
Encouraging Longevity in Nonprofit Development

What It Takes To Keep Your Development Director

Pamela Grow - June, 2017



Introduction

Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters.

Albert Einstein

Trust. It's one of the most important components of your relationship with the donors who make your very work possible. Trust isn't easy to gain. And it can be destroyed in an instant.

Yet every time a nonprofit organization fires a development director, they're eroding their trust factor with the public. Any organization with a revolving door of development staff (I have been development director number five in a span of three years) will have a tough haul growing relationships with donors.

The revolving door affects the bottom line. Not to mention board and staff morale.

And yet situations like this one are common in the nonprofit profession: "After five months, I was let go from my position as fund development director today because I was told that I wasn't cultivating enough donors. Over the same five month period, also wrote roughly 15 grants, only three of which were rejected while we had received no response yet for the remaining. Oh, also introduced the organization to a funder who ended up giving us a \$25,000 grant. Someone please tell me why I remain in the field of fund development."

What does it take to keep strong development staff? This report draws from the following recourses:

- (1) Penelope Burk's essential resource, Donor Centered Leadership, published in 2013. Here, Burk explores the employee attrition problem through simple language and concrete numbers straight from her research study, which involved a survey of over 12,000 nonprofit staff. She communicates directly to nonprofit decision-makers in delineating long-term attrition solutions that involve building a dedicated, high-performing team,

treating fundraising as a donor-centric, collaborative endeavor, and making informed decisions not only when hiring staff, but maximizing the potential of each member, with an eye for securing people for the long-term. What you'll find within this book is a roadmap to nonprofit sustainability.

- (2) A 2013 study conducted as a joint effort between CompassPoint and The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, titled *Underdeveloped: A National Study of Challenges Facing Nonprofit Fundraising*. The *Underdeveloped* report is the result of a vigorous research methodology involving a 2,700+ survey of executive directors and development directors within the nonprofit sector. In addition to delving deep into the attrition problem, the report proposes ten viable solutions that tackle the necessary cultural and systemic shifts that are conducive to successful fundraising, and what specific changes will generate this progress.

- (3) A blog post authored by fundraising consultant Mary Cahalane, titled, "Do you want to know why you can't find a great development director?" where, citing *Underdeveloped*, she zeroes in on the attrition problem through a multi-faceted lens. Along with an up-to-date explanation for why a loyal development director is hard to find, and advice for how organizations can look internally to fix what isn't working, Cahalane offers sound reasoning through five explanations that touch on factors including the organizational, cultural, financial, behavioral, and attitudinal, that potentiate short development director tenures.

What does employee attrition look like?

It manifests as a dangerous cycle

Underdeveloped aptly explains employee attrition this way:

“For years now, there has been widespread concern in the nonprofit sector about premature turnover of development directors, lengthy vacancies in the role, and the seemingly thin pool of qualified candidates from which organizations can choose.” The report’s findings directly point to the fact that: “...many nonprofits are stuck in a vicious cycle that threatens their ability to raise the resources they need to succeed.”

The researchers behind *Underdeveloped* describe attrition as a “vicious cycle.” Furthermore, they are keenly aware of the detrimental effects that this cycle has on nonprofits, who are very often working within a space of limited resources to begin with.

Penelope Burk’s concept of what employee attrition looks like is in agreement with how *Underdeveloped* explains it, however, Burk takes it a step further, analyzing turnover within the economic framework of supply and demand. And she, too, perceives it as a cycle that threatens the viability of nonprofit employee tenures. Burk states, “There seem to be too few fundraising professionals for a growing not-for-profit sector. The strain of an under-resourced profession means that fundraisers are easily lured...Directors of Development (or those occupying the top management positions in fundraising) say that they spend only three to six months in a new position before another not-for-profit asks them to consider a career opportunity.”

Mary Cahalane echoes this sentiment, explaining, “I know in my community it seems like a game of musical chairs as the same pool of candidates move from job to job.”

It has deep cultural roots and is markedly nuanced

The *Underdeveloped* report reveals, in no uncertain terms, that the conflict runs much deeper than the issue of hiring and retaining capable development directors, because it has to. Attrition is nuanced. It doesn’t exist within a vacuum; it demands context.

The reality is, the conflict that breeds the perpetuation of the cycle is located far beyond inadequately filled positions. Such dysfunction lives within the very fabric that supports an organization's well being. Nonprofits cannot expect unhealthy cultures and systems to undergo a seismic shift overnight, even if they're able to hire a resourceful development director within one day. The roots of this dysfunction are deep-seated; they were provided adequate room to grow in the first place.

Not only cyclical but symptomatic

While I do agree with the minds behind *Underdeveloped* that nonprofit employee attrition is part of a "dangerous cycle," I also believe it is symptomatic of poor organizational health. To regard an organization as a body isn't a novel idea; it's a rudimentary concept that makes logical, theoretical sense. Similar to basic anatomy, an organization consists of a group of parts that, when working properly, create a unified, functioning whole. A small to mid-sized nonprofit typically consists of (in no specific order):

1. CEO/Executive Director
2. Development Director/Development Staff
3. Marketing Staff
4. Program staff
5. Board members
6. Volunteers
7. (other positions, etc.)

For the nonprofit engaged in funding their mission, employee attrition is a symptom of poor organizational health. Organizations often become hopelessly mired in the dysfunction, which is precisely where the attrition lives and grows. It makes sense, then, that today's fundraising climate is rife with challenges that permeate nonprofit identity and action, because the obstacles endured fall within such a broad spectrum. This involves an interconnected network that pertains to the cultural, the organizational, the structural, the financial, the behavioral, the attitudinal, and beyond.

The methodology

What does it take to keep great development professionals working in a nonprofit organization?

I formed this question in response to the problem of nonprofit employee attrition, as well as an alternative to asking about it in an outright way. So rather than posing the question, "How can employee attrition be prevented?" I aimed to create the conditions for a positive headspace, where respondents could answer questions directly pertaining to the attrition problem without feeling overwhelmed by the pressure to provide a correct answer to the question (and its complexities) itself. Avoiding jargon in favor of keeping simple language helped me to occupy a comfortable space where respondents felt more inclined to respond truthfully and openly.

Motivational guru Tony Robbins has noted "If you want to achieve success, all you need to do is find a way to model those who have already succeeded."

In the spirit of simplicity and accessibility, I oriented my focus toward harnessing the power of personal testimonials and conversation. When nonprofit professionals communicate aspects of their lived experiences and convey their feelings, it is bound to resonate with other nonprofit professionals, because they've "been where you are," and there exists a shared understanding between those who work in the sector.

The primary question above served as a foundational guide toward formulating the questionnaire. I put out a call to over 20,000 nonprofit professionals in my subscriber base.

The survey generated a wealth of feedback and I knew that there was plenty of applicable information that I could employ in the construction of a tool geared toward nonprofits seeking resources that would enable them to improve their organizational health and fight attrition. In bringing nonprofit workplace testimonials to the forefront, I was able to create a conversation that speaks directly to struggling organizations and those who make the decisions within them.

The end result is an opportunity for struggling nonprofits to remedy some of their dysfunction and create the space and conditions for sustainable, long-term fundraising. My belief in an organization's capacity for vital change is unwavering, but never have I believed it can happen overnight. This guide has the potential to set nonprofits on the right path toward creating a workplace environment that nourishes nonprofit professionals by providing straightforward attrition solutions. Whether an organization is in the process of hiring their first development director or their fifth, they can use this resource to benefit their nonprofit.

From the entire pool of respondents' completed surveys that were made available to me, I pulled together a small sampling of nonprofit development professionals and chose to spotlight their specific testimonials. This tactic was closely tied to my belief in the power of storytelling, and these completed surveys each fleshed out personal narratives tied to individual experiences that I believed were worth sharing.

About the respondents

I. Most of these professionals revealed that they have been employed in their positions for an extended period of time. The vast majority have been employed for at least 3 years, and I was surprised to find that many had been employed for at least ten years. The feedback that they provided regarding their employment history shed some light on their organization's history, too: as far as predecessors in their positions, respondents cited low numbers; usually one or two, if there were any at all. For anyone to answer three or more was exceedingly rare.

II. Invariably, their nonprofit had invested in training materials that had encouraged participation across the board. The group that I targeted, after all, were those currently enrolled in my Basics & More courses, Basics & More alumni who had invested money and energy into the training, or longtime Grow Report subscribers. If the subscribers hadn't invested in training with me, they'd invested in training with another nonprofit professional.

III. The nonprofit organizations to which these development professionals belong were a diverse bunch, from small, to mid-sized, to larger organizations, and that variance extended beyond their size and to their missions, identities, and work that they do.

1. **Debbie Genung**, Director of Development at Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition. Debbie's organization is dedicated to finding permanent solutions for children in the foster system. Debbie has been FACC's Director of Development for over 11 years.

2. **Sally Zelonis, CFRE**, Major Gifts Officer at The Indianapolis Zoo. Sally has worked with The Indianapolis Zoo for almost 11 years.

3. **Trina Jones**, Managing Director at Health in Harmony. Trina's organization is focused on realizing their vision of healthy human beings and a healthy planet. Trina has worked with Health in Harmony for nearly 4 years.

4. **Leslie White Clay**, Chief Development Officer at Hope Cottage Pregnancy & Adoption Center. Leslie's nonprofit is the oldest non-faith-based adoption agency in Dallas, Texas. Leslie has been Hope Cottage's Chief Development Officer for over 7 years.

5. **Kathleen Kennedy**, Associate Director at Coalition at Sonoran Desert Protection. SDP is dedicated to realizing their vision of a healthy ecosystem that supports the needs of a healthy population. Kathleen has been SDP's Associate Director for over 9 years.

6. **Kurtlan Massarsky**, Director of Development and Marketing at The Boston Alliance of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Youth. BAGLY provides a safe, nurturing space for young people to be themselves, as well as tools and resources that promote physical and mental health and well-being. Kurtlan has worked with BAGLY for over 5 years.

7. **Karen Mercier, CFRE**, Director of Development at Regina Humane Society. RHS is dedicated to animal welfare and focused on providing protection, shelter, and care for homeless animals. Karen has been their Director of Development for nearly 8 years.

Insights gained from the survey

Flexibility

One commonality that emerged among these professionals was the importance of flexibility and its relationship to their respective positions and workplace environments. Each respondent revealed that this aspect of their job was important to them, and they often tied flexibility to a bigger picture, illuminating the necessary connection between work life and home life that creates balance.

Karen embraces the flexibility that her position at Regina Humane Society offers her. She says, “My job is very flexible which is the top reason I stay.” Additionally, Karen receives six weeks of vacation time and is permitted to bring her dog to work.

Work-life balance is decidedly important. Kurtlan, BAGLY’s development director, articulated this vital idea: “We should all be striving, regardless of our profession, to strike a work-life balance that makes us whole and complete adults.”

The policies enforced by Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection are flexible and family-friendly in nature, enabling Kathleen to spend time with her small children during her downtime. She says, “I have always worked for the Coalition part-time (ranging 20-30 hours/week) largely due to my desire to have ample time with my small children...I can’t overstate how much this flexibility has contributed to my long tenure.”

Leslie’s Chief Development Officer position is in keeping with reasonable workplace expectations and lends itself to flexibility and, in turn, freedom. She explains, “I can work from home, move my hours around, leave early if need be, come in late -- leave if the job is done...” Leslie’s position also includes 12 paid holidays and 3 weeks vacation.

Debbie revealed that there is a self-governing element involved in her position at Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition, as well as those of her colleagues, that is deeply rooted in flexibility and a desire to accommodate family life: “Our hours are set by ourselves – if I want

to work from 9 – 5 or 8 – 4 – she [the ED] expects us to get our work done. Many are parents and want to get home to kids so we eat lunch at our desks.” The option to work remotely from home is also available, and Debbie receives a reasonable amount of compensation and vacation time that she “never uses up.”

Kathleen advises prospective nonprofit professionals, “If having a flexible schedule is important to you, try to ensure this is in place from the start. I know this might not always be possible and it can be a delicate balance when interviewing for a job, but if there is a way to gauge this, try to make a point of doing it.”

The range of flexibility within a position is closely related to the workplace expectations that are enforced. As nonprofit employees do their best to balance their work lives and home lives, they warrant basic understanding, compassion, and cooperation from their employers, as these elements are essential for healthy workplace relationships. Cahalane recounts, “I know of one dynamic relationship between a chief executive and a development director. She had young children. So she made a rule: she would be home every evening to read to her children before bed. If needed, she’d return to the office. But she was not available for that time every day. Her boss not only accepted that rule, he enforced it.”

Great CEO or ED

Within that realm of workplace flexibility, an obvious connection emerged, existing between reasonable flexibility and competent, well-liked higher-ups. Within the insights shared by the survey respondents, multiple accounts described a positive relationship between the nonprofit professional and the individual at the top of their organization’s hierarchy, whether CEO, an Executive Director, or another variation existing at the top of the pyramid. The respondents used vocabulary that emphasized positive interactions, a will to lead fairly, and a desire to promote healthy workplace cultures, among other ideals.

Leslie and the CEO of her nonprofit shared a prior history before they both wound up at the same organization. Leslie says, “We have a great CEO. She and I actually worked together for about 20 months at another agency before she made the move to Hope Cottage.

She has an open door policy. She doesn't really micromanage, but is always there for advice. I cannot tell you how often our CEO has said, 'We will not build this organization on the backs of our employees.'" In accordance with this motto, Leslie's CEO insists on a 12-hour gap between when employees leave the office and when they arrive.

Sally speaks of Indianapolis Zoo's President and CEO with wonderful enthusiasm. "He's a visionary," she says. "I love having him be so aware of the future and the past! He is creative and a problem-solver -- great characteristics for a leader!" One important question Sally encourages those seeking a prospective long-term fundraising position to ask is, "What about the executive director or CEO -- are they visionaries?"

Debbie holds a similarly positive view of Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition's executive director, who has provided ample room for the organization's team and budget to grow, setting the stage for their fundraising program to thrive. "She's truly visionary and a good manager," says Debbie. "She totally gets the concept of capacity and has allowed me to expand my team as needed. When I started we had a budget of about \$600K and now it is \$3.6M. We have added programs and staff -- gone from staff of 6.5 to 40!"

Karen Mercer listed her fondness and respect of Regina Humane Society's Executive Director as one reason as to why her nonprofit is such a great place to work.

Kathleen and her boss share a relationship that is rooted in trust. Her boss provides Kathleen with the room to try new things, and she implicitly trusts Kathleen's judgement. She explains that this is one reason why she's remained in her Associate Director position for over 9 years. Her boss has been Director of Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection for nearly 19 years. For those seeking employment in the nonprofit sector, she stresses, "Ask questions about your ability to take risks, try new strategies, and generally keep up with best practices in fundraising. I find that having the freedom to be creative and think outside the box is really important to my job satisfaction."

Communication between staff

Cahalane is aware that maintaining interconnectivity within nonprofit organizations is conducive to the type of positive environment that nourishes development directors. For Cahalane, this means welcoming the development director into “the most inner circle” so that she can openly share her ideas and be an important voice in those conversations. Such a network is reliant on communication between individual members of the organization, and if something so fundamental is missing, donors will notice. Imagine what donor communications would look like if each organizational department existed within its own isolated bubble.

A few respondents mentioned that a line of communication exists between themselves and their colleagues, and they each feel positively about it.

For Kathleen, there exists a healthy balance between open communication and independence. She explains, “We work hard to make sure we are all in the loop on each other’s work, while also allowing everyone autonomy and space to work independently.”

Sally feels comfortable regularly communicating her ideas to her organization. She says, “I like when I think of a new idea for either an event or a way to reach out to donors, our team takes a good look and gives feedback if they think it will work.”

Trina points to positive communication as one thing she enjoys about her job. “Our board is engaged and supportive, my coworkers are close and work through conflict productively,” she says.

In Debbie’s position, she’s found that the structure and setup of her workplace discourages strong hierarchies and lends itself to an openness that has become essential to her workplace environment and relationships. She explains, “At first, it was just staff and then ED. Because of incredible growth and expanded staff, we do have program supervisors but it is a very team-oriented atmosphere. Our work environment reflects that – all wide open – the E’s desk too – no offices and no doors. We have a culture of “rapid response teams” which means that at any moment, we can just spin around and chat with the other team members near us to solve a problem or issue.”

For Debbie, such tight-knit co-worker relationships undoubtedly contribute to a nourishing environment where a development director would feel comfortable and welcome, while encouraging open dialogue, collaboration, and feedback.

The freedom to take risks and try new things

As human beings, we cherish our freedom, though the extent to which we enjoy it and the ways in which we navigate it are highly individualistic. When it comes to our professional lives, though, freedom can sometimes feel like an elusive concept. In addition to the freedom that flexibility provides, some respondents named “freedom to try new things,” or a variation of that idea, as a characteristic of their position and workplace environment that they enjoyed, echoing a recent sentiment from Cahalane.

One reason for why organizations struggle to retain capable development directors is predicated on the idea of a lack of trust, which in turn limits not only freedom, but growth, according to Cahalane. Her reasoning is this: if nonprofits place their trust in their development directors and provide them with room to test new ideas, a fundraising program will then have the potential to flourish. She posits that because the area of fundraising is inherently innovative and in flux, nonprofits require a development director who not only stays on top of what’s happening in the sector, but then goes forth to find out what works (and what doesn’t) through testing.

Kathleen, in highlighting the positive relationship between herself and her boss, outlined a vision that’s not only ideal, but aspirational. “I’ve been given a lot of freedom to take risks, mostly in our fundraising and communications,” she says. “I always run any new endeavors by my boss but she usually trusts that I think it’s a worthwhile risk, and she also knows that some will succeed and some will fail. I’m grateful for her trust in me.”

Karen, too, recognizes the importance of being able to take risks, as well as the significance of staying current. One piece of advice she offers prospective long-term fundraisers is this: “Ask questions about your ability to take risks, try new strategies, and

generally keep up with the best practices in fundraising. I find that having the freedom to be creative and think outside the box is really important to my job satisfaction.”

Some respondents described their bosses and supervisors using vocabulary that bears a strong correlation to a mindset that includes trying new things, taking risks, and embracing the change and innovation fundraising brings.

Passion, love for the mission, and awareness of impact

Passion or professionalism? If it comes down to it, should you hire the CFRE, or the candidate with a passion for your mission?

Not surprisingly, our respondents unanimously declared their passion for their organization and its mission throughout the duration of the survey.

The passion perceived throughout Kurtlan’s responses was undeniable. He says of BAGLY, “It’s an organization that allows me to support the many identities of a community I care deeply about, LGBTQ youth. What drives me is the mission of my organization, the people we support, and my dedicated co-workers and community.”

Karen’s organization’s vital work resonates deeply with her. “The cause is what matters to me most personally,” she explains. “The animals drive me. We [at Regina Humane Society] see a lot of sad things but you develop the coping skills and you realize the work you’re doing is what will prevent those sad things from happening again.”

To prospective nonprofit professionals, Karen advises, “Work for a cause that personally motivates you the most. The cause that you care about the most. When you do, your personal belief in the cause will keep you going when things are tough.”

For Kathleen, the work that she does through Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection is inherently connected to her geographical location. “Our work is rooted in the place we live and we all feel a passion for protecting the Sonoran Desert. Being able to make a difference in

a tangible way in our local community has been very gratifying and has helped maintain my passion for our work.”

Sally notices a collective passion at The Indianapolis Zoo, and she shares in that joy, and in the joy of fundraising. She explains, “The Indianapolis Zoo is a great place to work. 99% of the staff are passionate about the mission of the Zoo -- this makes it easy to work with them raising funds. The mission of the Zoo is also one that keeps me from burnout. I am passionate about the mission—it is hard to raise money if you don’t believe in the mission.”

Sally’s words of wisdom to those wanting to work in the nonprofit field? “Make sure you look for an organization whose mission is one that you are passionate about -- otherwise it won’t work! Look at the staff of the organization -- how long have they been there? What is the staff turnover?”

Debbie lists her passion for Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition’s mission as her number one drive, and her primary piece of advice to prospective nonprofit development professionals is this: “You **MUST** be passionate about the mission. My first Director of Development position was with a civic group -- did great work! **But it became clear to me very soon that I needed a “heart” mission not a “head” mission.** I knew I could learn a lot from that ED so I stuck it out for 3 ½ years – then found my passion.”

Leslie’s passion fuels her work, and her heart and soul are deeply engaged in Hope Cottage’s mission. “I love what I do,” she says. “I have a tendency to plan too much and probably pay way more attention to the little things than most development directors, but I just can’t not do it. I was taught to give my very best - to go the second mile. The thrill of the hunt really drives me -- achieving and exceeding set goals, bringing in a donor who hasn’t given in 25 years (my personal best).”

Impact on donor relationships

Penelope Burke places donor relationships at the very core of successful fundraising and best fundraising practices. A key component of relationship building is trust.

Many of the survey respondents opted to shed some light on how they've connected with their organization's donor base over the duration of their tenure, consistently revealing that their respective tenure lengths have played a crucial role in securing strong connections. Time, trust, and familiarity, along with the desire to really get to know donors on an individual and personal level, has provided the opportunity for vibrant, long-term relationships to blossom. An understanding of how critical these relationships are was virtually unanimous and unwavering among the respondents.

For Kathleen, the collective tenure between her and her boss is nearly 30 years. "When we send out a fundraising letter, we know probably 80% of our donors in some personal capacity. Many have been donors for a long time, many have volunteered in some capacity over the years, and many are people we know in other ways in our community. Between the two of us, we have relationships with a large portion of our donor base." For Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, donor relationships generate positive fundraising outcomes, *yielding a retention rate of 70% - 80%*.

Kathleen believes that a workplace where donor relationships are strongly emphasized can create a potentially promising opportunity for those seeking nonprofit employment. She suggests seeking a position in a nonprofit where you can "try to establish and cultivate personal relationships with your donors. Some will want a personal relationship and it can be very wonderful to get to know them, learn about your histories, and find interesting ways for them to be involved in your organization."

Debbie is aware of the importance of donor relationships and has a history with Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition's supporters, which she says "helps tremendously." She, along with her whole team, have been making it a point to document all donor contact. This will enable Debbie to transfer her relationships to her colleagues, which she would like to do before she retires within the next couple of years. This sharing of established relationships

will in itself be undoubtedly invaluable, and it also reinforces the truth that great donor relationships really are built to last.

The documentation of donor relationships, the ins and outs and myriad interactions that can arise from them, is critical. When Kurtlan began his tenure at BAGLY, the organization's donor database consisted of an Excel spreadsheet, but luckily, there has since been a transition away from that. According to Kurtlan, "Encouraging an organization-wide commitment to transparency and donor relations has seen a measurable (and sometimes exponential) increase in the size of donations, longevity of donors, and the general friendliness of the organization," has improved BAGLY's relationship to their donor base.

Sally shares a good rapport with Indianapolis Zoo's donors, and her tenure has inspired a trust that has sustained those relationships and enabled them to grow. She explains, "Because I have been here so long, donors know me and don't hesitate to call or email with questions or when they want to renew or give a gift of membership or an Amigo. I believe that tenure promotes trust. Donors trust what I share with them and trust that the Zoo will carry through on its promises."

Regina Humane Society's donors trust Karen, too. Karen observes that her tenure has made her organization's donor relationships much stronger, explaining, "I've been writing and talking to many donors for years. They trust me and the organization."

After 3.5 years in her position of Managing Director, Trina feels very confident in communicating with Health in Harmony's supporters, and she is in a positive place where she can identify each of them as unique individuals, which is an essential for nurturing donor relationships. "I know our donors well enough that it is more second nature to think of what they like and what would make them feel special," she says.

Leslie's interactions with Hope Cottage's donors are motivated by treating their donor base as people, too, rather than as an indivisible group. The idea that when you speak to your base as a group and "Dear Friend" them, they'll notice, has eluded many organizations. But Leslie focuses on getting to know each donor on an individual basis and approaches the situation with empathy, understanding that familiarity breeds not only comfort, but trust, and she knows that Hope Cottage's donors "are used to hearing from" her. She adds, "We all

know what it's like when you get to know your teller at the bank and then they are gone. After awhile, you stop trying to get to know anyone."

What else?

While Penelope Burk in her research found that The top reason fundraisers leave their jobs is to earn more, additional research revealed that feeling appreciated and acknowledged goes beyond salary. The following comments were gleaned from a post on this topic in a Facebook page.

Are there ways your organization can get creative in terms of perks?

Caroline wrote:

"We have Keurigs in multiple spaces with unlimited free pods of coffee or tea. If you don't like your desk chair, you can get a new one -- no questions asked. Everyone deserves a comfortable chair.

We close at 2:00 p.m. on Fridays throughout the year. We are a Jewish organization, and we close early because the Sabbath starts at sundown on Fridays (which can be 4:00 p.m. in December)... but we close at 2:00 p.m. year-round because it's a nice perk for staff in the summer months, too (when sundown is 8:00 p.m. or later)."

Erin notes

"I was able to buy MS Office for my personal laptop (literally personal -- I don't use it for work) for \$10 thanks to the licencing that our org has. I'm glad they made me aware of that. We also have this nebulous partnership with the local science center. It is a rather confusing thing, but a perk is museum membership."

Lori shared:

"We get 2 paid days a year to volunteer, which is really awesome! They reimburse us for a portion of our cell phone bill because we are required to have work email on our phones. The executive director sends us a card in the mail on our birthday and on our work anniversary with a hand written note--not just a generic note, but personalized according to an accomplishment we've made that year. They are just NICE!"

Kendra writes:

"I get \$70/month for my cell phone in addition to free parking. Our office is near some event spaces so free parking comes in handy for special events too."

Allison notes:

"I don't have to pay any monthly premium on my medical/dental! And we get paid time off between Christmas and New Year. And when they said 'flexible work from home policy', they actually meant it."

Kate says:

"We're an Arts org and we can take classes (ourselves or family) for 80% off. It's really awesome. Helps with childcare, too, when I can sign my kids up for summer camp on the cheap!"

Melissa's organization offers:

"Very flexible PTO, available in small increments [like 2 hrs]. Nap space (couch in a little used room). Arrangements to audit courses at a university in any field - see PTO policy above, which facilitated attendance. Occasional free tix to events."

Joel notes that his organization has

"24 days paid vacation each year. Two week holiday closure. Thirteen paid holidays. Ultra-generous retirement plan [automatic 13% salary match that occurs whether the employee chooses to contribute anything or not, with full vesting after 3 years]"

Christine says a great perk is:

"Beyond no premiums for our healthcare and dental, we have \$1,000 a year to be used on alternative medicine, including MASSAGE."

Rebecca writes:

"Being able to bring your dog to work (so long as it's not too rambunctious). If you live some distance away, having that option saves a lot of time, hassle, and worry. This might not work for larger organizations, but it's a real boon at smaller ones."

Sarah works for an organization that offers:

“Paid family /maternity leave. Also, a Babies in the Workplace option - where you can bring a pre-crawling infant to work with you (side benefit - apparently babies lower everyone's workplace stress and make people smile more).”

Conclusion

The insights, observations, and experiences presented here are intended to provide for an ongoing conversation between nonprofit professionals and serve as a tool for nonprofits who are looking to hire their next development director. Respondents have spoken at length about their workplace environments, what they like about their positions, and how their personal passions and connections to their organization's work motivate them, while providing occasional sound advice to prospective nonprofit employees. So not only is there valuable information for nonprofit leaders who are engaged in hiring (and retention) processes, but this can also hopefully serve as a guide to individuals who are seeking nonprofit employment. It is imperative for them to know what they want from a position, not to mention what they hope to achieve within the realm of workplace and donor relationships, before the search begins.

For each of these survey respondents, there was a point in time when they, too, were seeking positions in nonprofit employment and examining what was personally important to them within the workplace (as well as outside of it), determining how a job could fit or how it couldn't, and figuring out where their passions could best be put to work. I hope that their personal accounts, including reflections on various nonprofit workplace cultures, personal motivations and passions, and sage advice directed not only at prospects, but at nonprofit organizations as a whole, will provide a wealth of beneficial content in the form of a roadmap of what to do to keep capable nonprofit professionals on board for the long haul.