

PROFESSIONAL

December 2005

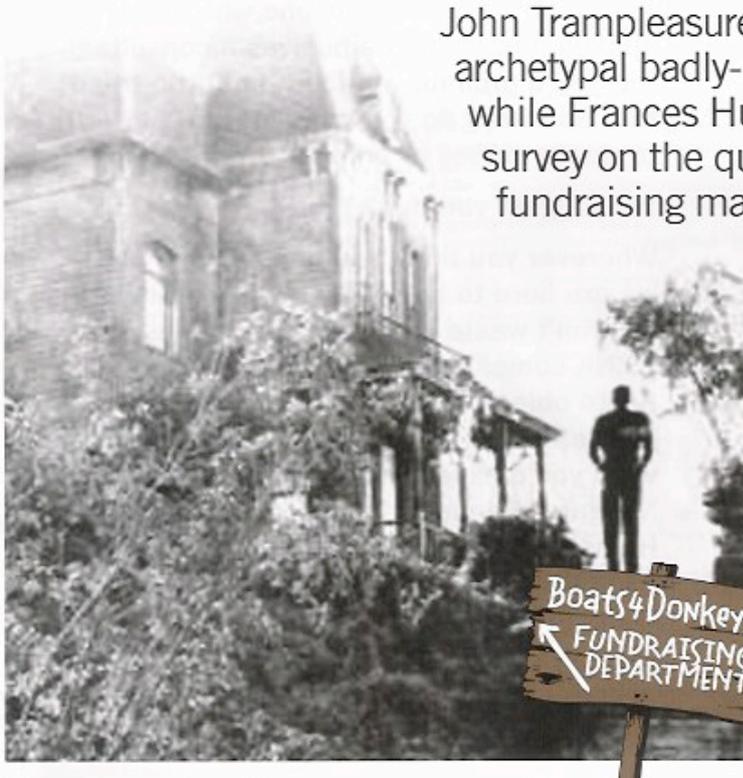
# Fundraising

The UK's only fundraising magazine

## PYSCHED OUT

Fundraising management from hell

John Trampleasure looks at the archetypal badly-run charity (pp16-18) while Frances Hurst introduces a survey on the quality of fundraising management (pp16-21)



### Generous Society

The sector responds to the recommendations in the Home Office's A Generous Society report pp23-24

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## I'm a fundraiser, get me out of here...

**The voluntary sector has traditionally been ambivalent about management. But, as Frances Hurst discovers, corporate psychopaths are making many employees' live a nightmare**

Am I alone in thinking that management gets more than its fair share of flak? Whether it's the NHS, British Airways or the England football team, when things go wrong, it always seems to be the management's fault.

Well, it normally is, I hear you cry. There have certainly been plenty of high-profile examples to support this view. But besides the excesses of the corporate sector, why does all management – public, private, or voluntary sector – get tarred with the same brush?

The faddishness of many management techniques – giving rise to the ‘Oh, they are just back from a management training course’ cry from staff – doesn’t help. The media doesn’t help either, with stories of fat cat salaries and nepotism. Admitting to being a manager these days is about as comfortable as having to explain that you clamp cars for a living. Turn on the TV and you are virtually guaranteed to see a manager being harangued on Channel 4 News for their incompetence or being ridiculed in a sitcom. Management is an easy target. Even Management Today, that bastion of the boardroom, ran an article this year entitled, ‘Let’s reclaim the ‘M’ word’, addressing this very issue.

A recent article in the HR press revealed that in a study of 3.5 million workers, more than three-quarters believe their work is impeded by interference from their managers. Reasons cited as hindering workplace efficiency included excessive bureaucracy, a blame culture, lack of input, and delays in making decisions. Meanwhile, a cross-sector survey earlier this year found that two-thirds of workers said the reason they had left their previous job had not been for more money or to advance their careers – but to get away from their manager. Then there are the real horror stories – the ones which make the bosses in John Trampleasure’s ‘Charities from Hell’ (see left) look like pussycats. We all know about the corporate mismanagement scandals of the likes of Enron, but what about corporate psychopaths? This might sound like the plot from a low-budget movie, but apparently there is a good chance that there is a corporate psychopath working in your office. Research in New Scientist estimates that psychopaths could make up as much as one per cent of the UK population – and they are more likely to be in management positions than in prisons. The report says: “They can be manipulative, arrogant, callous, impatient, impulsive, unreliable, and prone to flying into rages. They break promises and blame others when things go wrong.” The researcher adds: “Corporate psychopaths have similar ruthless traits to their sadistic counterparts, which helps greatly in reaching management positions.” Does this sound scarily familiar?

There are, apparently, four key characteristics of corporate psychopathic behaviour: an inability to develop good social relationships with others, impulsiveness, a lack of guilt that allows somebody to be callous, and an inability to learn from mistakes. In the workplace, a combination of these characteristics tends to lead to manipulation and bullying, as psychopaths use colleagues’ weaknesses against them.

So, be warned. The report says corporate psychopaths are articulate and often charming. But they have an inflated sense of self-importance that can manifest itself in grandiose and pompous behaviour, making them easier to identify. A simple test is offered to allow them to be identified: “Wherever you find money, prestige and power, you will find them.” Surely that should rule out fundraising then – or does it?

The voluntary sector has always been ambivalent about management. While the need to improve efficiency and effectiveness is widely regarded as critical, it is still often felt that this should be achieved without any distraction from the ‘proper work’ of the charity – delivering for the cause and, of course, at zero cost. This adds an additional tricky, cultural aspect to the already difficult task of management.

The senior management of a charity shapes its culture, whether consciously or not. It is responsible for whether the atmosphere is relaxed or stuffy, or whether it is OK to collapse in hysterical laughter or whether it is frowned upon. Unfortunately, some senior staff are just not cut out to be managers. They have just been promoted either because of their technical competence in a non managerial role or, worse still, their longevity. ‘This management lark would be easy, if it wasn’t for the staff’ might be a

cliché, but it's a thought most managers will have had at some time. Sadly for some, however, it betrays a real inability to work with people. It is sadder still that in 2005, such individuals continue to be promoted into management positions, regardless of their ability to manage others.

So what is the remit of fundraising management? Well, it isn't always clear. Some managers seem to have a very narrow view of what their role entails. 'Hit the targets' seems to sum it up. But good management is so much more than that. Isn't it also about developing individuals – not just to do their current job, but also for the next one? Then there is developing teams so that members support each other and work together, as well as facilitating good inter-team communication so that conflicts of priority are nipped in the bud. These are the aspects of 21st-century fundraising management that we want to explore. We want to uncover how fundraising management impacts on the lives of fundraisers, and why they move on (see our survey form on pp20-21).

With "commitment issues" still a hot topic in the sector (PF July 2005, pp16- 21), could better fundraising management help to stem the outward flow of talented staff? A senior fundraiser quoted in that article said: "It's not a lack of commitment. I wouldn't work for a cause unless I was 100 per cent committed to it. The reason I want to leave is because the senior management team is appalling, has no commitment to the organisation and is stifling growth." Just how common is that experience?

We are looking for the truth about fundraising management. So, take a well-deserved breather from the festive hubbub and let us have your views.

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