



INSTITUTE OF SCHOOL & PARISH DEVELOPMENT

Bringing People, Process, and Ministry Together to Build the

Kingdom of God.

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Development Directions

SURVIVAL TIPS FOR CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENT/ADVANCEMENT DIRECTORS

by

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All across America today there are hundreds of Catholic school and/or parish development directors who are making exciting things happen in their ministry. Some are one person “shops” and others have 2 or 3 or even more in their development/advancement office. Some of these folks have been at this for years, and many are brand new to the world of Catholic school and/or parish development. In ISPD’s work throughout the country, we have consulted with and/or “work-shopped” with hundreds of development officers. In a recent workshop I conducted in the past few weeks we had 17 development directors present – from elementary schools, high schools, regional schools, and parishes. Similar challenges, similar frustrations, similar cries for help.

Years ago when I was a development director at a Catholic high school, I often bemoaned the fact that I had very little guidance, no outside professional help, a broad lack of understanding by the board of what development really is, and a long list of expectations that basically translated into three words: “Raise More Money!”

Catholic school/parish development directors usually last 2.3 years. This statistic comes from working with approximately 250+ each year through our on-site consulting, workshops, and webinars. We find ourselves always asking, “How long have you been in this position?” or “How long did she/he last?” What we also find is that many Catholic school/parish development directors do not last longer than 2.3 years for seven reasons:

1. Lack of understanding by the administration, board, decision makers, and even the development officer that Catholic Development needs to be seen as a

system of processes built around the themes of people engagement and resource development;

2. No written, formal, strategic plan with priorities and benchmarks from which to operate;

3. No on-going professional training where growth is encouraged and tracked over a period of years;

4. Everything being measured by the amount of money that is to be raised;

5. Constantly running one fund-raising event after the other;

6. Lack of realization that Catholic Development takes 3-4 years to gain the “legs” it needs to be successful;

7. Little time spent to “re-charge the battery.”

With the above in mind, I would like to offer 12 “survival tips” for Catholic Development/Advancement officers.

1. Get trained and constantly grow in your ministry.

- There are many opportunities for growth in this ministry. The ISPD website has many free resources; there are workshops and webinars offered throughout the country; your Diocese may offer in-services; the NCEA Convention has wonderful presenters and presentations; there are many development/advancement publications from NCEA; explore the opportunities to network with other professionals in your area.
- Going to a 1-2 day workshop simply gives you a framework. Please remember there is the “art” of Catholic Development and there is “science” of Catholic Development. The art (people management) is learned through experience; that is the main teacher. The science is learned through experience and education; the science is all the processes that make up the world of Catholic Development:
 - How to conduct an Annual Fund;
 - How to hold an Open House;
 - How to promote a special event fund-raiser;
 - How to invite the gifts;
 - How to run a Major Gift Reception;
 - How to establish a Neighborhood Outreach in your parish;
 - How to set up a Planned Giving effort;
 - How to implement a Core Team;
 - How to create a Strategic Plan;
 - How to set up a Greeters’ Ministry;
 - And the list of Catholic Development processes goes on and on.

2. Educate your leaders.

- We think that pastors, principals, board members, etc. should know what Catholic Development is and what it is not. Not necessarily true. We encourage you to get your leaders to workshops; send them e-mails; forward news clippings; encourage articles, webinars and books; get them to network with others who understand.
- As part of your survival, your leadership (which is always changing) needs to constantly be educated.

3. Make personal visits every week.

- Please, get out of the office and have a cup of coffee or “eyeball to eyeball” meeting with 5 new people each week. This is a people business; this is not a computer lab.
- Seek their advice; ask for input; invite their participation into a Catholic Development process.

4. Work from a written Plan of Action.

- This is the main reason development directors do not succeed. There is no written plan of action. There is a lot of, “Well, I think you should be doing this and that.” But, no one ever says HOW! A written Plan of Action that uses the SMART formula will always lead to success.
- The strategic action must:
 - S: Be strategic and begin with an action verb.
 - M: Be measurable so you will know how you are doing or did.
 - A: Be achievable.
 - R: Be relevant to your situation.
 - T: Be driven by a timetable.

5. Encourage consideration of three years.

- When you accept your new position as development officer or when it is time for renewal, ask for the consideration of three years. It takes that long to DEVELOP and ADVANCE.

6. Bond with the staff.

- It is so important that you understand one tenet that we always state in our workshops and consulting: The most important groups of people to bond and get along with are the faculty/staff and parish staff. They live the mission every day; they are in touch with your “customers’ every day. Please bond with them consistently.

7. Assemble and work with the Core Team.

- ISPD has written a lot about the Core Team concept, and we have worked hard in putting hundreds of these in place. They are the “lifeline” for your success. Please research this more on our website and bring these 15-18 people into your world. Please note: The Core Team concept is not just for

new Catholic Development efforts; it is for every school/parish, no matter how advanced you may be. Some of the best Core Team efforts are with Catholic schools that have had development in place for 10+ years.

8. Word process monthly Update.

- Please let your “internal markets” know what you are doing. It helps to word process a one page, one side monthly Update simply using bullet points to list the many processes and initiatives you are working on. Hard copy, electronic copy – it makes no difference. This should go to administration, board, council, staff, and key leadership groups.

9. Listen, Listen, Listen.

- *Belonging leads to believing.* People feel that sense of belonging when they are invited to share their ideas. By listening, we really say to people that we care about their perspective, opinions and stories. We make them feel like they belong.

10. Make healthy choices.

- Been at it a while and still banging your head up against a brick wall because of lack of leadership or lack of understanding of what you are doing? Usually once or twice a month, we run across this scenario, and as we have said many times, (when Catholic development officers are in a “no win” situation), “Life is about choices.” There are thousands of outstanding Catholic leaders all across America, and yet there are a few that believe that the only management method is, “My way or the highway.” Total boss management. In 22 years in this consulting profession, I have never seen Catholic Development flourish when that style of management is present.

11. Reward yourself.

- The battery needs to be re-charged. The tank needs to be re-fueled. Great Catholic leaders who “die” in the heat of battle because of stress are doing themselves a disservice. Four statements we always make – much to the chagrin of development leaders:
 - Everyone is replaceable.
 - Let go; you simply cannot do everything. Delegate, delegate, delegate! Please don’t play the victim role. There are “troops” willing and waiting to come to your side if you will only let them.
 - “It’s ok to make a mistake!”
 - Please take some time off – physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

12. Be responsible for but don't guard your kingdom.

- There are wonderful resource people that you can count on – both within your community and outside of it. Please work hard to establish a system that invites input and expertise. The greatest legacy you can leave is a Catholic Development system that works – even without you.