

Q&A: Ready Responses to “But I Don’t Know Any Rich People”

Lacking a contact list packed with wealthy friends and other potential donors is a common concern among board members. Fundraising experts [Claire Axelrad](#) and [Rachel Muir](#) shared some great responses to help your board members find their hidden fundraising superpowers.

Q: How do you respond to board members who say, “I don’t know any rich people”?

CLAIRE AXELRAD: There are two ways around this one. The first is to say, “You don’t need to know rich people. Just think of your peers. Are there any who might be interested in what we do? You’re making a stretch gift here. Maybe they’d like to join you. You love this organization. Perhaps they will, too. Don’t assume they won’t be interested and say no on their behalf. Let them in on what we’re accomplishing here—maybe they’ll get just excited about it as you are!”

The second is to offer a different fundraising assignment. They don’t have to identify donor prospects, at least not until they become comfortable doing so. Board members can play a number of different fundraising roles—as ambassadors, advocates, and askers. Ultimately, it’s my goal to get them to wear all three hats. But sometimes you must work up to this slowly. Try this:

“If you can’t think of anyone to refer right now, let’s look at some other ways you might be able to help us with donor development. Would you be willing to make thank you calls, write personal notes on appeals, speak on our behalf at a community group, take prospective donors on tours? How might you be comfortable sharing your passion about our mission with others?”

RACHEL MUIR: Even without a fat Rolodex full of high-powered connections, a board member can support fundraising. Board members with few connections can support fundraising. Board members who are terrified of doing a solicitation can support fundraising. They can thank donors, join you for an ask, make an ask, host a donor cultivation event in their home and share their personal story of why they are involved in your organization, get assigned to cultivate two to three donors, write an article on why the organization is important to them, name your organization in their will, or take on a project to share client testimonials, or share how money makes an impact at your organization, or raise awareness about the organization.