



The joy of giving time

Becki Mckinlay

Director of External Relations, Monkton Combe School

I remember the first time I was asked to present. It was on a one-day course titled 'introduction to fundraising in HE'. I'd been in post less than a year and I couldn't imagine that there was anything I could say that people would want to hear. I'd spoken in front of audiences before during my role as Students' Union President at my alma mater, but the idea of standing in front of peers was a little intimidating.

The big day arrived and I found myself in a nice conference centre in central London with the other 3 presenters: all experienced directors of development. Panic sunk in as the 40 delegates arrived, looking to us for the silver bullet that will help them find their way in their new jobs. I'd prepared and rehearsed my presentation so many times, and I knew I had some good ideas or at least some fundamental footnotes for each eager new development professional to take away, but I just couldn't shake the imposter syndrome. Long story short: I made it through the presentation and delegates asked great questions (which I took as a great sign). I went for drinks with my fellow presenters who continued to ask questions about what I was doing. I soon realised that by trying new things, setting big goals, and taking colleagues with me, I was suddenly someone that people were interested in learning from.

Nearly fifteen years later, I look back across the dozens of presentations I've delivered for IDPE, CASE, Institute of Fundraising, and the many organisations I had the pleasure of serving as a consultant, and I can't tell you how much joy it brings. The fear of presenting and the imposter syndrome has gone, and I'm immensely proud of the presentations I have delivered and the conferences I have chaired. In our line of work you should never stop learning, and whilst the principles of fundraising, alumni relations, and external relations best practice don't change, the innovations, great ideas and sharing success is all part of what we do.

I've always worked in educational fundraising because my personal belief is that the world's biggest problems will be solved, or at least discussed, in the education sector. I also believe that personal development should never stop. That's why when I'm asked to present, or to mentor, or to help out a colleague, the answer is always yes. I might not feel like the expert on a topic, but the chances are I've had experiences that I can share. And whilst it takes time to prepare and put the information or evidence or ideas together, it is absolutely worth it when you have that one person that picks up the phone a few months later and thanks you for an idea; or you see your mentee get their next big job; or you hear someone talking about your presentation over lunch. It is immensely rewarding and I would recommend it to anyone.