

8 Things a Development Program Audit Accomplishes

Whether you're the President of a non-profit, a Vice President of Development, or someone else in leadership for fundraising, you have ongoing questions about raising money:

- How do you know if your development program is doing as well as it can do?
- What are the right expectations for major gifts, annual fund, and special events?
- Is your staffing model the right size and is it organized effectively?
- What are challenging but realistic goals for fundraising?

These are among the questions addressed by a Development Program Audit. The following list provides the eight things an Audit can do for your organization.

1. An Audit focuses the organization's energy on fundraising.

It's natural for any organization to experience "drift." This involves a reduced level of urgency or focus on raising funds. An Audit rallies staff to the purpose of their employment and service. By taking a close look at *what* is done and *how* it is done, the Audit stimulates conversation and fresh thinking for the tasks at hand.

2. An Audit provides an opportunity to affirm what works and provide detail on what can work better.

Many aspects of the fundraising program may need "calibration" rather than a major overhaul. A series of adjustments and problem-solving approaches can make each part of the program run more efficiently to maximize fundraising value. The Audit identifies several ways to improve what may already be a good program. If the program needs fixing in some way, the Audit also pinpoints those solutions, too.

3. An outside expert's observations and recommendations serve as a catalyst for the development program.

When Counsel evaluates a program, it provides an independent, third-party view of the entire program. Counsel's experience, combined with interviews with key stakeholders, provide solid, authoritative observations. From these observations, Counsel makes recommendations for how to refine and grow the fundraising program.

4. An Audit cultivates a select group of insiders.

In an Audit, Counsel meets face-to-face with decision makers, influencers, donors, and others who have worthy advice to add to the process. In these interviews,

Counsel covers a set of questions aimed at learning the most helpful information from participants. Interviewees naturally become more closely allied and better informed about your organization—which leads to deeper commitment.

5. An Audit informs and educates decision makers.

The Audit process allows key decision makers to learn more about development, about what is expected and what is possible, and how to apply it to your organization. In the Audit interviews, these decision makers can ask candid questions of Counsel in order to better understand where fundraising stands and where the program might aspire to go. The Audit usually generates ample opportunity for positive follow up contacts by development staff.

6. An Audit provides ongoing measurement tools.

The Audit Report provides a full accounting of the interviews and review of program reports and materials. The Audit Report also provides various tools for ongoing measurement of fundraising work. These tools can be used to maintain focus on key recommendations.

7. An Audit sets the stage for a strategic plan or pre-campaign planning.

Once the Development Program Audit is complete and the Board of your organization receives the Audit Report, there is a baseline of information that is credible and specifically tailored for your circumstances. From this, the organization can move directly into strategic planning for development or into a pre-campaign planning mode.

8. An Audit provides historical data for future efforts.

It's a good idea to conduct a Development Program Audit from time to time. For instance, it can be helpful to do an Audit between capital campaigns. Previous Audits can provide helpful information and context for future evaluations.

A Development Program Audit is a valuable experience, positioning your organization to make significant progress in its fundraising.

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