

# WHAT WILL MAKE YOU THE MOST MONEY, THE FASTEST?

Does this picture remind you of you on a bad day? Or every day? What's going wrong? How can you end the plague of doing three people's jobs at once?



Consider LEAN development. Going LEAN in nonprofit fund development is similar in some ways to lean manufacturing. Lean Development is similar to Lean Manufacturing in that you look at all of your different development processes and activities, and do your best to cut out the activities that do not make you the most money in the least amount of time, and put your focus and attention on the activities that DO make you the most money quickest. You will be fighting organizational culture tooth and nail, because nonprofits are often the most inefficient and financially strapped of industries, operating with a skeleton crew with no organizational memory.

For instance, Events are a HUGE timesink for development staff. If your development office does a large annual fundraising event and three or four more events throughout the year, you know that your staff person is really stretched.

Grants are less of a timesink, but do lead to delayed gratification in terms of money and it's never certain whether or not you'll get the money you seek.

Direct Mail Appeals have a 3% return, on average, so if you're looking to raise a lot of money, you have to send letters to a LOT of people, which is hard for a financially strapped nonprofit to do. And it's also a huge headache for the development person to go back and forth with the Executive Director to get the letter edited, then printed in house, then stuffed, stamped, sealed, put in zip code order, taken to the post office, weighed, put in trays, sleeves, strapped, etc.

I could go on, but I've made a fundraising calculator which details which fundraising methods give you the most bang for your buck on <http://wildwomanfundraising.com>.

**Lean Development** means you **minimize your focus on events, automate your development**

**processes** as much as possible, and **maximize your focus on major gifts**. This has been proven to make a nonprofit the most money in the least amount of time. You find major gift prospects through the Business Journal in your city, and through annual reports from similar nonprofits, as well as on the boards of foundations that give to causes like yours. Then you research the prospects, and use moves management to move them through the cultivation and ask process. Major gifts, when you ask a prospect for a gift face to face, has a 50% success rate. People don't realize how powerful this is. It's what people are often most afraid to do, but it gets the best results. This is why nearly 40% of the money given away in the US is given to religious institutions. They ask every Sunday, in person. It's hard to beat that for an opportunity.

Lean development also means that you focus on **the culture of continuous improvement**, study the methods of your competitors, and see where your development processes get bogged down. [The Elegant Solution](#) is a book I would HIGHLY recommend on the topic of Lean. Ways to apply Lean to fundraising are virtually endless, and this is a field of fundraising which is still evolving. I have a chapter on this available for purchase.

I firmly believe that nonprofits that practice this method are the ones that will survive this downturn.

