

Interview Questions for Development Candidates to Ask Prospective Employers

1. What's your organization's donor retention rate?

If they don't know it, that's your first red flag as to whether this nonprofit values their donors. If they don't value their donors, chances are good they don't value their staff, either.

2. Has your organization run your data through AFP's Fundraising Effectiveness Project to assess not just retention but also growth of new donors/gifts, reactivation rate, and assessment of donors who upgraded/remained the same/downgraded?

3. What kind of budget does your organization allocate for fundraising? And will I play a role in determining the future budget?

If they tell you they have no budget or they're going solely digital because it's *free,* run for the hills. This red flag is on fire!

4. How much time am I permitted to spend outside the office stewarding donors? What is my budget to steward donors (outside of mail)?

5. Does your organization currently have a fundraising plan?

6. Is there a current Strategic Plan with actionable items and deadlines to reach goals?

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7. What donor database are you using and who is responsible for data entry? Are you documenting your database protocols?

8. How are goals set for this position and what measures of success (KPIs) are in place beyond dollars raised?

9. Tell me about any events the organization currently has in place. What is the net ROI including staff, board, and volunteer hours?

(I wanted to insert a falling off the floor laughing out loud gif here but refrained)

10. Tell me about some prior fund development successes that I might build on.

11. In three words or less, how would you describe your board? How involved is your board in the fundraising process?

12. What was the last conference or training (with a fundraising focus) that an ED, staff, or Board member attended?

I liked this question because of an experience I had early on in my career. An organization I was working with had signed up for a local storytelling workshop and I attended on their behalf. One of the organizations attending was a nonprofit serving low-income women and children. However, unlike the other organizations, this nonprofit had sent two members of their program staff. Of the entire group of 20 or so nonprofits, the workshop was the most eye-opening for the program staffers, who immediately realized how they could help the organization with better storytelling. And it's why our Basics & More classes offer additional registrations to up to 7 team members — no extra charge, no excuses.

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13. How involved is the staff in development?

Do they regularly make thank you calls? Do they assist in the storytelling process, including helping to gather and tell the organization's stories?

14. Is there a process for collecting, storing and managing stories?

15. Do you have a Development Communications Plan?

And if there is a Communications/Marketing department, do they work with fundraising? When did your last donor newsletter go out?

16. Will I have access to Board members?

17. How do the DD and ED work together to accomplish fundraising goals?

18. Does your organization have a gift acceptance policy?

19. Do you have in-house prospect research? Do you outsource it? (And what's the budget for that?)

20. Do you have an established pipeline of prospects or will we be starting from scratch?

21. What does this organization consider a Major Gift? Why?

22. What sort of impact reporting does the organization provide for grant funders? How is this data collected? Who is accountable for reporting?

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23. Do you pay for networking opportunities – chamber of commerce memberships, junior league, etc.

24. What is the budget for donor cultivation coffees/lunches, etc.?

(my current boss makes comments every time I pay for coffee/lunch for a donor, to the point where I often pay out of my own pocket to avoid her remarks...which isn't fair)

25. What is your flex time policy?

(I was recently told after a 13 hour day that I couldn't take any flex time because the very next day was a holiday anyway...again NOT fair! What about flexing the day prior?)

26. What is your attitude towards employees occasionally working from home?

(Particularly important for those who have a longer commute and parents).

27. On what evidence does your organization base its approach to fundraising?

28. What mental models do you use to support the fundraising culture?

(eg 'donor love', 'Ask, Thank, Report, Repeat', 'relationship fundraising')