



## **Coming 'Round the Learning Curve**

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February 2006 - Nonprofit professionals understand the difficulty of creating a successful development program and know it is critical to realizing the mission. Unfortunately it seems that nonprofit organization leaders often disregard the effects of the learning curve on professionals new to the organization and the role it plays in the success of the development program.

Most people are familiar with the term, the "learning curve". It is a concept that was developed in the aeronautical engineering industry to explain how repetitive work becomes less costly over time due to the reduction of hours it takes to produce one unit as the laborer becomes more experienced. This same concept is applied to many other industries and can be applied to development as well. When a new development professional joins an organization, it takes that person time to understand the mission, the workings of the organization, the development program, the organization's programs, the leadership, etc.

During this time of transition and learning, there must be a realistic expectation of increased funding and relationship building. It takes time to build relationships and through these relationships often come increased funding, but it does not happen quickly. This transition time is a great time for initial planning, keeping in mind that plans will be adjusted as an understanding about the organization increases. To increase the success of your organization's new or changing development team, make sure the leadership is supportive of the team during this "slow" period.

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