

FUNdraising Good Times: You can't sell what you don't know

Written by Mel and Pearl Shaw
Wednesday, 07 August 2013 13:32



Part one of a two part interview with Mike Bruns

Mike Bruns possesses the characteristics of an ideal board member: deeply engaged with the organizations he supports, generous as a donor, and he treats his nonprofit involvement with the same seriousness he applies to business ventures. He has a great sense of humor, a kind heart and a warm smile. He's also the founder of Comtrak Logistics, a national transportation and logistics company headquartered in Memphis, and chairman emeritus of Youth Villages, a national nonprofit. We recently talked with Bruns to learn the secrets to his success as a nonprofit volunteer leader.

We asked what he looks for in a nonprofit when deciding whether or not to become involved. His response was straight-forward, "I do not want to be a part of an organization that is a fixer-upper, or is trying to make payroll by Friday. I want to support organizations who want to grow to the next level. The 'heart tug' is always trumped by an organization that is well run. With a well run organization I can work with other board members to help grow it to the next level."

It's not that he is opposed to the "heart tug." In fact, Bruns is passionate about the organizations he is involved with. "I truly believe in the organizations I become a part of. And I expect that of fellow board members. There's nothing worse than leadership that is begrudging or 'resume building.' The secret to success lies in the passion of the leadership."

Equally straight-forward were his comments regarding expectations of fellow board members in the area of fundraising. He cited the lack of board giving as the number one obstacle to fundraising success. "There's nothing worse than a board member soliciting money and they haven't made a meaningful gift. It doesn't always have to be all money - it can be meaningful giving of time. But they have to believe in the organization and be engaged."

Comparing fundraising to sales, Bruns was critical of board members who are not qualified to "sell the product." For that he places responsibility squarely on the shoulders of leadership, "What is the orientation? Without proper training, orientation, knowledge, feeling and involvement a board member can't 'sell' the nonprofit to potential donors. You can't sell what

FUNdraising Good Times: You can't sell what you don't know

Written by Mel and Pearl Shaw
Wednesday, 07 August 2013 13:32

you don't know or believe in."

Next week: Nonprofit success: more than "feel good"

Copyright 2013 – Mel and Pearl Shaw

Mel and Pearl Shaw are the authors of " [Prerequisites for Fundraising Success](#). " They position nonprofits for fundraising success. Visit them at www.saadandshaw.com