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# Enrique Aldana: Outstanding Fundraising Executive

Nov 12, 2021



Ed Flores

Enrique Aldana might not have received the 2021 Outstanding Fundraising Executive award had he listened to his doubts. The former sales executive for IBM and Xerox, among other companies, wanted a change from his advertising sales management job at Tucson Newspapers Inc. (TNI), the business arm of the Arizona Daily Star.

He sought career guidance from Jack Gibson, chief executive officer of Arizona Public Media (AZPM). Instead, Gibson ultimately hired Aldana in 2012 as associate director of development, promoting him to director a year later. It felt like Aldana came full circle, having watched public television to learn English after moving to the U.S. from Mexico at age five.

He admits having concerns about his abilities in those early days. “Having lots of sales experiences, but none in development, I was a bit nervous,” Aldana says. In his first year, he questioned whether he had made the right decision.

Sales, he says, is a clear transaction: He could quickly see the impact of building relationships with a resulting sale.

“Development, to me, moves at a different pace than in the business world,” Aldana adds. “You have to earn trust, build rapport, gain knowledge of a new culture and identify each individual’s passion.” Only then, he notes, is it possible to encourage someone to act on their passion through giving.

“Making the switch from the transactional to the emotional was at first a challenge for me and I had to adapt to a new way of thinking,” he asserts.

He credits former AZPM colleague Jill Becker with helping him through the learning curve. She had many community connections and introduced Aldana to AZPM donors and potential supporters. “Jill’s encouragement helped build my confidence in the new position,” he says.

Organizations noted his success. His fundraising leadership helped AZPM earn the PBS Philanthropy Award in 2018. In a press release, PBS said AZPM went from a \$2 million deficit to fundraising revenue of \$2.5 million, a 103% increase. “AZPM continues to benefit from a stronger bond between donors, station volunteer leaders and the community at large,” according to the release.

Aldana also helped TNI earn the Hearth Foundation's Victor Mergard Award, which recognizes support that advances the organization's work providing affordable housing to low-income families.

Although Aldana may have been new to a fundraising career, he was no stranger to giving and volunteering. Along with board service with the Hearth Foundation, he's donated his time and expertise to Assistance League of Tucson, Youth on Their Own and the Children's Museum Tucson.

His volunteer service honors his mother, who brought him to New York, then to Tucson when he was 12 and his stepfather retired. "My mother was always the first to help people in need," he recalls.

He instills that same giving spirit in his daughters, ages 17 and 18, as well as to youth and young adults who show an interest in philanthropy. That's what happened with Kate Hanson, who worked for nonprofits while a University of Arizona student. With Aldana's mentoring and encouragement, she's now a development director at the Southern Illinois University Foundation.

"I will never, ever forget the impression he made on me," she says, "and I always hope to be as good of a beacon for this profession as he is."