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First Things First



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G. Douglass Alexander, a Founding Partner of Alexander Haas, left this world April 6. He was a southern gentleman who made a lasting impression on those he met with his passion for excellence, dry and sarcastic sense of humor, his knowledge of how to guide nonprofits to success, and his basketball hook shot. Our hearts are with his family. Doug retired from Alexander Haas in 2007, but his legacy lives on here at the firm that bears his name and with the thousands of clients the firm has served and continues to serve.

[Read about Doug's life and legacy here.](#)

from the education-focused desk of
Arthur L. Criscillis, Ed.D. | Managing Partner

Training in the Time of COVID-19

In conversations with clients and colleagues, I have heard that training is high on everyone's list. With travel prohibited, many staff members are seeking additional training opportunities and many leaders are trying to structure appropriate learning opportunities for their staff members. That is well and good—an excellent way to utilize time.



Let me offer a suggestion for *Training in the Time of COVID-19* (apologies to Gabriel Garcia Marquez) of development officers that should actually become part of our general training regimen for gift officers. This suggestion is born of several factors—my own experience, my work with many, many gift officers as both supervisor and consultant, and my review of any number of training opportunities afforded front line fundraisers.

First some background. In working with a front-line gift officer to assist in strategy development for prospects, I was reminded of a gap in his understanding. He was interested in developing an approach for an alumnus, who did not give personally, although the accounting firm for which he is the founder and managing partner made contributions. It was clear to me that he failed to recognize that gifts from the firm were, in fact, to some degree coming out of the alumnus' pocket. While there was merit in working with that alumnus to secure an individual gift, to approach him as though he were not giving would be a mistake. In short, his lack of understanding of the differences among corporations was proving to be a problem in his work with a prospect.

That reminded me of my early days as a gift officer. I remembered dealing with a number of prospects who were involved in the world of investments. One was a hedge fund manager whose fund was a fund of funds, giving investors access to a good array of other hedge funds—sort of like a mutual fund approach to hedge-fund investing versus owning one specific fund. Let's just say that, as he explained what he was doing, I was lost. I had no idea what a hedge fund was; to say nothing about some of the strategies those funds employed. I nodded, smiled and kept quiet. Another did technical analysis for a mutual fund company...say what?? A third ran a fund that employed a long-short strategy designed to give investors a steady return. As he described it, "This fund is for people who want to have a reasonable return on their investment. I'll never hit a home run, but neither will I read the headlines and immediately get nauseous." One other was employed by Bain Capital. As he described what this private equity firm did (and I had no idea what private equity even meant), I struck that "smile, nod, repeat" posture so familiar to me (and others) when being told something about which I know nothing.

So, what's the point of this? I have come to believe that we would serve our budding (and some who may be in full-bloom) professionals well by ensuring that they have a basic—and I do mean basic—understanding of the language and structure of the business/finance world. Having a degree of fluency in those areas would be beneficial to most. Many of the prospects they will work with, will live in one or more of those worlds. Many who do not, will still have a familiarity with one or both. We take great pains to educate gift officers in the profession. We also make sure that they have a good understanding of our college and/or university. We provide them with continuing education opportunities of all sorts. Yet, I am fairly convinced that we do not serve them nor our profession well if we do not include the basic concepts and language of business and finance as part of their overall introduction to the profession. In doing that, we have resources galore, including faculty, our alumni or select board members, if we choose to use them. They could assist us in designing the training and even help with instruction...high-level, broad, but sufficient to give them some degree of fluency. In doing so, we are likely to help them become even more effective in their work with their prospects. So, as you think about the training or professional development you want to provide your staff—or some part of it—during this time of COVID-19 social distancing, give some consideration to this. Once we can return to normal (or a new normal), consider how it can be one essential component of the education of a gift officer.

COVID-19 Impact on *Education*

Breaking News on Round Two Funding for COVID-19 Aid

Congress should be approving round two of the **Paycheck Protection Program** this week, authorizing \$310 billion in additional aid. The program is intended to benefit small businesses, including non-profit organizations, by helping them cover payroll and operating expenses.

Round One exhausted its funding in less than two weeks, and funds for Round Two are not expected to last long, in part due to the number of applications in the pipeline when Round One funding ran dry.

[The NonProfit Quarterly wrote about](#) the experiences of several nonprofits in seeking Round One funding. One of the best pieces of advice:

- **Move quickly**, and, if you can, make your request through a smaller local lender such as your community bank. And, if you don't have a relationship with a local bank, ask your board members or key volunteers.

Gifts to Education Slipping During Pandemic

In the wake of the pandemic, support for educational nonprofits has slipped since the crisis crisis started, according to a new survey by *Luth Research* and the *Nonprofit Institute at the University of San Diego's School of Leadership and Education Sciences*, in partnership with *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

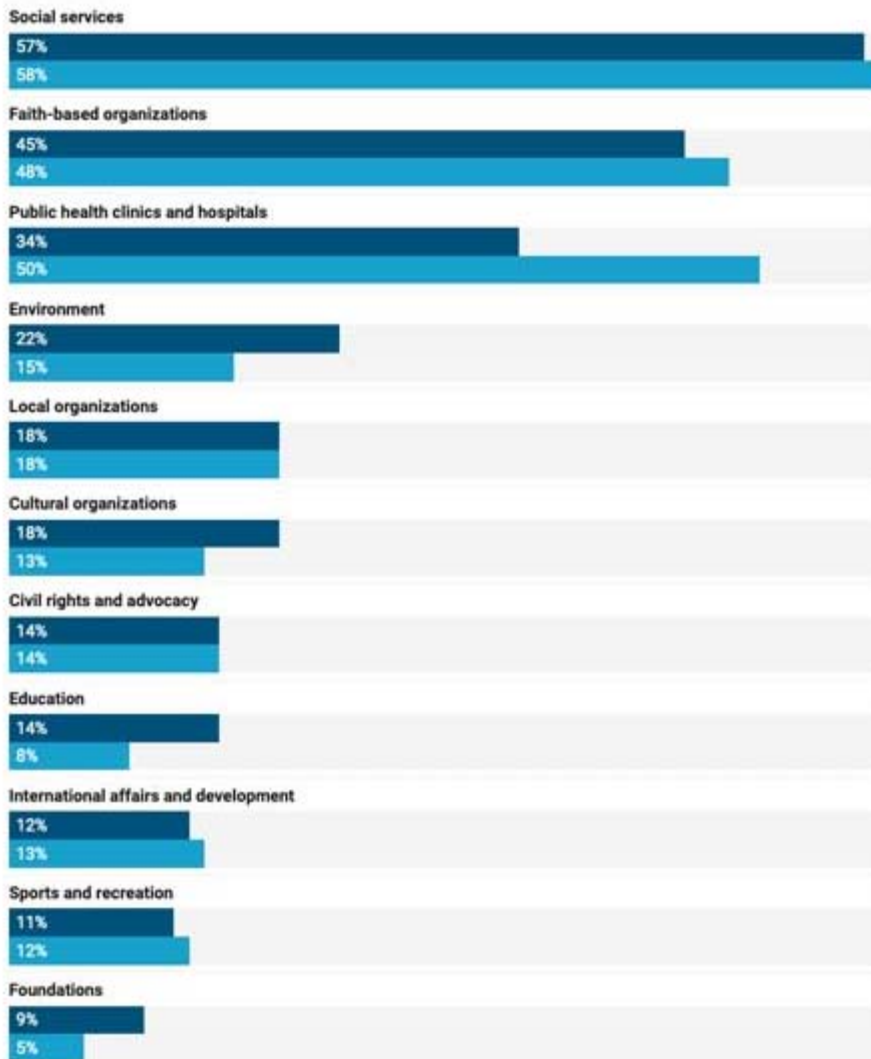
Fourteen percent of those surveyed reported that they had given to an educational nonprofit in the year before the pandemic. Only eight percent said they have given or plan to give to an educational nonprofit since March. *COP, 4-29*

Here's a Snapshot

How the Coronavirus Has Affected Giving

The pandemic has caused some Americans to shift the causes they support

■ Percent who gave to nonprofits 12 months before pandemic ■ Percent who have given or plan to give to nonprofits since March



Client's Student's Mask Design Goes Viral

You've seen this. It went viral a few weeks ago. While we are encouraged, and even required, to wear face masks during this pandemic, a key group seemed to be excluded from this movement: the deaf and hard of hearing. To help change that, Ashley Lawrence — a student **Eastern Kentucky University**, our Client Partner, studying education for the deaf and hard of hearing —designed a face mask with a clear window that allows others to see and read lips and facial expressions. So proud of this young woman and the attention her design has brought to this esteemed institution.



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