

# INSIDE& OUT

Hello, and welcome to our Summer Newsletter.

In this edition we talk to Catherine Miles, Director of Fundraising & Engagement at Breast Cancer Now, about how to build a career in fundraising.

Catherine has been a professional fundraiser for over 20 years, and we started by asking Catherine about her own career path:

My first job was as a Public Affairs Assistant for the National Federation of Women's Institutes. I did some Trust fundraising in that role, and really enjoyed it, so moved sideways to the Council for the Protection of Rural England as a Trust & Corporate Fundraising Assistant. I was there for four years, and as we were a small team I got a lot of experience quickly and was promoted to Officer.

From there I moved to Mencap as Head of Grants Fundraising (Trusts, Lottery and Major Donors) which was my first management role. I was at Mencap for three years, before moving to Shelter as Head of Major Gifts. There I led the team covering Trusts, Lottery and Major Donors and played a leading role on an Appeal. After 6.5 years at Shelter I moved to Anthony Nolan as Fundraising Director. In my 7 years there we tripled net income. I joined Breast Cancer Now as Director of Fundraising and Engagement a year ago, leading a team of 73 raising £27m.

Follow Catherine on Twitter @Cadders68

## The Only Way is Up



“The key attributes all fundraisers need are the ability to really understand their existing and potential supporters and how best to engage with them”

### Does it matter what area of fundraising you start in if you wish to move up the fundraising ladder?

I believe you can develop your career and progress up the fundraising ladder from any fundraising discipline, including database and supporter services teams. The key attributes all fundraisers need are the ability to really understand their existing and potential supporters and how best to engage with them, whether they be a blue-chip company, someone going onto the website to make a cash gift or a first time Marathon runner. As you progress in your career softer skills such as the ability to manage and lead staff and work effectively with peers, senior staff and Trustees become pivotal, and again these can be gained from a range of backgrounds.

Good ways of broadening your skills and knowledge are gaining experience of different income streams by volunteering at fundraising events, being a rep on a cross team working group, or sitting on an interview panel for a role in a different area of fundraising. Attending conferences such as the IoF Convention, following fundraising news, blogs and Twitter can also help develop your understanding of key trends and issues in the sector.

Finally, I think one of the best things about our sector is people's willingness to chat over a coffee so I'd always encourage people to seek out fundraisers whose work they admire and ask to meet or call for a chat.

### Is it better to have experience of different organisations rather than growing within one?

You can progress from any route but I think it's valuable to work in both large and small/medium charities. In smaller charities you're likely to get a wider range of experience at more junior levels and potentially more responsibility, as you'll often be covering a number of areas. Then it's great to try to move into larger charities, as you'll get experience of specialising at a greater scale and complexity.

It's also really good to work for charities covering different causes (health, social welfare, disability etc) as it gives you experience of fundraising for mass awareness causes and for one which can be perceived as being less popular. My experience fundraising for Mencap and Shelter was invaluable when I moved into cancer charities.

However, fundraising does suffer from people moving jobs too quickly. I've always aimed to learn as much as possible from a role and hopefully achieve what I've set out to do in it before I consider my next step. So it's important to try to develop as much as possible within any job and really be doing it well, before looking to move.

**How difficult is it to take the step into management?**

## Managing people is fascinating and rewarding but can be challenging!

As a sector, I think we can do a lot more to support first-time managers as it's not an easy transition to make. The most important things I've learnt is to try to be as self-aware as possible about my working style and how it impacts on others; try to understand my reports' motivations, preferred communication styles and how they like to work best; and then try to flex what I'm doing to get the best out of them.

Sometimes the attributes that make us successful fundraisers (drive, attention to detail, love of control) can make it difficult to learn to delegate and empower effectively. So there's a learning process that the behaviours that have made you successful in more junior roles and have got you promoted may need to be changed to be an effective Manager.

**What advice would you give to someone wanting to move into a Director of Fundraising position from a functional head background e.g. Head of Corporate etc?**

I think it's important that, as with any step up, it's definitely what people want to do rather than what they think they should do. It's easy to get into a pattern of thinking you should always be going for the next step up, when in reality it may not actually be what you really enjoy or won't make you happy.

It's worth spending time thinking about how you'll handle the major differences in role between a Head and a Director. As a Director you have the dual responsibility of contributing to decisions on what is best for the overall organisation (which may not be in the best interests of fundraising) as well as ensuring your area is delivering. Influence and persuasion skills are key as you will be working with peers who have the power to say no to you. Finally, the relationship with the CEO and the Board is absolutely vital, and it's really important to be able to explain how fundraising works to them in an accessible way.

Critically, you don't have to be an expert in all fundraising disciplines before you move up to Director. You need to know what the key questions are and what sector benchmarks they should be hitting, but they should be the experts in their area – not you. Your role is to set the overall vision of where fundraising should be going, and then build a team and get them what they need to make it happen.

**What are the key qualities needed to be a Director of Fundraising?**

Passion for fundraising and the cause you're raising money for; resilience; determination; the ability to negotiate with and persuade colleagues, CEOs and Trustees to get buy-in for what you need from the organisation; calmness under pressure. You have to be willing to take difficult decisions and be accountable for them, and at times tell your organisation things that aren't easy for them to hear, particularly on the need for investment, time it will take to grow income and brand or strategy changes that might be needed to raise more money. One of the key jobs of a Fundraising Director is to hire talented people and then create the conditions in which they can be successful – so the ability to spot, attract, develop and retain outstanding fundraisers is key.

**breast cancer**  
**now**

## HAVE YOU SEEN OUR WEBSITE?

We love our website, it's clear, straightforward and most importantly informative.

With some funky icons (work them out if you can), it's packed with lots of handy tips, advice and information for both recruiters and job-seekers.

**You'll find information on:**

- Current vacancies
- CV do's and don'ts
- Application forms & supporting statements
- Preparing for an interview
- Finding the right person to fill your vacancy
- Our newsletter archive
- Fundraising salary survey
- Some info about us with a few scary photos

## GET IN TOUCH

**We have been recruiting Fundraising, PR and Marketing professionals to positions at all levels within the not-for-profit sector for the last 19 years.**

For knowledgeable and friendly advice on any aspect of recruitment, please contact:

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