



Make It Simple to Give

If it's easy to give, you'll get more gifts than you ever imagined possible.

BY DIANE HODIAK

How can you make giving so easy that you remove donors' objections? So easy that they open their checkbooks, relinquish stock certificates, transfer account balances, and make a beeline to their attorneys to execute trusts? Consider the following ideas:

Personalization Makes It Easy to Interest

Whether it's direct mail, personal solicitation, special events, grants, or telemarketing, the ask must relate to the donor's or funder's unique interests. Consider how you can personalize each ask. Even for the most generic "dear friend" salutation, you can insert "Dear friend and advocate for animal rights" or a similar phrase that aligns itself with the donor's interests.

Envelopes Make It Easy to Respond

Whether it's a CRE (courtesy reply envelope, non-postage paid) or BRE (business reply envelope, postage paid), an enclosed envelope means that they won't have to travel

any farther than their checkbook or credit card. Some organizations go one step further and use a bangtail envelope that can be glued to newspaper and newsletter appeals.

Answer Key Questions to Make It Easy to Understand

Why you need the funds, what the funds will be used for, and when the funds will be spent are critical points of information. A good rule is that the more you ask for, the more information and education you need to provide. Don't leave so many questions unanswered that prospects or donors feel that they must know more before they make their gift.

Make It Easy to Reach the People Who Count

Supply names and phone numbers of accountants, trust attorneys, financial planners, or other professionals who can help the donor execute financial arrangements. Some donors may also enjoy talking to the executive, program staff, or a program participant. Some fundraising executives don't screen their calls for this reason. They make it possible for

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potential donors to just pick up the phone and talk to the person who can answer their questions. Communication with others can increase a donor's interest. Moreover, hearing others' points of view may cement in their mind the need and desire to give.

Make It Easy by Asking for the Right Amount

Don't ask for so much that it's an embarrassment. There's nothing wrong with stretching a donor's financial limits when asking for an upgraded or larger gift, but the stretch shouldn't be overwhelming. If you can't afford the prospect research to determine a giving level for an individual, consider providing two or more financial levels so donors can choose the one that's right for them.



CREATIVE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

Tie the Knot

Know someone who's getting married? Encourage them to incorporate charity into the event. Some ideas: Ask guests to give to a nonprofit organization rather than buy gifts. Hold the reception at a nonprofit venue, such as a museum or historic home. Donate leftover food to a hunger organization and flowers to a hospital or nursing home. Make charitable gifts in guests' honor instead of buying favors. For more, see www.marriedforgood.com.

Let Volunteers Raise Funds

Revolutionize your fundraising program with this simple approach: Identify the people closest to your organization, and invite them to raise funds for you in ways that validate their needs. That's the idea championed in *Hidden Assets* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, www.josseybass.com) and it has reaped huge rewards for many nonprofits.

Get Auction Donations the Easy Way

Need donations for your silent auction? Write down five family members, five co-workers, and five retail establishments that you frequent. Review the list, and you have 15 sources of donations—and not one is a dreaded "cold call"! Have each member of your auction committee do the same thing, and you're well on your way to great results. See www.benefitauktion.com.

Make it Easy by Providing Multiple Opportunities

Repeat the ask. You don't need to be a broken record, just gently repetitive and creative. Make the ask a part of the newsletter, the Web site, the annual meeting, the special event. Remember, this communication should be more than an ask. Create stories and statements that are emotional, funny, rewarding, and inspiring. Encourage your donors to believe that they will be catalysts, leaders, inspirational individuals who make it all possible. How can a caring donor resist these uplifting moments?

Also, provide multiple giving vehicles. Offer payroll deduction, electronic funds transfer, and credit cards. If direct-mail donors fail to renew after repeated mail attempts, try the phone. If they're major donors, make personal visits. Keep trying till you find the communica-

tion and solicitation methods that are easiest for the donor.

Make It Easy to Update Your Approaches

Review your development program to see if you're doing everything possible to accommodate donors. Include a provision in your planning documents to evaluate your procedures. At least once a year, perform an assessment to see where you can streamline your fundraising methods. That makes it easy for you...and easy for your donors. ■

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These resources are available from the Society's Resource Center, 800-424-7367, www.snpo.org.

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