51% of Fundraisers Plan to Leave Their Jobs by 2021.
Here's What You Need to Know.

October 31, 2019
This is... Concerning.

51% of Fundraisers Plan to Leave Their Jobs by 2021, Says New Survey

The Harris Poll
Harris Insights & Analytics LLC, A Stagwell Company

THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY
Instead of brushing it under the rug...

“We’re going to need a bigger rug or we’re sunk.”
We’re going to talk about it.

Mary Cahalane  
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With more than 30 years of professional experience working in (and with) nonprofit organizations, Mary brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise to any conversation on the subject of “nonprofits.” Her “hands-on” approach is rooted in a commitment to the dual nature of fundraising: half art and half science; half philosophy and half paper cuts. Learn more about Mary on her website, www.mcahalane.com

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As Chief Operating Officer at MarketSmart, Zach Shefska leads a team dedicated to providing revolutionary software and services that help nonprofit organizations qualify, cultivate and prioritize their best opportunities for major and legacy giving. In his five years with MarketSmart, Zach has contributed to major initiatives like the Major Gift Benchmark Study, Fundraising Report Card’s Open Benchmarks, and more.
What we’ll cover

1. A high-level overview of the Harris Poll survey results. We’ll learn why fundraisers leave -- and what you can do about it.

2. The true cost of fundraiser turnover, and how you can calculate that at your shop.

3. Where there are “bright spots” from the survey, and what they mean for you.

4. Tactics you can employ to increase staff retention.
Separation rate by industry, 2018

https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t16.htm#jolts_table16.f.1
Why fundraisers leave
High pressure, low appreciation

- Fundraisers are expected to produce miracles, or save their organizations
High pressure, low appreciation

- **84%** of fundraisers said they felt “tremendous pressure to succeed.”

- **55%** said they “often feel unappreciated.”

- At the jobs they left most recently, they were likeliest to be **dissatisfied with their prospects for promotion (85%) or a lack of succession planning (83%).**
Staff and board don’t understand fundraising

- Expectations are set by people who don’t know what’s involved
Staff and board don’t understand fundraising

- Expectations are set by people who don’t know what’s involved
- 78% of fundraisers wished they had more time to spend meeting with supporters.
Tremendous pressure to succeed on tight timelines

- Building a successful fundraising program takes time
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- Fundraising involves different disciplines -- one person can rarely do them all well.
- Unreasonable expectations will only result in failed fundraising and loss of fundraisers.
Tremendous pressure to succeed on tight timelines

Realistic Financial Goals and Development Director Influence

High Performing Organizations and Rest of Sample Comparative Responses

- 90% of High Performing Organizations have realistic financial goals in place.
- 75% of High Performing Organizations report that the development director has a lot of influence on financial goals.
- 64% of the rest of the sample have realistic financial goals in place.
- 37% of the rest of the sample report that the development director has a lot of influence on financial goals.

51% of fundraisers plan to leave their jobs by 2021, says New Survey
Lack of trust

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- **Fundraisers expertise is not respected.**
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- Fundraisers expertise is not respected.
- Fundraisers are blocked from developing strong ties with board members and other volunteers.
Lack of trust

1. Psychological Safety
Team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other.

2. Dependability
Team members get things done on time and meet Google’s high bar for excellence.

3. Structure & Clarity
Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.

4. Meaning
Work is personally important to team members.

5. Impact
Team members think their work matters and creates change.

https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/five-keys-to-a-successful-google-team/
Lack of investment in fundraisers and fundraising

- Poor salaries and poor schedules
- No organizational investment in continuing education.
- No donor management system, or a cheap one
- No willingness to spend money in order to raise money
Lack of investment in fundraisers and fundraising

Each additional form of training is associated with an additional $37K of income.

- 61% of people who left fundraising jobs say they were dissatisfied with their access to leadership training.
- 34% of current fundraisers are dissatisfied with their access to leadership training.

https://masteringmajorgifts.com/report/
No organizational culture of philanthropy

- Fundraisers are left on their own to build relationships and raise money.
- **36%** of fundraisers said they were dissatisfied with the support they got from their boards.
- **29%** said they were dissatisfied with the help received from the CEO.
Poor management and communication

- Fundraisers are not “in the loop” and often play catch-up with important news.
- Fundraisers are not consulted on important staffing decisions.
- The CEO does not view the CDO as a partner, but an employee.
What does it really cost?
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FIGURE 1
Replacing employees is costly for companies’ bottom line
The cost of turnover is remarkably consistent across jobs at different pay levels, except the very highest-paid jobs, 1992 to 2007

https://www.americanprogress.org
What does it really cost?

Very highly paid jobs and those at the senior or executive levels tend to have disproportionately high turnover costs as a percentage of salary (up to 213 percent), which skews the data upwards.
What does it really cost?

- Other industry reports suggest that 33% of salary is a reasonable benchmark for the cost of employee turnover.

- Payscale.com suggests an average salary of ~$69,000.

- It costs an organization ~$23,000 each time they lose a front-line fundraiser.

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http://info.workinstitute.com/retentionreport2017
Bright spots in the survey
Fundraisers are driven by mission

- Fundraisers need to feel a connection with the mission -- and they do.
- 93% of survey participants said they couldn’t work for a charity if they didn’t have a strong connection to the cause.
Fundraisers are happy with their travel schedules

- 92% are happy with their travel schedule.
But flexibility matters

- Many fundraisers are happy with their organization’s flexibility around family and childcare
Fundraisers are satisfied with the level of independence

- 83% are satisfied with their level of independence in their jobs.
Fundraisers are happy with their volunteers

- 83% said they’re happy with their relationship with their charity’s volunteers (excluding board members).
What can you do?
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- Respect work-life balance
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- **Invest in fundraisers and fundraising**
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- **Build a real culture of philanthropy that includes all staff and board**
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- **Be sure your fundraiser’s authority matches her responsibilities.**
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- Invest in fundraisers and fundraising
- Build a real culture of philanthropy that includes all staff and board
- Be sure your fundraiser’s authority matches her responsibilities.
- Don’t expect miracles
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