Your first 90 days as executive director: learn the revenue before you change the plan.

Scott Dunagan, dmideas.com

Get each answer in writing.

Days 1 to 30: Read the revenue

- [ ] Ask the board and staff what's blocked and what's working.
- [ ] Renewal: how many of last season's subscribers came back? Where is renewal today against the same date last year?
- [ ] Members: how many joined, renewed, and lapsed?
- [ ] Donors: of last year's donors, how many have given again this year? How many first-time donors came in? Which few major gifts decide the year? Does every open ask have a date?
- [ ] Baseline: for each line, write today's number next to the same point last year.
- [ ] If the database can't answer these, write that down as your first finding.
- [ ] Who owns what: do marketing and development share one calendar and one set of numbers?

Days 31 to 60: One target per major line

- [ ] Set one target per line (subscription renewals, memberships, donor retention, new donors, major gifts, single tickets), each with today's baseline and a date.
- [ ] Check hard media costs against 15% to 20% of projected earned revenue (tickets, subscriptions, memberships). Far outside that range? Ask why before you approve the plan.
- [ ] Walk one path the way a patron would: the email or ad, the landing page, the button, the follow-up. Can staff explain it in a minute?
- [ ] Check the order of the asks: renewal first, gift second.
- [ ] Set a checkpoint for each target and name the decision in advance: keep going, change course, or stop.

Days 61 to 90: Your first board report

- [ ] Keep the report to one page, built on results: contributed revenue against goal and last year, donor retention, new donors, major gifts closed and in the pipeline, pledges and grants still to collect, board giving, and renewals and attendance against your targets.
- [ ] Leave out the counts of posts, emails, and events.
- [ ] End with one real question the board has to answer in the room.
- [ ] Budget vote coming? Frame each marketing line around the number it should move and when you'll know.
- [ ] Interim? Leave the next ED a baseline and a clean report.