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# **Nonprofit Hero: Five Easy Steps to Successful Board Fundraising by Valerie M. Jones**

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Jones, V. M. (2018) *Nonprofit Hero: Five easy steps to successful board fundraising*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield. \$32.00 (Hardcover), ISBN 978-1538115022.

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### **Introduction**

Nonprofit boards play a key role in organizational sustainability. They are relied on for leadership, oversight, and strategy and to ensure that financial resources are in place to carry out the mission of the organization. Yet, for many boards, fundraising is the most challenging aspect of their role. In *Nonprofit Hero: Five easy steps to successful board fundraising*, author Valerie Jones applies more than 20 years of experience as a nonprofit consultant helping nonprofit boards unlock their ability to raise funds. Jones outlines a step-by-step, realistic process that is immediately useful for nonprofit boards of all shapes and sizes to become fundraising heroes.

### **Description**

The book is presented in just four chapters. The first chapter, “Unlocking the Secrets of Authentic Asking” sets the stage for the author’s approach to fundraising. It begins with a series of prompts asking board members to think about their own experiences as donors and to think about the instances when their financial gift brought them joy and when it left a bad taste in their mouth. The author cleverly uses this tactic to highlight the power of authenticity in the fundraising process. Building on this exercise, Jones takes the reader through additional questions that help the reader think about and focus on their passion and what they care most about in life. Jones puts forth that knowing what is personally important is the basis for successful fundraising by stating, “Once you articulate what you care about and hope to accomplish with your life, you’ll know how your nonprofit’s mission aligns with your own” (p. 7).

After the reader has an idea of their passion and purpose, the author introduces the Myers Briggs personality type assessment as a means to help board members understand how different personalities play different roles in the fundraising process. Following the Myers Briggs assessment, the author introduces the traditional fundraising model, but reframes it by placing “thanking” as the first step rather than “research,” which is typically what most

fundraising books suggest. The author offers that thanking donors is not only an easy way to start fundraising, but is also a powerful means to retain current supporters. Jones drives this idea home by including the results of a national survey that found “not being acknowledged or thanked” was the top reason donors stopped giving (p. 22).

The second chapter, “The Five Steps,” takes the reader through each of the five fundraising steps—thank, engage, research, cultivate, and ask—included in the model from chapter one. Jones taps into personal experience in working with nonprofits, and uses parables as a means to share real-world fundraising situations for each fundraising step. Jones offers several scenarios that correspond to each step while relating it to a specific personality type. Each scenario includes corresponding action steps that are immediately useful. Some scenarios encourage the reader to reflect a bit deeper by walking them through a journaling exercise.

The third chapter, “Do It Your Way: Sixteen Asking Personalities,” gets to the heart of the author’s approach by helping board members identify which fundraising superpower they are more likely to have, based on their Myers Briggs personality type. Each of the sixteen possible personality types are applied to each of the five fundraising steps along with examples of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. Jones includes a brief description and a few fun facts about each personality type, as well as a helpful reference chart on pages 68 and 69.

Chapter four, “Fund Your Vision,” starts off reminding the reader that knowing their personality type is critical to the actual tasks of fundraising. The author moves on to practical resources that nonprofits can use, such as sample plans, tools, checklists, and scripts. The book concludes with the “Fundraiser’s Toolkit” that includes examples such as sample thank you notes, giving dos and don’ts, and cultivation activities, to name a few.

## **Evaluation**

Using individual personality types, motivations, and experiences, the author addresses the “yeah buts...” that are universal to anyone who has ever asked for money to support a cause. In helping board members learn about their personality type, raising money becomes an enjoyable, authentic activity free of the usual anxieties and fears related to “the ask.” Furthermore, the author’s approach that focuses on thanking donors as the first step in fundraising is a refreshing perspective. As such, “Nonprofit Hero” is a useful guide to help nonprofit boards overcome their fears about raising money.

If the desire is to find a comprehensive toolkit about how to raise money, this book may not be the best fit. Although Jones provides several tools, sample scripts, and examples, they are not exhaustive, but rather can be used as starting points. And, while the author provides tools and guidance along the way about potential issues related to each step, and helps the reader identify their unique style of fundraising, actually carrying out the steps might be challenging for most nonprofits. However, if a nonprofit chooses to use this book, they would need a “champion” who can guide the board through each step. An ideal champion would be the board chair, the executive director, or a board member. Furthermore, rushing through this book will defeat the purpose. Each section must be given the time necessary to allow for self reflection and engagement in the recommended action steps.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, “Nonprofit Hero” is an excellent tool for board members to start a conversation about how to raise money for their organizations in an authentic way. The author uses self reflection and personality styles as a unique approach to the traditional fundraising model.

Ultimately, what Jones offers is a process for board members to reflect on their purpose and passion, turning fundraising into something full of excitement rather than dread. Jones states, “you can decide that no one cares about your cause. You can assume they will reject it (and you) if asked for support. If you’re right, the world of fundraising is fraught with peril. If, on the other hand, you believe your life is ablaze with human stars twinkling brightly, ready to light your way...well, then, fundraising’s a grand adventure” (p. 42).

Jones has succeeded in reframing fundraising in a way that inspires and encourages board members to uncover their superpowers. It would be an effective board development activity to use on a regular basis to keep board members engaged in fundraising. However, the book is more than just a fundraising tool for board members as it provides any group a process to discover how their personal purpose and passion supports the common goal.

### **Author Biography**

**Crystal Trull** uses her more than 20 years of experience as a nonprofit professional consulting for nonprofit organizations and teaching master’s courses on nonprofit management and leadership and nonprofit board governance at the University of San Diego and the University of California San Diego.