

THOMAS G. SANBERG

## The Development Function

*Development* is an appropriate term for describing the essential function which sustains most nonprofit, contribution-reliant institutions. To develop is to activate or to grow; the development function is concerned with promoting growth. Often, in the context of the nonprofit organization, development is considered to be synonymous with fund raising; the function is seen exclusively as one of raising money. Actually, the development function is much more inclusive. Fund raising is the result of development, not the essence.

Librarians working for tax-supported libraries rather than private, nonprofit organizations are understandably interested in ways to develop the funds necessary to compensate for budget cuts and increased costs. The ideas under discussion here apply to both not-for-profit and tax-supported institutions, although the frame of reference will most frequently be nonprofit organizations.

The development function includes a variety of activities which promote growth. First, however, it is important to understand how development fits into an organization's overall structure. In most nonprofit institutions, some group of people, often the membership, elects trustees or a board of directors. The board establishes broad policy and hires a chief executive officer (CEO). The CEO has the day-to-day operating authority and is responsible for effecting the policy established by the board. The CEO may hire an executive vice president and one or more vice presidents to manage the main departments. Frequently these include vice presidents for finance, for development, for programs, and for operations.

More progressive organizations generally allocate operating decisions to the executive vice president and to the vice presidents for programs and operations, while the responsibility for planning is allocated to the vice presidents for development and finance. In other words, involvement with day-to-day operations is not the responsibility of the development department.

This has both positive and negative aspects. The vice president for development may feel excluded from the daily operation of his organization, although it is his efforts which make possible the institution's long-term

survival. On the other hand, because he is not burdened with responsibility for operations, the development officer is free to devote himself to long-range planning and to activities which make future growth possible. Furthermore, the development professional may be comforted by the fact that innovation is usually initiated by his branch of the organization. This bifurcation between long-range development planning and day-to-day operations is the key to the successful, efficient functioning of the not-for-profit institution.

It is not possible to attend adequately to the development function *and* to supervise operations. There is an overwhelming amount of work in the development area, and the number and size of projects increase geometrically as the organization achieves increasingly greater success.

The development function basically includes two activities: fund raising, and communications, which is more commonly called "public relations." The development officer is responsible for both. In a very large organization a vice president for development may have both a director of development and a director of public relations reporting to him or her. However, the fund-raising and public relations activities are not always separate and distinct: more often than not, they overlap and sometimes merge. Fund-raising activities include capital campaigns, annual operating funds campaigns, special events, deferred-giving programs, and volunteer development. Public relations responsibilities include publicity, publications, community relations and presentations, and government relations. Generally, both fund-raising and public relations activities require planning, budgeting, administration, and record keeping. Let us examine each of these elements.

First, development is planning. Planning is the initial and continuing process of evaluating an organization's strengths and weaknesses, needs and goals. It is the creation of projects which maximize strengths, overcome weaknesses, fulfill needs, and effect goals.

Well-administered organizations periodically "audit" themselves. The development officer must be a key person in the administrative process by which the internal and external strengths and weaknesses of the institution are thoroughly and objectively assessed. A description of the organizational audit is a seminar topic in itself. Briefly, however, it involves an effort to quantify important factors. Is the service being delivered increasing or decreasing and by how much? Is the financing adequate or inadequate? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the staff and the volunteers? Can their competency, capacity, "clout," and level of involvement be estimated? Is the physical plant adequate? How urgent is expansion or repair? What are the priorities for replacement or additions? Analyzing these factors requires introspection on the part of the institution; it must subject itself to a searching internal examination.

An organization's "audit" must also assess external factors. It should analyze the sociological components of the community, i.e., demographics, power structures, and ethnological and racial composition. Which institutions are leaders in the community? Which are the most prestigious? Where does the library stand in relation to them? How adequate is its location? These are only a few of the more important points an organizational audit should consider. It is a good place for the development effort to begin. Planning starts with facts, since facts are necessary to establish priorities.

A second duty of the development officer is budgeting. A good development person must be a capable budgeter of both time and money. It is imperative that a nonprofit institution be able to justify to its donors and its constituents every dollar raised, every dollar spent, and most certainly, every dollar spent to raise a dollar. Our donors are entitled to hold our institutions to high and exacting standards of accountability, and to scrutinize our efforts.

A tight control on the development budget is essential. Every project should be carefully and separately budgeted, and deemed financially feasible before being undertaken. Every project should be closely monitored so that the budget remains viable. If budgeting realities make a project unfeasible, either the plan must be revised or an alternative project substituted. Decisions to continue or to abort a project based on financial feasibility are extremely difficult, but are the true test of the judgment of the development professional.

The third area of responsibility of the development officer is personnel, administration, and record keeping. All administrators must, of course, have the ability to recognize talent and hire the most able person for any given job. Some of the best and most qualified people can be found among the organization's volunteers — people who are already committed to the institution, who are familiar with it, and who frequently have developed appropriate special skills. Development officers should be both aware of the potential of the volunteers for staff positions, and willing to help those interested and qualified to make the transition. Certain administrative functions require special skills of the development officer. He or she must be able to inspire loyalty to the institution and motivate people to give the extra effort frequently needed to maximize the achievements of the institution. These tasks present unique challenges to the development department. Special events of a developmental nature often require people who can take on unfamiliar projects and work erratic hours. A benefit or fund-raising event may even require herculean efforts on the part of the entire staff. A development director who can achieve the necessary flexibility and motivation within his or her staff so that it can adapt to these demands is invaluable to an organization.

Communication with other departments is an important administrative responsibility. Although the development department may be excluded from operational activities, it cannot afford to exclude the operation departments from developmental functions. Every person in the organization is a development person; every contact with the community, by anyone in the organization, has implications for the institution. It is important to maintain close contact with people throughout the library. Every department should know what the development department is doing and be involved whenever possible. Ultimately, these people are the institution's best publicity agents. They should be involved in all special events, luncheons, photo sessions, and publications. It is axiomatic that the development officer will always want to include as many people as possible, as often as possible, in anything he or she does.

Record keeping may be a tedious responsibility, but it is crucial to know when things happened, how, and to whom. It is completely unacceptable not to know the correct spelling of a donor's name, his title, the amount of his last contribution, or any other important information about a board member or a major donor. Development officers are information specialists, and the more relevant information they can muster, the more effectively they perform. Computers have given us a vast capability for compiling and processing records of donor/member information with a minimum of effort; this whole area of the development function is becoming highly specialized. But whether an organization uses sophisticated computers or three-by-five-inch cards, record keeping is an integral part of the development function and deserves tender loving care.

Fund raising often focuses on specific goal-oriented projects. These can generally be classified as annual operating campaigns, capital campaigns, and long-range or deferred-giving campaigns. Most large, nonprofit institutions have at least an annual campaign and deferred-giving program. A capital campaign may be necessary periodically, although many development officers will never have to manage one. Most organizations turn their capital fund raising over to outside fund-raising consulting firms if capital funds are required.

In the field of fund-raising practice, it is useful to distinguish two kinds of fund-raising efforts—donor acquisition and donor renewal—and the methods that are appropriate to each. Direct mail is the solicitation device used most often for donor acquisition. Personal solicitation and personalized mail are the most common methods used for donor renewal. Special events are appropriate for reaching potential new donors and recommitting former donors. When all the components of development come together in the proper way at the proper time, the result is a charitable contribution—and

the development professional must be acutely aware of each of the factors which ultimately achieve this result.

It is a fund raiser's axiom that people give to people. The cause is often a secondary consideration. In the context of a capital campaign, for example, this means that an organization should enlist the most visible, most important person in the community to be chairman. If he or she agrees, the success of the campaign is practically guaranteed.

This leads to consideration of volunteer development, another subject worthy of a separate seminar. A solid, well-informed, active volunteer corps is the most important asset an institution can develop. Not-for-profit organizations fail without caring people, and they grow and prosper when people care. New volunteers must constantly be involved in every area. As with the capital campaign, effective volunteer development means cultivating the enthusiasm and involvement of community leaders. They will bring untold benefits to a cause. A not-for-profit institution which cannot inspire dedicated volunteers should probably critically reexamine its position and image in the community. The key to a successful volunteer program is to treat the volunteer as a professional. He or she must have meaningful tasks, real responsibility, realistic goals, and a chance to see the results of his or her efforts. Next to planning, volunteer development is the officer's most important activity. If this is effective, it can be the beginning of all good things.

On the public relations side of development work, the most basic component of a good program is a regular newsletter. It provides effective communication with the community and, equally important, within the family, i.e., the development staff and volunteers, as it provides regular reinforcement of the importance of their work. The essence of a good newsletter is lots of names and pictures of people. People like to see their names and their friends' names in print. Furthermore, the visibility of a large number of people connotes activity and, of course, activity draws people.

News releases are also a fundamental part of public relations, but getting them in print is tricky business. City newspaper editors and the broadcast media are bombarded with releases, so it takes an unusual approach to catch their attention. The first step a development officer should take is to get acquainted with the city newspaper editor and the news directors at the broadcast stations. He should find out, if possible, how much interest each one has in the library. Libraries have a particular advantage here because they provide — and probably already have provided — research tools for these people. Above all, news releases should not contain trivia, but only that which is dramatic, informative, or widely pertinent to the community. The development officer should call before sending a news release, or better yet, deliver it personally. The availability of public service announce-

ments on radio and television should not be forgotten. All broadcast stations are required to give a certain amount of time to public service announcements. There is someone who selects these announcements at each station. The development officer should find out who it is and make it a point to meet this person. "PSAs" are there for the asking; the development officer should not forget to ask, or be afraid to ask.

There are two essential publications, in addition to the newsletter, which often end up as the responsibility of the development office: the annual report and the basic descriptive brochure. The annual report contains an audited financial statement. It also usually includes a message from the chairman of the board and the president, and an editorial treatment of the highlights of the year's activities. Photographs and other visual treatments can make this report attractive and lively. The content and appearance of the annual report merit attention, since it is vital for the solicitation of large gifts from foundations and major corporate contributors and is often the organization's first introduction to them.

The basic descriptive brochure should detail the service which the institution provides the community. It can include a history of the organization, a listing of the key staff and volunteers, and pictures of the facility. The keys to a successful brochure are drama, clarity and imagination. It may be money well spent to call on the services of professional advertising people to design and produce the brochure.

In addition to the basic descriptive brochure, special printed pieces can be prepared which address separate aspects of the institution's service or solicit funds for special needs. There is a wide variety of printed material that may be prepared by the public relations staff. I strongly recommend that the same graphic theme be used in all of an organization's printed material; this helps to provide a recognizable identity.

The role of community liaison overlaps with many of the development officer's other activities. Public relations, volunteer activities, fund raising, and publicity all create bonds between the organization and the community. But, in addition, an institution should have a specific community relations program. Staff members should be encouraged to join and participate in various service clubs, and to speak at luncheon meetings, school functions, and to church groups. Lectures and presentations at the library to which the public is invited also have "community liaison" benefits.

Part of a community relations program—and the bottom line for evaluating community liaison activities—is continually to emphasize a positive image of the institution and to develop strong ties between it and the community. If the community feels as though the organization is its organization, then development efforts have been successful. And the suc-

cess will be evident, not only by the level of support received, but also by the way in which the community as a whole will participate in, and will assume responsibility for, maintaining the library. The value of such support is inestimable, particularly when there are political hurdles to leap. Those who have needed rezoning, or building variances, or have had to "fight city hall," will know exactly what this support can mean.

Since the influence of government agencies is growing and becoming increasingly pervasive, it is crucial that a development officer know his political representatives, local, state, and national. He should know key people at any government agency with which he deals or with which he might have to deal in the future. He should be able to get his calls answered and his letters acknowledged. Government agencies can be best friends or fierce foes. Too often, they are our adversaries. The development officer should be aware of this and prepared. It is the job of the development officer to seek the support and recognition of government agencies and officials at all levels.

Many elements have been touched on in this overview of the development function. Every one of them covers a subject about which books have been written, and in which careers have been established. The relationship between and coordination of development and operations, and of planning and day-to-day activities; the organizational audit as the basis for planning; the budgeting process, administration, personnel work, and record keeping; fund raising, public relations, community and government relations; and volunteer activities — these are the components of the development function which library development specialists should be encouraged to understand. The development professional may not have expertise in all of these areas, but he should have a working knowledge of the components — enough so that he knows where to find the people and information he needs to go further. There are enormous rewards in being part of the growth and success of the institutions which we care about and believe in. Furthermore, institutions are the direct beneficiaries of the fact that such rewards are addictive.