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Advice from the Top with Donna Vuchinich

President & CEO, University of Hawaii Foundation

By Jason Ubay

After 25 years' experience in public-university fundraising, Vuchinich was named president and CEO of the University of Hawaii Foundation in 2004 and spearheaded its Centennial Campaign, raising \$336 million in 2009.

How do you find mentors in the nonprofit world?

There are so many opportunities to get involved in the community [and] work with amazing people if you're willing to volunteer. ... Yesterday, I was at the Red Cross and they have an amazing workforce of volunteers working 24/7. Amazing place to get involved in your community and learn and meet amazing people.

What's your advice for people in fundraising campaigns?

People always say, "I don't want to ask for money." Well, I don't go out asking for money for me. I'm sharing an opportunity that they can choose to support or not. ... There are some people who are never going to give, so you have to choose who you spend your time with. But, for some people, it may not be the right time, there might be a crisis or a family emergency. ... You might ask for a referral. "Thank you for listening, but is there anyone that you know who would be interested in what we're doing that you might want me to talk with?"

What did you learn in your first job, at your father's gas station, that you can apply today?

That was a service industry and that's exactly what I do today. How you interact with your customers, how you treat your customers, whether they return and repeat business with you, the quality of the work you do. ... It's not about what you're going to get out of the relationship. The more you give, the more you get in return.



Photo: Courtesy UH Foundation