17 (YES, 17!) EASY WAYS
TO LEAD YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE SHIFT

Basics & More™

17 (yes, 17!) Easy Ways to Lead
Your Organization's Culture Shift

We've all been there. Feeling unappreciated. Working for organizations with a re-volving door of staff (*especially fundraising staff*). Mired in dysfunction. It can all be a bit discouraging, no?

But here's my question to you: Are you following…*or leading?*

When everyone is on board, right from the start, not only will your fundraising flow (you'll be surprised and delighted), but you'll have happier, healthier staff, volunteers, and board members.

But effecting your organization's culture shift absolutely will not happen overnight.

It takes patience, consistency and commitment.

And, as the development director (or executive director) you are primarily responsible for building a culture of philanthropy.

Don't ask for permission to lead.

Let me repeat that: Do not ask for permission to lead. Take the reins and be pre-pared to lead your organization's staff, board and, yes, even your executive direc-tor.

Now, I'm not going to lie to you. Changing your organization's culture may take some time, and more importantly it will take consistency and persistence. But it's surprisingly easy — and fun, too — once you get the hang of it. Here are some of my very best tips (directly from the pages of [Simple Development Systems: Suc-cessful Fundraising for the One Person Shop](#)*):

1. **Regularly send out links** to some of the best fundraising articles (such as Mary Cahalane, the Bloomerang Blog, or the Veritus Group's Passionate Giving blog. Or subscribe your staff, volunteers, and board members to a weekly newsletter, such as [The Grow Report](#).

2. **Integrate a short training into every staff and board meeting**. You'll find plenty of examples in the book, [Train Your Board and Everyone Else to Raise](#)

[Money](#), by Andy Robinson and Andrea Kihlstedt. Every nonprofit needs this book on their bookshelf.

3. **Always ask a program staff member their advice** on any story shared in any donor communication, for the simple reason that a.) you'll find people excited to give their advice, b.) it's a lesson in the importance of story gathering, and c) it will help to ensure that your stories are ethical and true.

4. **When you receive special "thank yous"** from clients, copy them and send them on to board members.

5. **Show gratitude regularly.** Utilize a company like [Send Out Cards](#), or keep a desk drawer full of inexpensive cards (Trader Joe's has a nice line), to send Birthday, Anniversary or "just because" cards to your special donors, staff and board members.

6. **Schedule regular 'Thank-a-Thons,'** where your board members pen handwritten thank you notes, or make thank you phone calls to donors. Make it a fun experience by scheduling 20-30 minutes within the course of a board meeting and serving refreshments.

7. **Your board is more than an entity. Spend one-on-one time with your board members** getting to know them individually. *Find out their stories — why did they get involved? What does success look like for them?*

8. **Take a photo of the work your organization does,** capturing progress in pictures. Then, send or hand-deliver the photo and tell the donor.

9. **Get your CEO or Executive Director to write a handwritten note** to your "A" level donors, saying how much their support is making a difference.

10. **Some call them 'mission moments:'** At every staff and board meeting share your latest "story," whether it's about one of your agency's clients or about a donor or even about a recent visitor to your organization. Encourage staff members to share their stories.

11. **Shadow a member of your program staff** for several hours or even a day. Better yet, invite program staff to donor and foundation visits!

12. **Invite donors into your organization.** Not just for the usual guided tours… think about inviting a donor to your regular board or staff meetings (and definitely consider including a donor on your board). Most importantly, invite them to share their perspective. You're building partnerships.

13. **Install a** [‘share-your-story’ page](#) on your organization's website. Regularly direct your donors and supporters to it by way of your emails and social media.

14. **Think outside of the proverbial box.** I once attended a United Way branding workshop on behalf of a client. Among the participants, I was delighted to learn that one organization had sent program staff in lieu of marketing or

development staff. I spent some time chatting with them and it was clearly an eye-opening experience for them in terms of how they could better share their clients' stories with their development department.

15. **Grow your organization's culture** with Mandy Fischer's "Culture of Philanthropy One-Pager." This simple tool brings everyone on board, right from the start!

16. **Does 100% of your board contribute financially?** You'll need to find out what works best for you, but I have found that speaking with board members on a one-to-one basis typically yields far better results. Starting your monthly giving with your board members is also a great way to both introduce monthly giving, and encourage your board members to stretch their gift. Here's a template to help.

17. **Create a habit of celebrating the successes that matter.** When you reach 100% board participation, celebrate it! When your retention rate climbs over 60%, celebrate it! Perhaps with a pizza party at your next board meeting, or by breaking out a bottle of champagne. A board member has brought in three new donors? Send them a thank you gift or present a token of your gratitude publicly at your next board meeting. Remember to have fun and **"Celebrate what you want to see more of."** (Tom Peters)

Is that all? Nope. Know your organization's numbers, know your retention rate, and educate your staff and board. A dashboard system is a handy tool.

You know how to do this.

And you owe it to your organization to step up to your leadership and be the change. How are you leading your organization's culture shift?