

Top Ten Tips for retaining fundraisers

By Frances Hurst



You can hardly pick up a newspaper these days without reading how wonderful it is to work for a charity. How it gives people a sense of purpose, how you just can't compare marketing soap powder with raising money to save the planet!

I'm sure that many of you reading this will agree with the sentiment, but if working in the voluntary sector provides the dream jobs we are all looking for, then why is it that staff turnover among fundraisers is so high?

Charities should be great places to work - and that's not just because it's nice to see lots of happy, smiling faces on a Monday morning. As a fundraiser, you can hardly feel motivated to come up with 'the next big thing' if your manager doesn't care that you've been working such long hours you've forgotten where you live.

Developing a vibrant and supportive organisational culture is vital if new ideas are to take root and flourish. As this thoughtful observer of organisational life commented:

A new idea is delicate; it can be killed by a sneer. It can be stabbed to death by a yawn, or worried to death by a frown on the right person's brow.

Charles Browder

My research and consultancy work in the UK voluntary sector has given me some clear insights into what the most successful charities are doing to keep their fundraisers happy and brim full of ideas. So here are my 'Top Ten Tips' for retaining fundraisers...

Top Ten Tips for retaining fundraisers

1. **Keep your fundraisers close to the cause.** If you want your fundraisers to inspire others about what you do - you have to inspire them first!
2. **Pay your fundraisers fairly.** Salaries may not be the highest, but they need to be fair - and seen to be fair.
3. **Keep communication flowing.** If there are changes of plan - fundraisers need to know.
4. **Listen to fundraisers views.** Fundraisers want to be respected for their skills and experience and feel listened to and valued.
5. **Support good staff relations.** Make space for informal networking between departments and a bit of fun!
6. **Involve fundraisers in setting their own targets.** No one likes working to someone else's agenda.

7. **Then let them get on with it!** Fundraisers work best when they are empowered to take decisions and given the freedom to make things happen.
8. **Provide opportunities for development.** Fundraisers need to keep developing their skills. Be creative and flexible.
9. **Support fundraisers in developing their careers.** Paradoxically, perhaps, the more you do this, the longer they will stay with you.
10. **Spend the charity's money wisely.** Nothing is more demoralising for a fundraiser than to see their hard-raised income squandered....

Another way that my partner Sam and I are trying to help raise the standard of people management in charities is to improve the quality of staff satisfaction data available. Our latest initiative is *Charity Pulse* - a UK voluntary sector-wide staff satisfaction survey that takes place every spring with *Third Sector* magazine.

Our inaugural survey provided some fascinating findings. You can download a **FREE copy** of the 2007 Report at: www.bird-song.co.uk. (Click on *Charity Pulse*.)

If you want to join the campaign to improve the way charities work with their people - then take part in the 2008 survey! Charity Pulse is inevitably focused on fundraisers working in British nonprofit organisations but much of what we've learned has universal applications, so we hope every fundraiser will find this relevant and interesting – wherever they work.

Whatever your opinions of your charity are, we'd love to hear them. The survey questionnaire only takes 10 minutes to complete and anyone who works for a charity in the UK can get involved. The more people who do, the more influential the data will be. Look out for the web-link on the Birdsong Charity Consulting and *Third Sector* websites from 5th March.

Thanks for your support. Together we can make those dream fundraising jobs a reality!

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Frances Hurst is co-founder of Birdsong Charity Consulting. She was previously director of marketing at the UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).
