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LET'S BUILD HOPE
Transforming Nonprofits through Partnership

Traits of Successful Chief Development Officers

Finding a great development leader is NOT impossible. There are, however, some traits that live in most successful lead fundraisers, especially in small to mid-sized shops in which leaders need to do or manage a variety of tasks. Consider these traits and interview insights or questions that might help you elicit information about your candidate's qualities.

- Great people skills
  - *Do you want to have a beer/coffee/glass of wine with this person in the first 30 seconds that you meet them?*
- Exceptional first impression
  - *Does your candidate show up polished, professional, and prepared?*
- Comfortable with and good at asking for money
  - *Role play with your candidate: "Solicit me for an individual gift at your current nonprofit."*
- Strategic thinker
  - *How would you approach your first 90 days as CDO?*
- Excellent speaker and writer
  - *Write a letter of thanks to a new donor for your current organization.*
- Ability to manage many tasks well and happy to do so
  - *Do you prefer variety in your work or one or two key areas of focus? Describe.*
- Attention to detail
  - *Tell me about a time when you found an error someone else had missed and how you addressed that situation.*
- Follow up and follow through
  - *How and how quickly do you connect with a donor, post-visit?*
- Quick on his/her/their feet
  - *Tell me about a time when you had to be "quick on your feet."*
- Does not get defensive when pushed
  - *Press the candidate on any resume item that is even remotely concerning...and do it with some attitude. If your candidate can manage being pushed without getting defensive, you're on your way!*
- Displays authenticity and vulnerability with appropriate boundaries
  - *Tell me about a time when you became close to a donor and had to set boundaries to keep the relationship moving forward appropriately.*
- Has a strong need for performance outcomes
  - *How important is it for you to meet your goals? What tools do you use to manage your performance?*
- Happy to work in an environment of measurable accountability
  - *How do you like to be supervised? How do you prefer to be held accountable?*
- Can teach others without seeming condescending or pedantic
  - *Describe an experience in which you had to "teach" your Board members or superiors a new skill, task, or way to think about things.*