

What does it mean to be an "Ambassador"?

When you serve on a Board of Directors for a nonprofit organization, you have both internally-focused and externally-focused roles and responsibilities. Of your external responsibilities, one critical one is being an **ambassador**. It helps with fundraising, marketing, community relations and more.

Many times board members say things like "I don't like fundraising" or "I'm not comfortable asking people for money." The good news is, there is **much more** to fundraising than asking for money! And your role establishing and advancing relationships – connecting donors and prospective donors to your mission – is an absolutely essential part of fundraising, yet one where "the ask" doesn't even need to cross your mind.

Something I've learned, over the years, is that story-telling (and, I would argue, story-listening) are among the most critical competencies of board members and executives. If you're in a situation where you need to communicate (as an ambassador) about the mission of your nonprofit, you would do well to know a few pro tips:

Less is More. Think of your role as being a door-opener, not a deal-closer. You probably don't need more materials, more facts and figures, and more talking points. Instead, I bet you need less! Think of (and share) why you are involved; why you volunteer your time and donate money; why this is important to you. Your "why" is more important than the organization's "what."

Frame the Picture. Have you noticed what a huge difference it makes, in viewing a piece of art, what kind of frame surrounds it? Whether the frame is thick or thin, and what color it is, takes the viewer's eye to different aspects of the picture. So, too, with oral communication. If you begin by establishing a simple frame, the listener will hear your #1 point once you're prepared to make it. Just like "Once upon a time..." cues the listener for a specific kind of tale, your framing the conversation in terms of "to my surprise..." or "something I've been learning..." or "when I was volunteering, I saw..." will help bring your listener into a personal story wherein you may share your deep insight or poignant fact.

Cultivate Intrigue. It is far better for your listener to be curious than bored. Share some surprising fact, stay quiet, and let them drive the questioning. If the listener is the leader, you will be answering the right questions and not casting about for futile attempts at relevance.

Focus on One. People don't know how to absorb and digest facts about thousands or millions of people in need, acres of land, schools served, etc. You and I probably don't remember exactly how many million people needed to escape Syria. But we probably both remember the photo of a child, face down on water's edge, and suddenly the crisis pierced our consciousness. Tell a story of one kid, one family, one school rather than all the data points you've worked so hard to memorize. There is a great deal of research in brain science that bears this out: We can take in a story of one far more deeply than facts about many.