



Sterling Strategic Advisor Foundational Fundraising

What emerging trends do you believe development professionals should be aware of?

Today's development professionals need to be aware of donors' increasing desire and ability to measure outcomes, shifts in donor recognition practices, and the integration of artificial intelligence, which may require additional resources. As the nonprofit landscape continues to change and evolve, I also think it is vital to always remember that nurturing and sustaining relationships with donors is and will always be the core of successful fundraising.

Reflecting on the years you spent in the nonprofit sector, what achievements are you especially proud of?

Putting together an exceptional team at Texas Children's Hospital was a significant achievement. I am proud to know that our work laid the foundation for future success. Similarly, at KIPP, I am proud that our work truly improved outcomes for our KIPPsters. Additionally, making The Brown Foundation more accessible to prospective grantees and offering guidance to those who were not receiving funding was another accomplishment I am proud of.

What were some of the most significant challenges you faced in fundraising?

One of the challenges was not having the right people in place to accomplish our goals. To overcome this obstacle, I took steps to determine the necessary skill sets and roles needed, advocated for the resources to build the appropriate team, and actively recruited talented individuals. Another challenge was working with boards whose understanding and giving capacity were limited. To address this, I initiated educational efforts for both the organization's leadership and existing board members, set clear expectations, and worked on recruiting new board members who possessed the necessary capacity and commitment to support our fundraising efforts. Navigating through recessions posed another formidable challenge. To tackle this, I prioritized effective communication strategies, adjusted our fundraising timetable to adapt to economic fluctuations, and remained resilient and determined to continue pushing forward despite the circumstances.

How do you approach mentoring fundraising professionals?

First, I ask what their goals are or what it is they are hoping to learn more about. I use this information to determine if I can effectively help them or if additional resources would be beneficial. I then establish a timetable, whether it involves a single conversation or a series of engagements and close the loop by asking if their learning objectives were met. I always try to maintain available to listen and provide support for as long as I can.

How does your philosophy of "working to make things better" translate into your mentorship approach?

Our knowledge and our work fuel successful fundraising, which is intended to help make things better. That's why I was drawn to philanthropy. I also think it is vitally important to build relationships with trust, candor, hard work, teamwork, humor, and commitment. I deeply appreciate those that mentored me; some of them didn't even know I looked to them as role models.

What are you looking forward to in your role as a Sterling Strategic Advisor?

I always believed that I would be ready to retire and step away from our profession. However, Sterling has given me the opportunity to transition gradually, and that has been an incredible gift. This experience reminds me just how much I enjoy the continuous learning, the ability to make good things happen, and the people. Being a Sterling Strategic Advisor allows me to stay involved – and wake up a little later!
