

Fundraising resolutions: Three steps to start your year the right way

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Veganuary? Meatless “meat” balls are all the rage...Dry January? My local pub is offering dry white wine and dry London gin, to help, in a way... *New Year, New You?*

The start of the year is often when we are drawn to take a look at who we are, what we stand for and how we spend our time. I don't know about you, but I'm sometimes left thinking: *Must try harder.*

And, when it comes to our work (despite the joys and benefits of management accounting reviews), we rarely assess other measures of performance; less frequently still, do we seek to identify and articulate the values and goals of our firms and funds. Surely, January is as good a time as ever to haul our LLPs, RAIFs and ManCos in front of the proverbial mirror and take the time for some quiet reflection. You'll have a better February to December, if you do.

With that in mind, below are a few pointers to set you on the right path to fundraising .

1. Know thyself

Set some time aside (and get some help) to identify what really drives you and your firm

Whilst it is imperative to understand the needs of your investors (and, for that matter your other stakeholders: portfolio companies; intermediaries and advisers; colleagues), remember that forgetting who YOU are is guaranteed to weaken your messaging, disappoint those that don't know you well and unnerve those that do. Yes, make sure you respond to the needs of your stakeholders, but stay true to who you are. Otherwise you are going to sound insincere and will look like a carbon copy of everyone else in the market.

Take the time in January to think about the values that drive you and your colleagues and use these as the foundation of your value proposition. They should inform everything you do. We can help you on this journey of self (re)discovery – so get in touch if you want to talk and improve your fundraising approach.

2. The Only Way Is Ethics

Make sure your firm understands the importance of acting properly and the consequences of bad behaviour

Regulatory, political and civil suspicion, with regards to sharp practices and malfeasance in private equity are as high as they were when Edward Lewis took an interest in fictional ship builder, Morse Enterprises. And even if the Pretty Woman reference leaves you nonplussed, you'll have noticed that Romney's continued presence on the political scene in the US, during this impeachment and election year, means that certain notable Republicans, as well as the traditionally opposed Democratic presidential candidates will be sure to conjure the spectres of asset stripping, leverage and offshoring. In this context, demonstrating your firm's commitment to value creation that is *ethically* as well as commercially sound is vital (essential for fundraising). It is time to acknowledge that the world is moving in this direction and that it ain't stopping any time soon.

As ever, rule number one, when it comes to ethics is: if it feels wrong, DON'T DO IT.

3. It's not all "work, work, work"

Appreciate the importance of down time for yourself and your team

Yes, there are times when the IR team is going to be working at a level of intensity that sees you, having already burnt the candle at both ends, trying to light the middle, as well. Nobody is suggesting that this has to stop, but it is worth making sure that you have formal policies in place to help team members unwind once the pressure is released. And maybe there are some functions of the administration and due diligence process that could be more efficiently performed by a third party (we can help, contact me for more information). A less frazzled team performs better, and a closing is no time for fatigue-induced human errors...

So, there you have it – three sure-fire ways to get your year off to a winning start and fundraising:

1. Take some time out to discuss and articulate the values that motivate your team to success for yourselves, your portfolio and your investors
2. Ensure that the importance of ethics is understood throughout the business and underlined by senior management
3. Codify entitlements and relaxation/stress policies to help staff cope with more intense work periods and look outside for short-term help, if needed

Have a great year!

Tags: fundraising , investor relations , IR , marketing