In 2013, the study *UnderDeveloped: A National Study of Challenges Facing Nonprofit Fundraising* found that high levels of turnover and lengthy vacancies in development director positions throughout the sector make it difficult for organizations to raise enough money to be successful.

The study identified deep problems that contribute to instability in the development director role, such as a need for basic fundraising systems and more attention to fund development from all board and staff members.

Below are some of the report’s main findings, as well as an explanation of why the findings matter and what can be done to help nonprofits break this cycle and achieve better fundraising consistency and financial success.

### The Problem

**Revolving door:**
High turnover and long vacancies in the development director position.

- Fundraising efforts thrive on consistency and strategy. Without someone driving fundraising, critical time and money are lost.
- Average turnover is 16 months or less, and it can take months or even years to fill positions.
- Without a supportive environment, fundraising can be a high-burnout career.

**Help wanted:**
There aren't enough qualified candidates for development director jobs. Executives report performance problems and a lack of basic fundraising skills among key development staff.

- It's a “buyer's market” as a fundraiser. There are always greener pastures and they are frequently recruited for other positions.
- Certain hard skills and personality traits contribute to fundraising success. Unqualified candidates don't perform well in these positions.

### Why Does This Matter?


### What Can We Do to Break the Cycle?

- Be patient with new fundraisers. Fundraising is based on relationships and processes, which take time to build. Keep your fundraiser focused on the most important tasks and be willing to expand the team when the job becomes too large for one person.
- Get the right person in the right seat on your organization’s bus. It's not enough to love the mission. Successful individuals will have some of the hard skills necessary for this role.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Help wanted</th>
<th>Why does this matter?</th>
<th>What can we do to break the cycle?</th>
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<td><strong>Fundraising is a team sport.</strong></td>
<td>Some people don’t want to be labeled as a “fundraiser” because they feel it has negative connotations (like being a beggar or disingenuous car salesman).</td>
<td>A shift in mindset is important: fundraising gives people the opportunity to support missions they hold dear. Funds are needed to contribute to the public good.</td>
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<td>It must involve a group of people, including executive leadership.</td>
<td>Organizations and their leaders need to build the capacity, the systems, and the culture to support fundraising success. The findings indicate that many nonprofits aren’t doing this.</td>
<td>Embrace fundraising across the whole organization. Fundraising is one of the few ways a nonprofit organization can generate revenue to deliver its mission.</td>
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<td>Directors of development cannot be the only fundraisers in the organization. They must be the fundraising project manager for a group of people.</td>
<td>Involve fundraisers in program strategy discussion. They have a pulse on donor interests and know what could be funded.</td>
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This information was adapted from the report UnderDeveloped: A National Study of Challenges Facing Nonprofit Fundraising, available in full text at https://www.compasspoint.org/underdeveloped.
The Integrated Fundraising Model: Strategy, Commitment & Involvement

**Strategy**
- Does your organization have an active strategic plan? Does it include fundraising?
- Do you have a fundraising strategic plan?

**Board/Leadership**
- Do you have ‘buy in’ from the leadership of the organization?
- Do you have board and staff leadership on the fundraising strategy?
- Do they understand their role in fundraising?
- Is your board giving annually at 100%?
- Do you have an active development committee?

**Culture**
- Do most people in the organization act as ambassadors and engage in building relationships?
- Do people associated with the organization promote philanthropy and can they articulate a case for giving?
- Is fundraising viewed and valued as a mission-aligned program of the organization?
- Do you have organizational systems established that support donors?

**Stewardship**
- Do you have an active policy for thanking your donors?
- Are you involving board members, key staff and volunteers in the stewardship process?
- Are you consistently sharing the impact donors are making on the mission?

**Accountability**
- Have you implemented a detailed accountability plan with key performance indicators (more than simply financials) to measure progress?
- Are you monitoring this plan monthly? Quarterly?
Engaging Board Members in Fundraising (without cold calls!)

Identification
Who are the right people? Think about everyone you come into contact with. Think about all of your Facebook friends, professional connections, personal connections, your children’s friends’ parents, service providers for you. Generate a list of people who might be interested in your organization’s mission. NOT who would want to give – who would be interested in the mission. Give the list to the organization.

Information
Take some time to learn about the prospect list. Meet with them and ask them questions about themselves. Research them on the internet. Talk to mutual acquaintances about what interests them. Record all information in a database.

Interest
Gauge their interests – what matters to them and why? Meet with them and LISTEN. Ask them questions about why they got involved, ask them for advice, ask them what other things they like to do. Get to know them. What matters to them and why?

Involvement
Invite them in (activities, mission events, feedback/advice). Figure out ways that their interests match with the organization’s initiatives or needs. Ask not what they can do for you, but how you could meet their needs through helping you.

Investment
Ask for support after you’ve done the above steps. If you’ve cultivated a donor well, the asking is easy! Sometimes it’s not even an ask – it’s an offer from them of, “What do you need?”

Recognition, Stewardship and Renewal
Most donors would they’d give again if they received:
- Prompt, warm, personalized, meaningful acknowledgment (especially from a board member!).
- Reassurance their gift will be used as they intended (for a specific purpose).
- Meaningful results about the program they funded.