings

- 53% of midlevel donors have been giving to the charity they support for 10 years or

more.

- These donors also tend to be older; the lion's share are either baby boomers (61%) or members of the silent generation (21%). Only 13% are Generation X, and 5% are millennials and Gen Z. 59% identified as women, while 39% identified as men, and 3% chose not to answer.
- Most midlevel donors connected with their favorite causes when they were young; 72% engaged with their cause by the age of 39. The bulk of those people (42%) connected at age 20 to 39, while a smaller share (19%) connected in their teens, and the remainder (11%) found their cause at age 12 or younger.
- Nearly a third of midlevel donors have made a bequest to a charity, and 23% are considering it. The survey data also pins down a good age range for fundraisers to begin approaching people about charitable bequests.

Midlevel Advice

- **Make your website easy to navigate.** It's important for donors to be able to find the group's mission statement and donation page. Nearly 40% of midlevel donors visit the charity's website when researching them.
- **Change the overhead narrative.** Donors who are baby boomers or older believe roughly 77% of funds should be spent on programs, while millennials and Gen Z give an estimate of 66%, allowing a third for overhead.
- **Diversify donors.** 89% of midlevel donors are white, which is a wake-up call for organizations to broaden their internal makeup, the makeup of their staff, the makeup of their boards, so they attract donors of color.
- While donor-advised funds are quite popular to **talk about in fundraising circles**, only 20% of respondents said they had them. Another 8% said they were considering starting one. *COP, 3-14*

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"Be" Haas Inducted into Hall of Fame

Beatrice "Be" Haas- Atlanta's First Fundraising Consultant, was honored as one of **The Georgia Women of Achievement Hall of Fame** at a ceremony in March. Be, one of our Founding Partners, was one of four outstanding women lauded at the event held during Women's History Month.

Be was honored for being a trailblazer! She founded and was CEO of the first fundraising consulting firm in Atlanta in 1954. She spent many years as an active volunteer for the **League of Women Voters**. She was twice honored as *Woman of the Year* in Atlanta and served on the Board of Directors for several businesses and nonprofit organizations. In November 1993, she received the first *Lifetime Achievement Award* ever given by the **Georgia Chapter of NSFRE**. Her enormous impact on the community is because of her tireless work as a business, civic, and philanthropic volunteer, and it is because of that work that she was inducted into the Georgia Women of Achievement Hall of Fame.

The Georgia Women of Achievement was established after Rosalyn Carter approached Wesleyan College* with the idea of establishing a center to recognize Georgia's most distinguished women. She was among some of the state's greatest leaders as a founding committee member which created and established this organization. The first induction to the GWA Hall of Fame was held in 1992. Since then, the organization has been celebrating Georgia's women of achievement during Women's History Month in fields such as the arts, business, government, health, sciences, journalism, and more.

Whether you knew Be or not, we urge you to watch this celebration of her life and work from her family and colleagues [here](#).



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