

August 2024



## WORKSHOP

**Boards on Fire: Eliciting  
Optimal Leadership  
with Susan Howlett**

**Date: Wednesday, Sept. 25  
Time: 9am - 1pm  
@ SCAF Office**

**For: Executive Directors &  
Board Presidents**

Your board members want to be strategic governors, compelling ambassadors, and effective fundraisers, but don't always know how best to engage in those roles. In this highly interactive and illuminating session, we'll explore how to get the most out of your current leaders and make their jobs as enjoyable and effortless as possible. You'll leave with practical, no-cost suggestions you can implement right away. Join us!

**Register at: [www.s-caf.org](http://www.s-caf.org)  
\$10 per person**



## Nonprofit Newsletter

### ***5 Community-Building Tactics to Boost Donor Acquisition*** **by Jamie Bearse (CEO of Build a Better Nonprofit)**

It's been more than 50 years since irreverent comedian George Carlin coined the seven words you can never say on television. If we were to build our own nonprofit version, the word at the very top of the list might be — "acquisition."

Like the seven words, everyone wants to know more but might be too afraid to ask. Acquisition has been a dirty word in development for years but never as much as it has been recently.

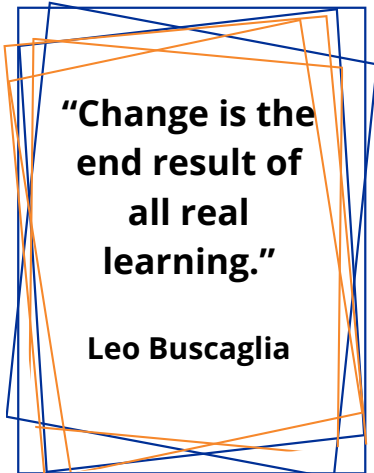
Those fundraisers and CEOs with sensitive stomachs, please skip ahead because I'm going to share why this is: The industry is in an unsustainable, years-long trend of over-relying on major donors to cover the shortfall of overall donors and abysmal rates for donor acquisition of newly retained donors.

Just last year, new donor and newly retained donor groups saw an 11.6% and a 14.7% drop, respectively, in total dollars donated, according to the [Fundraising Effectiveness Project](#). These two groups accounted for a jaw-dropping 68% of the decrease in total dollars raised across the sector. This means that if your nonprofit had a shortfall of \$100,000, chances are it was mostly because new donors (acquired within the last two years) aren't giving anywhere near as much as they did the year before.

It's inflation. It's got to be, right? But the same report shows that total dollars from repeat retained donors (those who have given for at least three years) is down 3.5%. Still enough to give heartburn but it shows that inflation is only a small part of the problem.

The fact is that we're falling short on donor acquisition because of our inability to make new donors feel at home with our organizations. New supporters won't be part of our community unless they feel just as connected with us and their peer supporters as they do to the mission. Use these cost-effective community-building tactics to boost donor acquisition:

(Article continued on the next page)



**“Change is the end result of all real learning.”**

**Leo Buscaglia**



## COMING SOON: Nonprofit Directory

SCAF is working to develop a directory of all nonprofits, service organizations, and membership groups.

This searchable directory will be a great resource for both nonprofits and community members.

Stay tuned!

### Article Continued...

#### 1. Champion Participants

Use gratitude as a retention strategy for pre-donors. Once anyone participates in anything they do for your organization, celebrate them like a donor. This means if they write a letter to Congress, download an e-book or even just ask a question, celebrate their involvement in your cause with more than an auto-generated email or text message. Organizations that label their participants as volunteers or some other specific title, like “cause hero” or “champion,” are 66% more likely to donate.

#### 2. Watch Your Words

The Institute for Sustainable Philanthropy found that when organizations use the same words that donors use to describe themselves, donations increased 27%. This also goes for people who engage in any way with your cause. For example, if someone calls themselves big-hearted and conscientious and you use those words back to describe them, the donor gave more than expected.

#### 3. Celebrate With Empathy

Taking the time to understand and genuinely care why each person is coming into contact with our organizations is a lot of work but it has an incredible upside. By taking our job personally and hiring others who will do the same, we can show empathy to our supporters and their own personal narrative in a way that makes them feel belonging to the cause.

A 2022 Springtide Research Institute study found that when congregants feel they belong, they were an astounding 12 times more likely to donate and three-and-a-half times more likely to recommend their charity of choice. The first scientific study of its kind showed that activities like 90-minute online workshops and in-person meetings were among the ways to increase belonging.

#### 4. Embed Staff Into Communities

Some organizations that went remote during the pandemic hired staff around the country but are now evaluating whether to go back to having a staff in its headquarters’ city. Organizations that can develop a strong culture of how everyone on staff will behave with one another, can embed staff — especially development and events hires — strategically in communities where they can connect with cause champions on a regular basis.

#### 5. Shared Stewarding and Thank-Yous

Traditionally, many organizations work in silos when it comes to fundraising. Development staff want to control the donor experience and other staff don’t like asking for money. A study found that when donors were personally thanked within 24 hours, the donor was 40% more likely to give again. This has been tested out among new participants; finding that personal thank-you phone calls from board members, staff leaders and volunteers yielded first-time donations at roughly the same rate.