

Top 10 Roles in which You Need to Excel as a Chief Development Officer—Beyond Fundraising

In addition to being excellent fundraisers and excellent fundraising strategists, today's highly effective and successful CDOs excel in the following roles:

RELATIONSHIP BUILDER IN CHIEF:

Successful CDOs build and sustain healthy relationships with their CEO and with many and varied constituents. They appreciate competing priorities and anticipate and resolve conflict. They view staff and other colleagues as experts with varied skills and perspectives rather than as competitors and/or opponents. They build strong social capital. They enjoy meeting people and have winning, engaging personalities. They find mentors, teachers, and advisors among many constituencies. They are stewards of organizational memory, recognizing the importance of sustaining relationships with past leaders.

SHAPER OF CULTURE:

Successful CDOs create and maintain an inclusive culture that views and treats donors as philanthropic partners. They sustain a fundraising culture that is sensitive to and fits within the larger organization culture.

VISIBLE LEADER IN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION:

The nonprofit sector and advancement profession specifically have been talking about diversity and equity for a long time, yet little progress has been made. Successful CDOs recognize that strengthening DEI internally and in work with donors and potential donors is essential to engaging an organization's full constituency and to achieving an organization's full fundraising potential, thus it is essential to fulfillment of the organization's mission. They are visible, knowledgeable, passionate, and effective champions of building awareness that leads to action.

STRATEGIST AND PLANNER:

Successful CDOs ensure that development is seen as a contributor to financial stability and growth rather than a drain on organizational resources, partnering effectively with CFOs and CIOs. They create business plans that balance investments in short-term and long-term growth, produce solid returns on investment in both the short and long term, and are fully integrated into organization-wide plans, enabling the organization to support priorities and meet strategic goals. They build development programs that are effective and sustainable.

ADVISOR ON BOARD MATTERS:

Successful CDOs play leadership roles in issues of organizational governance and are seen as valued advisors on governance matters. They work effectively with diverse board leaders and board members.

THOUGHT PARTNER:

Successful CDOs serve as strategic thought partners to their CEOs, other organizational leaders, and donors. They are intellectually curious and well-informed, capable of engaging in meaningful dialogue. They are exploratory visionaries. They stay up to date on the fundraising profession, on the work of their organization, and on the competitive landscape.

VISIONARY AND CONFIDENT SIGHT RAISER:

Successful CDOs inspire, energize, and communicate with great skill, ensuring that many and varied internal and external stakeholders are well-informed and feel engaged, excited, and valued by the CDO and by the organization as a whole. They draw on personal passion for the mission and vision of the organization. They are relentlessly positive and optimistic without making unrealistic promises.

RESILIENT OPTIMIST:

Successful CDOs are passionately committed to their organizations' mission and impact. They maintain confidence and build confidence in their teams, among their colleagues, and with all their organizations' constituents. They remain optimistic even in the face of enormous challenge. When they are unable to do so, they recognize that it is essential for them quickly to rebuild their confidence and optimism or move to another organization.

TALENT MAGNET:

Successful CDOs know how to identify, recruit, and retain diverse and high-performing teams and work with them to establish and sustain inclusive cultures. Development professionals as well as volunteers from many and varied lived experiences are drawn to them and want to work with them.

MENTOR, SPONSOR, AND ALLY:

Successful CDOs understand how to shoulder their responsibilities as senior officers and allow staff members to focus on fundraising and fundraising program management, while at the same time giving future CDOs experience with organizational leadership sufficient to prepare them for those future roles. They serve as mentor, sponsor, and ally to future CDOs within their organizations and across the profession.



The above is a brief summary and introduction to "THE CHIEF DEVELOPMENT OFFICER: Beyond Fundraising, Second Edition," authored by Ronald J. Schiller and published in 2021 by Rowman & Littlefield.