

Most of the time, I think of the executive director role as the hardest job on the planet. Running a close second, or maybe even neck and neck, has got to be development director. Both jobs require leaders who can communicate a vision with passion, build and maintain relationships with many types of people, be highly organized and also highly adaptable, focus on the big picture but sweat the details, and remain optimistic in challenging times. Let us pause a moment to give thanks to all the (slightly crazy) men and women who choose these two roles in their professional lives. Amen.

When the partnership between an executive director and development director works, it is a beautiful thing. When it doesn't, both can come down with a serious case of what I call the "resentment flu". I call it the flu because it is contagious — they keep catching it from one another, each feeling the other isn't pulling her weight.

Working in our sector is hard enough. Why make it worse by failing to build the relationships you need to truly succeed? Here are three keys to developing and stewarding a strong and fruitful relationship with your development director:

**Set Clear, Agreed Upon Expectations.** Develop an annual performance plan together, based on your fundraising plan. In order to ensure success, you both need to agree on what success looks like, how you're going to get there, what part you'll each play in achieving success, and what metrics you'll use to gauge progress along the way.

**Share the Spotlight.** Provide opportunities for your development director to engage with donors, work with the board, and represent the organization in the community. Don't hog all the major donors to yourself (or hoard all the easy ones). Look for opportunities to give credit and praise to your development director, and let him know how much you appreciate not just his results, but his efforts as well. If your development director prefers to operate behind the scenes, find less public ways to acknowledge his importance to the organization.

**Break Down the Development Silo.** Find opportunities to engage your development director in high level conversations, strategic decision making, and programmatic discussions. Make sure that the development director and his team are well-integrated into the programmatic and operational life of your agency. Work with your development director to build a culture of fundraising through-out the organization, so that everyone has a stake in your fund development success.

I can't guarantee that, by doing these things, you'll build a beautiful and lasting relationship with your development director. But with the average development staff tenure still hovering below 24 months, isn't it worth a try?