Fund-Raising Consultants

Fund-raising consultants can be a godsend to non-profits. For organizations with an inexperienced, small, or nonexistent staff, they can do everything from mentoring a budding development director to designing specific campaigns and tools to setting up the organizational structure for an ongoing fund-raising effort. Larger organizations with considerable experience in fund-raising and a fully professional development staff can benefit from a consultant’s mastery of the process of initiating new types of fund-raising efforts and reorienting the development department.

A) Basically there are two types of consultants:
   1) National or regional firms offering a full range of services and a large staff experienced in all facets of fund-raising and well versed in the needs of all types of non-profits.
   2) Locally based individual consultants or minimally staffed firms that know a particular community’s fund-raising climate and resources and perhaps specialize in one or more broad types of non-profit organizations—the arts, education, health care, etc.

B) A proposal from a first-class consulting firm, large or small, to act as counsel in a fund-raising campaign would likely include the offer to help determine:
   1) The case for support
   2) The campaign plan
   3) Key prospects and their suggested giving levels
   4) Individual strategies for major-gift solicitations
   5) Volunteer leadership
   6) Volunteer solicitors
   7) The proportion of gifts to be sought from corporations, foundations, & individuals
   8) The campaign goal

C) There are four absolute caveats in engaging consultants:
   1) Never hire consultants whose regimen and methodology are unyielding. Consultants should be flexible in the services they provide and willing to adapt to an organization’s processes.
   2) Never hire consultants who request that they be paid a percentage of the funds raised in a campaign. This is regarded as unethical by the industry.
   3) Never hire consultants unless you are committed to taking their advice and following their counsel. To do otherwise is to throw your money away.
   4) Never hire consultants to ask for the money. That’s the job of your volunteers.