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from the desk of
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Partner

## It's the People!

As part of a campaign readiness assessment, I recently met individually with eight members of an advancement team. This team has been through a significant number of leadership changes over the past decade, so professional development has generally been put on the back burner. However, everyone I met with told me – unprompted – how appreciative they were that their new Vice President reworked the budget to ensure everyone on the team would have at least one professional development opportunity annually. The decision to prioritize the team's professional growth clearly made a huge statement and is positively impacting morale, job satisfaction and the inclination to stay at the institution.

**What a great reminder of how important it is to invest time, effort, and resources into developing the people who ensure our organizations' success day in and day out.**

As fundraisers, we know that it is easier and less expensive to retain a donor than to acquire one. This holds no matter where they fall on the donor spectrum—annual, major, or planned giving. It's exactly why we develop donor retention strategies through various cultivation, stewardship, and communication plans. Then, we allocate resources to those strategies, execute our plans, analyze our results, and tweak as needed, year after year. That's a very high level, but it's the general cycle.

As leaders, managers, and/or supervisors, we should apply this same "cycle" concept to retaining staff. After all, **it is generally easier and less expensive to retain a top performer or a rising star than to lose them and have to go to market to replace them.**
Turnover disrupts workflow and results in significant financial and organizational costs. From recruitment expenses to lost productivity during the transition period, the impact of turnover can be staggering, no matter where the employee falls on the employment longevity spectrum. I've seen:

- a rising star take another job because they didn't know how to talk to their supervisor about their career goals and professional development;
- a mid-level manager with a proven track record for building successful programs leave for another position because she was passed over for a

promotion several years in a row; and

- a seasoned and successful gift officer with a long institutional memory, make a career change because he didn't believe he was valued by leadership.

In all these examples, the employees didn't want to leave; they just didn't see a path that made staying feel like a strategic career choice. So, they moved on, and the institutions they served lost out. Programs were disbanded or put on hold, gift conversations had to be started months later, and, very importantly, institutional memory was lost. ROI took years to rebuild and be realized.

Advancement is a relationship business, but leading, managing and/or supervising should be a relationship business, too. Don't forget about your people! Make sure you talk to them about their career aspirations and professional development needs. Be disciplined about setting annual goals and reviewing progress towards goals on a regularly scheduled basis. Commit to having candid two-way conversations about performance and what the future might look like.

Developing and retaining your team takes time and we all know there is never enough time in non-profit work. Non-profiteers are deeply driven and committed to fulfilling the missions they so passionately serve. If devoting time to your people is an issue for you, I encourage you do some self-reflection and evaluate if you are spending more time on what seems urgent or what is most important.

I hope you come to the conclusion that what is most important is your organization's success and then realize that that success is contingent upon having a talented, dedicated, appreciated, and thriving team to fulfill that mission. Remember, it's all about the people!

Our Team

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## Philanthropist Builds a New Home for Arts in Atlanta

**John Wieland**'s hobby of collecting art and filling office walls soon became a bigger passion. Wieland, founder and former chairman of *John Wieland Homes and Neighborhoods*, now has his private collection of art on display at his art museum, the **Warehouse**, which opened to the public on April 13. The facility, located at 1643 Chattahoochee Avenue Northwest, will continue with monthly open houses—free with an advance reservation—on the second Saturday of every month from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. As a relevant theme to the museum, all 400 pieces of art relate to the concept of house and home.

Photograph courtesy of the Wilbert Group

Wieland bought the property in Atlanta's Westside in 2010, converting a former furniture store into a storage facility. Its renovations in 2023 made it a full-fledged museum with offices, a video theater, and lounge areas. Philip Verre, formerly chief operating officer for the High Museum of Art*, is the director at the Warehouse, with John Wieland's son Jack serving as curator.

Is Wieland himself an artist? "No, my form of art is architecture," he says. "But we aspire to be part of the Atlanta arts ecosystem with this museum." *Atlanta Magazine, April 2024*

*Alumni Client Partner

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## Giving Remains Stable, Online Giving Rises

Most organizations saw very little year-over-year change in giving (-0.2 percent) in 2023. A report from the **Blackbaud Institute** found giving at the average organization remained well above pre-pandemic levels, with a five-year compound annual growth rate of 1.79%, illustrating a solid upward trend.

**In addition:**

- Online giving continued to make gains, with 12% of giving occurring online in 2023 versus almost 8% in 2022.
- Small organizations (revenue below $1 million) received nearly 17% of their donations from online sources versus nearly 10% for medium organizations and 12.5% for large organizations.

Based on a dataset of nonprofit organizations totaling more than $50 billion in fundraising revenue globally, the report, Blackbaud Institute Spotlight: 2023 Trends in Giving, can be found here (PDF). *NPD, 4-17*

Our Facebook

## Philanthropic Sector Messaging Needs Clarity

A study conducted by the **Council on Foundations and the Center for Public Interest Communications** finds that a shift in philanthropy's narrative could increase its trust with the public and government. The report found that many Americans don't understand philanthropy or its impact on their lives because they are confused by the sector's messaging.

More than two-thirds of respondents said they had positive attitudes toward foundations, but 86.3% said they had moderate, little, or no knowledge about how foundations work.

The narrative elements that increased respondents' trust most were specifics about how philanthropic money is spent and how decisions are made. And, while the philanthropic sector has not effectively established a shared narrative to counter harmful coverage about foundations, most members of Congress seem more interested in collaborating with foundations than increasing their regulation.

The report, *Philanthropy's New Voice*, can be found here (PDF). *PND, 4-10*

## Do You Need Help With Your Membership?

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Our Services

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