



Seventh-day Adventist Church
NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION



Philanthropic
Service for Institutions

Finding Meaning in the Mysterious—Careers in Fundraising (Part Five)

In progressing up the ladder of professionalism in fundraising, both in practice and positions held, the fundraising professional will find a constantly changing set of challenges and opportunities. Most organizations of the nonprofit sector, from small social service organizations to huge universities, employ fundraisers, and now there is trend to engage fundraisers in conferences and church-related organizations.

The positions also range widely, from prospect research to major gift acquisition to leadership of a fundraising department or foundation. A fundraising professional can choose to work in a setting that is congruent with his or her values and interests.

Preparation for a career has also progressed greatly in the last fifteen to twenty years. Most seasoned fundraisers talk about “falling into fundraising,” or finding themselves in the career by accident. Today there are many credible, accepted ways of preparing for fundraising as a profession. These include:

- Academic programs
- Schools such as The Fund Raising School
- Centers and institutes, often housed at academic institutions
- Associations which offer their own professional development
- Continuing education programs
- Affinity groups which provide a collegiality along with professional development
- Consultants who often give workshops
- Fellowships and internships, a great entry point for a first job
- In-house training
- Mentoring and on-the-job training
- Self-study available through books and other media

Finding that important first job in fundraising can be a challenge for anyone entering the field, especially the young person. Most job ads state “three to five years experience,” but the perennial question nags at us—“How can I get experience if I can’t get a job?” Next time we’ll provide suggestions that may help you find the right fit.