

## THE ART OF ENGAGEMENT

Most non-profit organizations eventually (and often reluctantly) come face-to-face with what I consider to be the single most important reality of fundraising: *“In order to secure meaningful gifts, we need to engage potential donors in meaningful conversations.”*

The problem is that most people, however generous with their own time and financial resources, are reluctant to “impose” on others to contribute even to the most worthy organizations and causes. Every person in a leadership position – volunteer or staff – should be expected to engage people in meaningful conversations about their organization, to speak up “loud and proud” about its good works. I have found that most donors expect this level of engagement and are often puzzled by the lack of enthusiastic endorsement from those closest to the organization.

The fact is that effective fundraising is not the art of asking; it’s the art of engagement. And both volunteers and staff are more likely to master that art if they share certain key perspectives; for example:

*“We’re always looking for opportunities to engage potential donors in meaningful conversations about our organization.”*

*“It’s important to listen carefully to a potential donor. Their expressed interests and concerns undoubtedly will have a bearing on their eventual support of our organization.”*

*“Potential donors expect us to prioritize our funding needs which reflects our overall financial planning.”*

*“We only ask for a gift consideration when we feel the potential donor has been well-prepared to give a thoughtful response.”*