

CULTIVATING YOUR MAJOR DONORS

When funding needs are pressing, your enthusiasm to quickly secure a major gift is no substitute for thoughtful cultivation of major donors' interests. You should assume that your potential major donors are seasoned and sensible stewards of their financial resources. As such, they will:

- Want to be assured that the plans they are being asked to fund result from thoughtful and sound planning and not the sudden inspiration of an organization eager to get their money.
- Want to know that others support the organization, especially the governing Board, and that they have not been singled out for a gift just because they have significant financial means.
- Want to be persuaded that the funding need is an urgent one, essential to be met now and not at some future indefinite time.

In my experience, some recurring themes tend to feature prominently in an individual's eventual decision to make a major gift:

- Major donors tend to relate to ***institutional vision*** and ***leadership***: a vision of what can be achieved well beyond current fundraising goals, promoted by leadership that inspires confidence in achieving that vision.
- Major donors want to know that their gifts ***make a difference*** in meeting a compelling need, and are not to shore-up the need for sound fiscal management.
- Major gifts reflect the donor's level of ***involvement*** with the organization, an involvement courted not simply for their capacity to give but for a more intimate role in the organization's governance, programs and services.