

MAJOR GIFT CONTACTS – PREPARE YOURSELF!

Volunteers and professionals alike, whether old hands or new comers to fundraising, should prepare themselves prior to making personal contact with potential major donors.

An Overview

Be comfortable. Each person has a comfortable personal style for persuasion. There are no hard and fast rules for securing major gifts commitments. Be comfortable. Be candid. Admit what you may not know, but can certainly find out. You can't make a mistake in wanting to help others benefit from your organization's services and programs.

You are not asking for yourself. You are offering an opportunity for a caring individual to provide for others who may be less fortunate.

You can't fail. Fundraising experiences have shown that 50% to 65% of people personally contacted and met with will eventually make a contribution. The great value of you personally "*telling the story*" is that 100% of the people you engage with will know much more about your organization than before you talked with them. And that's a winner!

Persistence and patience pays. Fundraising experiences have also shown that it can take 6 to 18 months of multiple conversations and meetings to secure an individual's major gift commitment. Polite persistence and thoughtful follow-up will demonstrate to potential major donors the importance of your efforts. "One-shot" attempts much less so!

Mini-Campaigns. Consider each potential major donor a "mini-campaign" requiring a thoughtful approach and understanding of the individual's interests, circumstances, and relationships. Much of which can be learned from careful listening during your personal contacts.

Anticipating Questions

Anticipating thoughtful questions a potential major donor might ask, or would certainly have on his/her mind, is the best preparation for your personal contact. As well as helping you gain confidence in your approach. If you don't have answers to any of the following questions, or others you may have, ask the staff at your organization to suggest responses.

"Do you have a site for the proposed project? If not, should I wait until a site is selected before making my gift commitment?"

“Has the Board made their contributions to the effort? If so, what is the percentage and aggregate dollar amount?”

“What happens if you don’t reach the expressed dollar goal in a timely manner?”

“Is the organization prepared to finance a portion of the projected costs; for example for ‘bridge’ or ‘gap’ financing in order to move forward with the project in a timely manner in the event contributions fall short?”

“Who is leading the fundraising effort as volunteers?”

“Who is providing professional support for the fundraising effort?”

“What are the anticipated fundraising-related costs, and is that amount included in the fundraising dollar goal?”

“How confident are you that the dollar goal is sufficient, when reached, to fund both direct and indirect costs of the project?”

“What are the anticipated added costs to the organization’s overall operating budget when the new facilities are built and new programs operational? And, how will those added costs be funded, i.e. endowment income, government contracts and grants, increased annual giving?”

“How long will I have to make payments on my pledge: 2 to 3 years; 5 years; 10 years?”

“How long do you expect this fundraising effort to run?”

“Will there be donor recognition opportunities, and how will my family be recognized?”