

FUNdraising Good Times: Nonprofit success: more than "feel good"

Written by Mel and Pearl Shaw
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Part two of a two part interview

Success in business is not enough. In fact, nonprofit involvement –and giving – can be a greater "buzz" than continued business growth. "After becoming reasonably able to share, a person realizes that the buzz you get from sharing can be greater than the buzz you get from daily life in business. Ten percent growth year-after-year doesn't always equal the buzz of giving ten percent to the community." That's the experience of Mike Bruns, founder of Comtrak Logistics, a national transportation and logistics company headquartered in Memphis.

"The true donor misses the boat if they don't get just as much back in their heart, meeting people and making friends," Bruns continued. "Involvement brings satisfaction - it makes the donor feel good. I was chair of Youth Villages for so many years, and they did as much for me as I could ever do for the organization."

Youth Villages, also headquartered in Memphis, is a leading national nonprofit dedicated to providing the most effective local solutions to help emotionally and behaviorally troubled children and their families live successfully.

"Youth Villages grew as a result of a wonderful culture, incredible leadership team, and a management team that knew this was a business. Nonprofit is more than a feel-good. Many stall out because the person who started the organization didn't surround themselves with good business people. At Youth Villages the leadership surrounded themselves with business people who helped them run the organization like a business, but not at the expense of their passion. They serve 60,000 young people and they measure everything. 'Feel good' doesn't last long if the business model doesn't work."

That goes for the board as well. The biggest challenges Bruns has experienced arise when board members don't know what is expected of them. "That has to be done on the front end. You can't read a board manual to people. You need to explain their job description, financial expectations, and share with them why they were recruited. They have to become involved with the organization and passionate about it. Board members who are engaged and feel a part of

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something come to meetings. This solves the problem some boards have where they spend almost half their time worrying about the best time to get attendance. As board chair I focused on getting engagement. So many boards operate without engagement."

Bruns closed with his perspective on board members' reluctance to fundraise. "When a board member is not prepared, and is not personally passionate, the gifts he solicits become a 'trap' wherein he now 'owes' an equal gift to the donor's nonprofit of choice." The solution: "Be prepared and sell the nonprofit on its merits; then people give to the organization and not to you. You then are free to make your gifts based on merit too."

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