

The Mind and Heart of a Fundraiser

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My husband is a tech guy, and he approaches life situations much like he would a software glitch. He logically identifies the few possible causes of the matter, checks each until one lights up, deals with it, boom. All is well until he expects the same worldview from others, such as me. In my worldview, all is not logical.

Fundraisers see illogical things all the time. Faith, inspiration, leadership--how can these ever be defined as logical? Transformative social change agents are opposite of logical. Working with vision-oriented leaders every day for 35 years has gifted me with a bright and positive worldview. Fundraisers do many things at the same time; we do not think on a straight line. And yes, all this has influenced my assumptions of the abilities, integrity and intentions of others.

Generally I've found fundraisers to be more patient, trusting, consensus seeking and optimistic. All is not rosy. Because I am immersed in the culture of philanthropy, believing in my organization's raison d'etre and future vision, every rejection of a major gift solicitation hurts. Though I am trained to continue down our list, encourage our volunteers with genuine smiles and appear unflappable, I am silently crushed. On the other hand, if I have successfully engineered an important gift, my spirit soars beyond the small tick in mood a commissioned retail salesperson may experience. I light up inside and that light is shared with many others.

Recently I had the dubious opportunity of speaking with an attorney. I came away feeling confused until I realized the daily environment of her work day consists of facing anger, aggression, retribution, impatience, greed, duplicity. On that very day that our conversation occurred, mine had been filled with hope, dignity, honor, respect, gratitude, affection and humor. She should have been a fundraiser.