

FACES OF WID



Name: Kate Gutierrez

Title: Senior Director of Development, Major Gifts, Massachusetts General Hospital

WID Role: Member of Program Committee

Birthplace: Manhattan Beach, California

Lives Currently: South Boston, Massachusetts

Education: Georgetown University, English/Art History major

Hobbies: Enjoying the outer Cape, running, travel

When and how did you join the development field? What path brought you to your current role?

I came to Boston in the late 1990s to do marketing and communications for a software startup. It was an exciting and profitable time in Boston and in tech, up until the “dotcom bubble” burst, followed by the horror of 9/11. Our world seemed very suddenly changed. My company sold its technology to IBM and dissolved itself. I found myself out of a job, but with a severance that afforded me breathing room to explore a path forward.

Back in high school I had enjoyed and dedicated much time to volunteer service. Now, with time on my hands and seeking more meaningful ways to spend it, I decided to return to volunteering. So I picked my favorite non-profit in Boston at the time—the Museum of Fine Arts—and offered up my services. Soon enough, I discovered that all the types of work that I had done in the for-profit world—strategy and sales, advertising and marketing, writing and design, planning and executing events, accounting, reporting and more—were also needed in the museum setting, but the difference was that the non-profit workers seemed to me to be kinder, happier, and more fulfilled. As I met more people on staff, I tried paid contract assignments in the membership department, the marketing department, and the special events department. In all those roles, I interacted with the development department and was intrigued by the idea of a line of work where relationship building seemed to be the main function. (Relationship building is one of my favorite things!)

When I eventually took a permanent position at the MFA, it was in the development department. This was during the earlier days of the “Building the New MFA” \$500+ million campaign, a huge number at the time, and especially for the arts. We raised the funds to build, open, and operate the new wing for the Art of the Americas, 53 new galleries, new auditoriums, the new Shapiro Courtyard space, and so much more. I was hooked, and haven’t looked back to for-profit life since.

Why did you join WID and how long have you been a member?

I joined WID in 2007. I decided to become an official member once I realized I was “in development” for the long haul, although it would have been even more helpful to join WID much earlier, in the years when I was first considering the switch to non-profits. I encourage anyone who is interested in or connected to fundraising in some way to join WID, especially if you work in the for-profit world and are considering a switch, or you do fundraising or board work in your personal time. You can learn a lot from WID programs and the people you meet at them.

Do you have a favorite WID moment or memory?

At one of the annual meeting breakfasts, I recall feeling moved by the insights of featured speaker Pat Brandes as she was retiring from her role as executive director for the Barr Foundation. It was compelling to hear her reflect on all that she had accomplished throughout her career and during her tenure at Barr, and even more inspiring to hear what she imagined and wanted for herself in her next phase of life—her “second adulthood,” she called it.

Describe your biggest development success story to date.

Last month, I finalized the largest seven-figure gift I have closed to date. I’m proud that the gift will allow a group of amazing scientists and physicians to accelerate earlier detection and diagnosis of disease, in ways that are easier and more convenient for patients and less expensive. It’s also a success story for me personally because one reason I chose to move from fundraising for the arts into fundraising for biomedical research was to have the opportunity to work at seven-, eight- and nine-figure gift levels, and now I am doing just that.

I should add that “smaller” six-figure gifts I raised in the past were still successes, if you take the view that success is tied to the relative impact that your work has on your organization. For example, at the MFA, \$100,000 was the largest gift I closed, but I ran a team that closed hundreds of gifts each year at the \$1,000-\$100,000 level. While not “major,” these gifts were important because the museum relied on them for 10 percent of its entire annual budget. At the tiny performing arts non-profit I worked for earlier in my career, the largest gift we closed was \$500,000. This gift was critical for an organization whose annual operating budget was under \$4 million, and who relied on my team to deliver 80 percent of it every year through fundraising.

Now, at Massachusetts General Hospital, a non-profit with 25,000 employees, I have moved to an individual contributor role, with no team to manage, in an organization where philanthropy is “below the line” in the budget, and where my individual annual goal is less than 2 percent of development’s overall annual fundraising goal. So, my organizational impact is pretty minute these days, but I sure do sleep better at night.

What advice would you offer to someone new to the field of development?

The CEO matters. Even if you are in or considering a position where you won’t directly interact or partner with head of your organization, take the time to research how he or she speaks and interacts with donors, as well as how he or she interacts with staff. Without a leader at the helm who makes time for and “gets” development, one who respects donors and donor intent, it can be challenging to fundraise at levels that will be truly transformative and meaningful for both the organization and the donor. How your CEO or President or Director interacts with donors, the board, staff, constituents, and the community can influence most every gift conversation that takes place, not to mention internal morale. So, a great leader is important—and a great leader with a love of fundraising is even better!