

Practitioners' Guide

Integrating Practice and Theory for Advancement

Thomas Bakewell

Thomas Bakewell works as a management consultant. He has years of experience consulting with higher education, the corporate world and not-for-profits (NFPs). He has conducted over 50 major engagements for higher education boards, presidents and NFPs nationwide in the areas of strategy, advancement, finance, full-scale organizational transformation, good corporate governance, and organizational effectiveness. He is active with leading board retreats, strategic planning, and speaking engagements. Prior to consulting, Tom held a number of senior management, finance and legal positions in both the nonprofit and for-profit world.

Editor's Note: *This is the first installment of a multipart practitioners' guide focused on strategic planning, organizational development, and legal issues. It will feature practical advice and powerful insights for implementing advancement programs that are organized, productive, and legal—and that generate top results. Thomas Bakewell, an organizational development specialist skilled in leadership, planning, and the law, will address these unique components of higher education advancement that make a vital difference.*

Come on now. Tell the truth. Given the nature of your work, how often do you

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get to blend the rigor of deep “academic” thinking with high-quality research and mix it straight away into your intense daily pressure-cooker demands of educational advancement as we know it today? Pretty rare isn't it? I am pleased to say that is what you have with this issue of the Journal—rigorous thinking, timely high-quality research, and intensely practical ideas and articles useful for your daily work and beyond.

I am smiling as I review that last sentence, because I have a personal secret, actually two secrets. Not only was I surprised by the invitation to write this section, given the practice-oriented nature of my consulting and the high-quality research found in this journal, but I never desired to earn a doctorate, nor ever pursued one. Don't get me wrong, education was always very important to me. But my career plan dictated a practice-oriented path with lots of other learning in law, finance, management, and the like. This was mixed in with much hands-on management experience over the years. And yet, most of my clients have had distinguished academic careers.

So why the surprise and smile on my face? Because every now and then a gift shows up! I have always truly valued great academic research, but in my daily work of strategic and organizational consulting with presidents, the time for deep thinking and high-quality research is often subordinated by the challenges at hand. No doubt we all face the press of the urgent on a regular basis, and the word “crisis” often springs to mind. Sound familiar? Sound like your job? Educational advancement could be accused of inventing the phrase “What have you done for me today?” don’t you think?

My smile tightened as I thought about the challenges of being a “practitioner” writing for a premier academic journal for educational advancement scholars—and yes, for practitioners. But then a curious thing happened. In preparing to write, I jotted down a short list of the top trends and issues facing my clients today. Just after that exercise, I reviewed for the first time a list of article titles for this issue and was thrilled by what I found as I compared the lists. There was an uncanny connection between my clients’ top

trends and issues and the Journal’s current article titles. By the time I read the first articles, I was downright beaming and excited about what I was reading, this journal’s vital work, and my part in writing from a practitioner’s perspective!

Take a look for yourself at the list of some of the trends and issues my clients are facing today (Table 1). Compare it with the list of article titles for this issue. I bet you will see the connection I saw, and I am certain when you read the articles you will find the excellent research, solid theory and current appeal I found so exciting. There were solid insights and helpful solutions for some of my client’s most pressing challenges. And the same value is there for you!

To whet your appetite for what is in store with this journal, let me share just a few of the connections and insights I found between the top three trends and issues my clients face today and the three related articles. (My original list had 10 items. Contact me for full list if of interest.)

Keep in mind that my consulting is at the senior level of organizations and I

Table 1: Trends and issues vs IJEA article titles, Fall 2004

Top Trends and Issues Facing my Clients Late Fall 2004	Article Titles for this Issue of IJEA January 2005
Positioning the organization to maximize giving over the long term	The advancement value chain: An exploratory model
Growing giving in an “operating efficiency” environment.	Increasing efficiency in academia: The use of a weaning model in fund raising.
The career tracks of the next generation of higher education executives/presidents and the roles of deans and faculty in fund raising.	The role of faculty in fund raising at black colleges: What is it and what can it become?
	The relationship of institutional characteristics and giving participant rates of alumni
	Tasks and strategies of in-house lobbyists in American colleges and universities
	Perceptions and positionings of colleges in New York City: A longitudinal study of brand images
	Dynamics of internet visibility: Mutual benefits for distinguished alumni and alma mater

have a wide range of clients with size and revenues ranging from tens to hundreds of millions annually. Given these diverse profiles, I will need a few sentences to describe the circumstances at hand.

My Topic: Positioning the Organization to Maximize Giving over the Long Term

As you would expect, this topic covers a multitude of issues. But today they typically fall into three categories. First, you find the thriving organization that has had top advancement results and is strategically looking at moving their performance and results to a higher goal. This often involves a key group of people, such as growing a high performance board of directors or a deeper advancement team. Second, you find the organization that is succeeding but facing some compelling challenge like being spread too thin. A classic example of this today is the midsize college that is having good results with major gifts and planned giving, but their annual fund giving is dropping precipitously, and they are tempted to give up any real effort and investment with the annual fund. Third, you find the unpleasant circumstance that can't be prettied up. It's an organization facing financial distress or outright financial exigency, that thinks crisis fund raising will be the solution.

Related Journal Article: "The Advancement Value Chain: An Exploratory Model"

This excellent research work builds on the pioneering value chain concept of Michael Porter in breaking down and identifying the discrete elements that bring value to the modern corporation. Author Edward Leonard rigorously analyzed several hypothetical models to study and identify causal links in giving to higher education.

His exploratory model shows a fine goodness-of-fit; it succinctly articulates, describes, and discusses most, if not all, of the key variables related to giving, and it has given me great persuasive information for using in decision making with clients. For example, while it may be intuitive to many, being able to share a research article with a link that "dispels the myth that annual giving is subordinate to major giving" has helped me persuade clients on the continued value of investing in annual funds despite their short-term challenges.

My Topic: Growing Giving in an "Operating Efficiency" Environment

When colleges and universities start to experience financial pressure and the management team is faced with tough decisions on resource allocation or the ever difficult budget reductions, traditional dilemmas are faced: academics vs. athletics; academic staffing vs. ancillary departments like admissions or advancement, and so forth. Solid strategies can go out the window if they exist, and if they don't exist there are few resources to invest for the future and critical strategic planning.

Related Journal Article: "Increasing Efficiency in Academia: The Use of a Weaning Model in Fund Raising"

Given the reality of higher education coming to rely so heavily on undergraduate tuition as its primary income stream,¹ authors Maniaci and Poole have written an award-winning comprehensive article on private universities, tuition dependence, and a creative approach to applying improved operating efficiency.

This article as a whole, and the following quotes in particular, have been

valuable additions to my consulting tool box with clients looking at tight budgets and enhanced operating efficiency: “The budget operationalizes the strategic planning of the institution” and “Institutions operate at different levels of efficiency. At one extreme are institutions with unrealistic missions, poor strategic plans, and budgets determined arbitrarily or driven by exigency. On the other end of the spectrum are those with realistic missions and strategic plans reinforced by budgets that align priorities with resources. Most are somewhere in between those extremes.” For me, it is always valuable and powerful to ask management teams to define where they are on these continuums.

My Topic: The Career Tracks of the Next Generation of Higher Education Executives/Presidents and the Roles of Deans and Faculty in Fund Raising

It is not a well researched observation on my part, but more and more new college and university presidents are being pulled straight from senior development roles. Likewise, more deans and even many faculties are having fund raising added directly to their job descriptions and duties. This opens up all kinds of challenges, issues, and opportunities on campuses today. This topic is showing up on a regular basis and in lots of different ways on many of my engagements. It is definitely a hot button.

Related Journal Article: “The Role of Faculty in Fundraising at Black Colleges: What Is It and What Can It Become?”

Author Marybeth Gasman draws upon her knowledge of fund raising at black colleges to perform a wide-ranging,

fascinating, historical review designed to provoke an important discussion on the role of faculty at black colleges in fund raising. Provoke she does, in a thoughtful way, and the very real challenges highlighted with the study of this topic for the special community of black colleges, functions as a catalyst to clarify and heighten similar issues in the larger college and university community as a whole by my thinking. All the hot button issues of faculties fund raising are spelled out here in a great treatise on the topic.

In closing, I am excited about the challenges of writing on the current trends in educational advancement from a practice-oriented perspective. It is a real opportunity for us to challenge one another in serving our mission-driven organizations as we work to integrate practice and theory for enhancing our work in educational advancement.

It is my personal hope that at some point one or more of these great journal articles will stir serious debate in the way that law professor Susan Hamill’s article in the *Alabama Law Review*² stirred up a noted debate on the injustice of Alabama’s tax code to the poor. Perhaps you will write the article for the Journal that ignites the next generation of major gifts for higher education or simply gives your colleagues something new to consider. This journal is a great forum to share our ideas and grow together.

References

1. R. Zemsky and W. F. Massey (1995), “Expanding perimeters, melting cores and sticky functions: Toward our understanding of our current predicaments,” *Change*, 27, pp. 41-9.
2. S. Hamill (2002), “An argument of tax reform based on Judeo-Christian Ethics,” *Alabama Law Review*, 54, 1, pp. 1-112.