



**Launch your nonprofit fundraising career, season 1 recap**  
*Season 1, Episode 12*

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*\*\*transcripts are for reference only and created with AI, minimal editing is done*

Transcript

Speaker 1:

Welcome to Asking for Good a podcast for people who want to make a difference. Hear stories from seasoned nonprofit professionals and volunteers on how to begin or further a career in making the world a better place.

Speaker 2:

Hello, I'm Katie Puer, a career fundraiser committed to making the nonprofit sector better.

Speaker 3:

And I'm am Emily Pujari. I work with foundations in the US and abroad to make the world a better place.

Speaker 2:

This is our season one recap, fundraisers, academics, and those just starting their career in the non-profit sector, had this great advice to share with you.

Speaker 4:

I am so grateful for the chance to speak about this field and two people who are considering it. And we want you to come work in philanthropy. We welcome you, and there are so many people like myself who are willing to have conversations with any one of any age and background who really wants to transition into this work. Please don't shy away from it because you have a preconceived notion about how hard it will be or how boring it will be or how little it pays. And know that there's this huge kind of shift right now in philanthropy. And there's people like me who wear sneakers to campaign meetings, and there's people who are frontline fundraisers for billion dollar campaigns who are in their twenties and who are in their sixties. And so if you feel drawn to this kind of work, please come. Please explore it. Please apply for jobs. Please ask mentors and people for advice and don't feel the pressure to go on the traditional route that we've all historically felt like we need to go on to be successful. It's a new day in philanthropy, and you can and should do the work that you feel most aligned to do.

Speaker 2:

The premise of our coming together has everything to do with helping those who want to be a part of the nonprofit sector, understand the sector better and jump into it in an informed way. Which advice

would you give to someone starting their career as a fresh out of undergraduate or graduate work or someone who is transitioning from the private sector into the nonprofit sector?

Speaker 5:

You spend a huge part of your life going through transition. So a lot of it is planning for that transition. Then, you know, going through it and then understanding what it takes to get past that transition. If you're, you know, changing from a for-profit to a nonprofit, it is probably more than likely you're doing it because you are finding or have found something that you're passionate about. That's just so important. And then the other thing I would say is find mentors. Find a mentor. Find the mentors that will support you.

Speaker 6:

Above all, it really is your passion, your clear vision for what it is that you want to do, and for what that organization's going to do to impact our society moving forward.

Speaker 5:

Follow your heart, follow your your gut. You're in this for the right reasons. You know, we need more people in the, the business of nonprofits. So it's great work and and rewarding and much needed and appreciated.

Speaker 2:

So you're also a hiring manager and I wanna hear from you what you look for in a candidate.

Speaker 7:

I look for people who are curious. I look for people who want to be challenged, who are open-minded to trying different things, who will also challenge me.

Speaker 5:

What does annoy me as, as a hiring manager is it's so easy now to just get online and click on positions and submit your resume without really having an interest. You've gotta make your case. Your cover letter needs needs to be specific to the organization. It should bullet out your qualifications that match what it is that the the job post is looking for. And you know, you follow it up with, with a phone call and, and if you get the interview with the thank you letter with

Speaker 2:

From the person applying for jobs standpoint, how do you find a good organization?

Speaker 5:

Y you do your research work your network. If you don't have a network, develop your network and, and trust your gut. And just remember when you're interviewing that, yes, they're interviewing you, but you're interviewing them too. So for me, I'm always looking for is this mission something I believe in and can get behind? Lots of great causes out there. There's no reason to compromise.

Speaker 6:

Essentially it is what will you provide the organization? How can you help them to fulfill their needs? How will what you do for the organization continue to challenge you and to help you grow? And you see that also in a sight line associated with where you are headed in your career.

Speaker 2:

Oh, each of us, when we are considering embarking on a career in the nonprofit sector, we need to think thoughtfully about what our passions are and how we wanna see the world change, and then find those organizations that will allow us to fulfill our personal passions and personal worldviews,

Speaker 8:

150%. The advice someone gave me was, if you're not willing to have a relationship with your donor, then you're in the wrong field. I knew I needed to talk to others all the time about how they can make change in the world. And I, passion is wonderful.

Speaker 9:

It's it, it is the basis of what we do, but passion alone will not get you there. You have to have skills and you have to make clear to people that you know what you are going to do, or at least you will communicate well about what you intend to do and how you will do it with these resources. I will just end on the note of saying I am so grateful that there are so many people that specialize in fundraising and that have taught me along the way.

Speaker 10:

Most people issue like, well, I don't know how to fundraise. I don't know how to ask for money. But I think requiring every board member to think like a fundraiser is a very, very good experience for everybody. And I've learned so much because of that requirement because I too initially was a little concerned about how I was going to personally fundraise for the organization. And I think I underestimated as many people do the networks that I have in place and that I've really, I've actually, amazingly, I love asking people for money now. Like, I have no problem asking people for money. But I think that was an evolution for me because I began to see that I was able to do it successfully in different ways. I am active now on several boards and I'm really loving the work I'm doing there and am exploring different roles in nonprofit that might be a good fit for me, where I can help advance the mission, use my corporate skills in a different sector, and spending my time thinking deeply about what organization would be the best fit for me. Where I could give the most from experiences I

Speaker 7:

Have. Listen, I mean, I'm a woman of color and in, in this profession, let's be frank, there's not a lot of women of color in this profession. And I personally feel like I have a commitment to the profession and for, for that matter, to help engage, inspire, encourage, support other fundraisers who might be thinking would love to be in that career, but I don't see anybody that look like me. <Laugh>.

Speaker 11:

Just overall we wanna think about steps not only that individuals can take, but also what an organization can be doing to encourage diversity and inclusion. I think what's nice is I think these values are woven

into the goals of many organizations right now. It's part of so many conversations, especially given what's happening in the world. I just hope that organizations walk the talk. It's so easy to check off a box and hire diverse employees, do a workshop here and there. It's a lot harder to foster a long-term culture of inclusion from the top down and much harder to retain a diverse workforce if they aren't feeling like they're seen, heard, or represented. So I think in the things that I do, I really want to showcase these ideas and make sure that it's woven into the fabric of what we offer. And I think I carry these personal values with professional work, so hope to continue doing that going forward.

Speaker 9:

I think there's a lot of pressure at times on people to just know what they wanna do. And you can't know that until you start going out and trying things. Speaking as an educator, I can tell you that even education and formal classroom training is still only gonna get you so far. You have to get out there.

Speaker 2:

In hindsight, what advice would you give yourself five years ago?

Speaker 12:

Well, my program in college, my musical theater program was very much had the mentality like acting is the end all be all. And I wish five years ago I knew that I wasn't in that there are so many different paths that you could take and be happy. You never know where life is going to lead you. So just keep learning and trying new things and you'll find your way.

Speaker 13:

Five years ago I was in still my first year of teaching and I think I would tell myself one, you're going to get through this experience of being in, you know, three different schools at three different grade levels and it's going to make you better at your future jobs because you're really used to change and adversity. And so, you know, take it in stride, but it's also very valid to feel the way you're feeling. And I think on just a second note is as important as it is to listen to other people and to, you know, hear what advice they have to say, being extremely clear about what it is that you want is at the end of the day the most important thing because people will oftentimes be very excited to help people find their next role. And if you aren't extremely clear on your end about what it is you want to be doing, people can end up leading you down paths that you aren't interested in. And that could be just a waste of time on either person's end. And so it's okay to tell folks, you know, thank you for offering that. However, I don't think it quite fits with what I'm going for. And to figure out a way to articulate to them what it is that you do want and what would be the most helpful because people are willing to be helpful in a lot of different ways.

Speaker 14:

Yeah, I would tell five years ago me that I don't know a single thing and that's okay. You just need to buckle up, be humble, express gratitude, and be willing to learn for at least the next 15 years, <laugh>

Speaker 15:

<Laugh> years. And I would echo both of those things and just saying, you know, pursue your passion, number one, keep willing to learn. You don't know like where you'll be. And always, you know, stay humble. I was originally an electrical engineering major five years ago, and now I've changed completely to transfer schools. I changed majors. I was a political science major and now like, you know, it's a whole

different ballgame. So you can make your own path, carve your own path and use the people you know and help with your network to figure out the best steps for you and your future.

Speaker 11:

Sometimes looking for job openings that were very compelling while having to work at my full-time job currently, but it also kind of took the pressure off. So I've also, I was really picking and choosing positions that I really wanted to actually be in. I wasn't just throwing everything, you know, throwing applications out there left and right. I was very selective. And so then I was very invested in each position that I was applying to. And I'll admit those first few interviews early on that I got, it was pretty rough and you could tell I was rusty and I had to really polish my answers, especially around that. Tell me about yourself question. It's so broad and I would just find myself rambling sometimes as I kept interviewing more, it was apparent that certain questions would likely be asked time and time again. So I was really able to hone my answers.

Speaker 11:

And luckily there are so many resources and tips that I found on YouTube that were really helpful in helping me frame my answers and making sure that they were concise and comprehensive. And some of the common interview questions that I encountered were, of course, why do you wanna work here? Why do you wanna leave your current place? Share what you're most proud of or major proud of, or a major accomplishment? Tell me about a mistake you made and how you overcame it. Tell me something that's not on your resume. And also a lot of scenario-based questions that were relevant to the organization that you were interviewing for.

Speaker 16:

Honestly, it's just, it's such an exciting time to be in our industry right now and things are changing so rapidly and so having the ability to connect yourself to an institution or an organization that you believe in is so essential. If you're gonna get into fundraising, you need to believe in what you're selling. The other thing is, is you cannot put a price on good leadership. And as I've said before, I am extremely fortunate that I have worked for some of the best in the industry. And I continue to think that if you don't have the right team in place, if you don't have confidence in your supervisor and they don't have confidence in you, it, it may not be the right place. And so always keep that in mind that you wanna believe in what you're, what you're doing, but you also wanna enjoy the people that you're doing it with.

Speaker 7:

If we appreciate our own mortality, perhaps we, we might take bigger risks. Boulder risk

Speaker 11:

So much of what,

Speaker 10:

What blocks us is just in our heads. And you can just get past that and, and see the joys of, of helping support a nonprofit in its mission. I think there's just nothing more rewarding than

Speaker 8:

That. I stand the best luck out to any one of your listeners who are thinking about making this plunge, or if you're in the plunge and swimming through the trenches, know that there are many of us out there pulling for you every single.