

NACMA



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Fundraising as a Department-Wide Collaboration

When I worked for the University of Arizona under then-Athletics Director Greg Byrne, he used to remind our athletics staff that all of us, regardless of department or title, were compliance officers and fundraisers. It was made clear that every single one of us played a role in following the NCAA rules and generating additional resources to help our student-athletes succeed.

When I was hired in November 2021 at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) to lead our external affairs, I wanted to make sure that I reiterated what Greg taught me all those years ago at Arizona – that everyone had a role to play in our fundraising efforts. Fortunately, we were able to put that into practice right after we hired our new Blue Raider Athletic Association (BRAA) team in February. We onboarded four new

BRAA staff members on February 1 and had our University's Day of Giving – "True Blue Give" – less than two weeks later.

To pull this off, we leaned heavily on our communications team to coordinate a press release and numerous social media posts on the main athletics accounts. We asked our marketing team to help us host a "Staff Power Hour" where the athletics department staff came by to eat breakfast, meet the new team, and make their commitment for the upcoming year. It was truly a group effort, and we broke our True Blue Give record for athletics!

In addition to our annual giving push during True Blue Give, we also leaned on the entire athletics department staff to help with our major gift fundraising push called the Build Blue Campaign. For multiple six or seven figure major gift prospects we have developed a memorable solicitation event that incorporates multiple areas within the department. We roll out the red (or blue at MTSU!) carpet at our Football Stadium Club to make our top donor prospects feel special before asking them for a transformational gift.

As part of this event, we rely on the video department to put the prospects' name on the football video board, ribbon boards and TVs

within the club. We lean on our special events team to order food and set up the club with renderings, football helmets and other decorations. We depend on our facilities staff to make sure the club is clean and the equipment staff to provide gear in the right sizes. We even have all head coaches who are available greet the donors as they get off the elevator to provide a unique and impactful moment upon arrival. If any of these tasks are not taken care of, then we can't execute our presentation and make our major gift solicitation as effectively.

It's often said that fundraising is all about relationships. The last point I'll make is that the development staff are not the only people who can cultivate those relationships and lead people towards a gift. The ticket office staff, marketing department, head coaches, sponsorship sales teams, and senior level administrators all have valuable relationships that can assist with development efforts. Fundraising needs to be a collaborative effort to succeed at the highest level. As John C. Maxwell said, "Teamwork makes the dream work."

@d3admins

NADIIIAA



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Brands. We all have them. Some stronger and more popular than others. Some iconic, rich with history and tradition that is well known. Others still may be working to cultivate awareness and streamline the tentacles that reach beyond our departments, teams and athletes into the community. A brand is a promise of performance. A story. We are the story tellers of commerce. A clear story makes it easier for a consumer to invest, monetarily or through association. In our case, consumers are not only prospective students, but alumni, parents, donors, fans, corporate and community partners.

Consistency is key when building equity in your brand. Your brand isn't just the visual identity, which is a key component in recognition (exact PMS color matches, alignment, context, etc.), but so many other facets. Your brand is the

non-tangibles and the value that people associate with you.

It, like a reputation, can precede you and encourage people to fill in the blanks if not clearly defined. Brand attributes are a personality; in the mind of the consumer, it is your reputation.

When working to clearly articulate your brand and its value, ensure that you've done your homework. What is the legacy and tradition that key constituencies associate with your brand? Does that align with your institutional and departmental mission and goals? Is the theme relatable and sustainable for past, present and future? Does this narrative cohesively support and align with the larger institutional brand?

Sport is a lifeblood to many of our Division III campuses. It encapsulates the life lessons outside of the classroom. We may not have the same cathedral-like venues that our Division I or professional counterparts call home, but we still can capitalize on and harness the value that our brands stand for.

A strong brand translates into awareness and clearly defined values. That, in turn, can open doors for new fundraising efforts and revenue streams. Cultivation of corporate sponsors

through relational partnerships are more successful when entities know the value of your brand. Valuations can occur based on impressions and reach. New partners may be looking to associate their products, services and tools to your students, fans and attendees.

Your brand should be your authentic north star. Always guiding you while keeping your mission, values and traditions at the forefront. This will also help you to clearly define properties and organizations that you do not wish to be associated with. The rest will come with constant intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skillful execution. Over time, if you remain authentic, equity will build with awareness, differentiation, perceived quality, loyalty, and value.

If done right, all of this will firmly place your value stake in the ground, allowing you to return to the foundation of your brand. After all, Jeremy Darlow says it best with the title of his book, *Brands Win Championships*.