



Job Satisfaction and Workplace Issues in the Fundraising Profession

Executive Summary

Conducted by The Association of Fundraising Professionals &

The Chronicle of Philanthropy

In Conjunction With The Harris Poll

Background

The fundraising profession is under enormous pressure. With government funding decreasing, many charities are turning increasingly to their fundraisers to generate the support needed to continue operating important programs. At the same time, the population of donors is, slowly but surely, shrinking, with giving only increasing in recent years because of major gifts and a focus on wealthy donors. In addition, there remain many misconceptions about fundraising—and what it takes to create a successful fundraising program—among charity CEOs, boards and others, leading to heightened and misinformed expectations about the impact a fundraiser can immediately have upon an organization.

With all of these factors, it can be no surprise there is growing concern in the profession and among charity leaders about how fundraisers view their jobs and their satisfaction with their employing organizations. According to the Association of Fundraising Professionals' (AFP) *Compensation and Benefits Reports*, the turnover rate in the profession has averaged roughly four years over the last decade. These reports also find that in a typical year, at least half of respondents reported thinking about leaving their jobs at some point.

Employee retention is especially critical among fundraisers because the foundation of fundraising is creating connections with donors. If fundraisers leave their jobs, charities often have to rebuild those relationships, or at least pause those relationships, as new fundraising staff is hired.

Because of the importance of employee retention and job satisfaction in the fundraising profession, and the growing emphasis on workplace culture, self-care, work/life balance and career burnout, AFP and *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* partnered with The Harris Poll on a survey of 1000 fundraisers across the United States and Canada. The survey, *Job Satisfaction and Workplace Issues in the Fundraising Profession*, asked a variety of questions about job satisfaction, important benefits, fundraising support from an organization, workplace culture and why fundraisers leave their positions.

Methodology

This executive summary, along with the accompanying infographics, highlight the key findings from the survey, which was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* and AFP between May 23 and June 3, 2019. The research was conducted among 1,035 *Chronicle of Philanthropy* and AFP subscribers/members aged 18+ living in the U.S. (n=984) or Canada (n=101) who work full-time, part-time, or were employed within the past five years in fundraising or leading an organization that relies on fundraising.

Respondents for this survey were selected among those who are subscribers to *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* or members of AFP and have agreed to participate in online surveys. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Highlights

Schedule Flexibility Ranks Highest in Keeping Employees Satisfied

More than nine in 10 current fundraising professionals are satisfied with their travel schedule (92 percent) and the flexibility they have in dealing with family/childcare issues (91 percent).

More than eight in 10 are satisfied with:

- Autonomy and independence in their role;
- Relationships with their organization's volunteers (non-board);
- The feeling that their work matters to the organization;
- Current job overall; and
- Benefits.

Fundraising professionals are least satisfied with their organization's current succession plans with regard to the fundraising department and the organization overall (both 44 percent).

Only about five in 10 are satisfied with amount of staff they have to do their job (50 percent), the speed with which vacant fundraising jobs are filled (50 percent), opportunities for promotion (51 percent), and opportunities to receive mentoring (56 percent). No differences exist between US and Canadian professionals.

Paid Time Off, Medical/Dental Insurance, and Flexible Hours are Most Important to Job Satisfaction

When asked to select the top five from a list of 24 possible job benefits, six emerged as the most important to job satisfaction, with at least 50 percent selecting it as a top five. Paid time off ranks first (78 percent), followed by medical/dental insurance (73 percent), and flexible hours (72 percent). Rounding out the top six are retirement funds (66 percent), professional development opportunities (56 percent), and remote work options (50 percent).

Differences exist between Americans and Canadians: Paid time off and remote work options are significantly more likely to own a top five spot among Americans (15 and 11-point gaps respectively), while Canadians are much more likely to value professional development opportunities than Americans (16-point gap).

The Nonprofit Mission Is Core to Talent Acquisition and Retention

Over nine in 10 agree that they could only work for a nonprofit for which they have a strong connection to the mission (93 percent), and over eight in 10 agree the benefits of their job outweigh the negatives (84 percent). Fundraising professionals also agree they wish they had more time to focus on meeting with donors (78 percent).

However, more than eight in 10 (84 percent) say they feel or have felt tremendous pressure to succeed, and more than half (55 percent) say they feel or have felt under-appreciated in their role. Just under half agree that fundraising jobs “are pretty similar no matter the organization” (46 percent).

Fundraising professionals largely agree that donors have become increasingly involved.

- More than nine in 10 (92 percent) say compared to five years ago, donors increasingly want more information about the impact of their gift.
- More than eight in 10 (85 percent) say donors overall are more aware of social issues than they were five years ago.
- More than seven in 10 (77 percent) say compared to five years ago, donors increasingly want to earmark the purpose of their gift, with significantly stronger agreement among Canadians (10-point gap).

There is some disagreement with the direction donations have taken in the last two years. Nearly half (49 percent) of fundraising professionals agree they’ve seen a spike in donations in the last two years, while over 3 in 10 (34 percent) agree they’ve seen a decline in donations in the last two years.

Three in 10 Are Likely to Leave the Fundraising Field in the Next Two Years; Salary and Organizational Issues Are Primary Contributing Factors

While 30 percent of current fundraising professionals indicate they are likely to leave the fundraising field within the next two years, half (51 percent) say it is likely they will leave their current organization within the next two years—and Canadians are much more likely to do so (61 percent vs. 50 percent).

Salary and organizational/management/leadership issues are the most common reasons given for being likely to leave, or for having already left, the field of fundraising. Workload is also mentioned by two in 10.

While not having enough staff members to meet fundraising goals is cited by just under two in 10 (19 percent overall), this is the #1 reason why Canadians say they will leave (or have left) fundraising (35 percent vs. 18 percent for Americans):

- About one in 10 do not feel their career goals are supported (14 percent) or that they do not have enough autonomy and/or independence in their role (10 percent).
- Discrimination on any level and an insufficient commitment to diversity account for a very small percentage of those who say they will leave or have already left the fundraising field.

Key Findings by Category

The key findings from the survey have been divided into six different categories:

- 1) General Satisfaction With the Job
- 2) Fundraising Support in the Workplace
- 3) Salaries and Benefits
- 4) Organizational Culture
- 5) Professional Development
- 6) Looking for New Employment

(Rounding of figures means that not all data points add up to 100 percent.)

1. General Satisfaction With the Job

- Most fundraisers (80 percent) are satisfied with their current position (40 percent very satisfied/39 percent somewhat satisfied), while just one in five are dissatisfied (15 percent somewhat dissatisfied, 5 percent very dissatisfied).
- A large percentage of fundraisers (93 percent) agreed that they could only work for a nonprofit where they have a strong connection to the mission (62 percent strongly agree, 31 percent somewhat agree)
- 84 percent agree that they feel tremendous pressure to succeed in their role (43 percent strongly agree, 40 percent somewhat agree).
- Just over half (55 percent) agree they often feel or have felt under-appreciated in their role (19 percent strongly agree/36 percent somewhat agree), while 45 percent disagree (28 percent somewhat/17 percent strongly).
- Almost four in five (79 percent) agree that the benefits of their job outweigh the negative (35 percent strongly agree, 44 percent somewhat agree), while 14 percent somewhat disagree, and 7 percent strongly disagree.

2. Fundraising Support in the Workplace

- Almost three-quarters of respondents (73 percent) are satisfied with the amount of money that their organization allocates for fundraising (32 percent very/41 percent somewhat satisfied).
- Two-thirds (67 percent) are satisfied with the technology they have, such as donor database and gift-processing platforms, to do their job (28 percent very/39 percent somewhat). Twenty-two percent are somewhat dissatisfied, and 11 percent are very dissatisfied.
- Half of fundraisers (50 percent) are satisfied with the amount of staff they have to perform the organization's fundraising functions (17 percent very/32 percent somewhat). Three in ten are somewhat dissatisfied, and 21 percent are very dissatisfied.
- More than three-quarters (77 percent) are satisfied with the quality of the fundraising staff their organization hires (38 percent very/39 percent somewhat). Twenty-three percent are dissatisfied (17 percent somewhat/6 percent very).

- Almost two-thirds (64 percent) are satisfied with the way their organization allocates fundraising staff and resources (21 percent very/43 percent somewhat). Just over one-third (36 percent) are dissatisfied (27 percent somewhat/9 percent very).
- Seven in ten respondents (71 percent) are satisfied with the support they get from their organization's chief executive officer (40 percent very/31 percent somewhat). Eighteen percent are somewhat dissatisfied, and 11 percent are very dissatisfied.
- Two-thirds are satisfied with the understanding of their organization's staff about the importance of fundraising (31 percent very/37 percent somewhat), while 33 percent are dissatisfied (23 percent somewhat/10 percent very).
- Three in four respondents (74 percent) are satisfied with the overall effectiveness of their organization's fundraising (25 percent very/49 percent somewhat). More than two in ten (21 percent) are somewhat dissatisfied, while 5 percent are very dissatisfied.

3. Salaries and Benefits

- Three-quarters of fundraisers are satisfied with their salary (29 percent very/45 percent somewhat). One quarter (26 percent) are dissatisfied with their salary (18 percent somewhat/8 percent very).
- Eighty percent are satisfied with their benefits (46 percent very/34 percent somewhat), while 13 percent are somewhat dissatisfied, and 7 percent are very dissatisfied.
- Half of respondents (51 percent) of respondents are satisfied with their opportunities for promotion within their organization (17 percent very/35 percent somewhat), while 49 percent are dissatisfied (29 percent somewhat/20 percent very).
- More than three in four (77 percent) are satisfied with their work-life balance (40 percent very/37 percent somewhat). Just under a quarter (23 percent) are dissatisfied (16 percent somewhat/7 percent very).

4. Organizational Culture

- Seventy-two percent of fundraisers are satisfied with their organization's work culture (35 percent very/37 percent somewhat). Twenty-eight percent are dissatisfied (18 percent somewhat/10 percent very).
- More than eight in ten (83 percent) are satisfied with their autonomy and independence in their role at their organization (54 percent very/29 percent somewhat), while 12 percent are somewhat dissatisfied, and 6 percent are very dissatisfied.
- More than three-quarters (78 percent) are satisfied with their organization's office environment and the behavior of their colleagues (41 percent very/37 percent somewhat). Fourteen percent are somewhat dissatisfied, and 8 percent are very dissatisfied.

5. Professional Development

- Three-quarters of respondents (75 percent) are satisfied with their access to professional development (42 percent very/33 percent somewhat), while one-quarter is dissatisfied (16 percent somewhat/8 percent very).
- Two-thirds (66 percent) are satisfied with their access to leadership training (35 percent very/32 percent somewhat), while 34 percent are dissatisfied (20 percent somewhat/14 percent very).
- Fifty-six percent are satisfied with their opportunities to receiving mentoring (23 percent very/34 percent somewhat), while 44 percent are dissatisfied (28 percent somewhat/16 percent very).

6. Looking for New Employment

- Just over half of respondents (51 percent) are likely to leave their current organization within the next two years (25 percent very likely/26 percent somewhat likely), while 49 percent are unlikely (22 percent somewhat unlikely/27 percent very unlikely).
- Three in ten (30 percent) report being likely to leave the fundraising field within the next two years (9 percent very likely/21 percent somewhat likely). Seventy percent are unlikely to leave (26 percent somewhat unlikely and 44 percent very unlikely).
- The top five reasons for wanting to leave fundraising are:
 - Salary: 29 percent
 - The organization's management overall: 28 percent
 - Unreasonable expectations about fundraising goals: 27 percent
 - A toxic organizational culture: 27 percent
 - Leadership (CEO or board) lacks respect for, or understanding of, fundraising: 21 percent
- Half of respondents (50 percent) are satisfied with the speed in which vacant fundraising jobs are filled at their organization (17 percent very/33 percent somewhat), while 30 percent are somewhat dissatisfied, and 20 percent are very dissatisfied.
- Less than half (44 percent) are satisfied with the succession planning in their organization's fundraising department (9 percent very/34 percent somewhat), while 56 are dissatisfied (36 percent somewhat/20 percent very).