



5 Five Simple Ideas for Developing Fundraising Results

You can reap immense rewards with just five easy steps.

By Diane Hodiak

Veteran fundraisers understand why they call fundraising “development.” Development makes it possible to secure major gifts, lifelong friends, and contributors. But what exactly is “development”? Development is a continuous cultivation process that educates and befriends donors and stakeholders.

Think about the important people in your life. More often than not, you see them regularly and remember them on holidays and on their important personal days. You know your Uncle Tim likes baseball games, your sister likes Greek food, and your college mentor has received an award.

If this is the way to develop relationships, why do some fundraisers only communicate with major donors by letter two to three times a year? Why don't we treat donors as

our special friends? Why don't we ask them what they like and what they don't like so we can meet their needs? It's easier than you might think. Here are five simple ideas to incorporate into your development plan.

1. Ask donors what they like. Studies show that when you ask people what their mailing preferences are, they often respond by sending a charitable gift. That simple question tells donors that someone actually cares enough to ask. And the question often yields valuable answers, too. Wouldn't you like to garner an e-mail address from a donor who prefers online content and save the cost of mailing your newsletter? Asking people for their preferences is always a worthwhile investment. And if you care enough to ask, make sure you care enough to abide by these preferences!

2. Tell donors what you need. Telling donors what you need is more than asking for a gift of a certain amount. You'll improve your

results if you explain how you'll use the money. Even if you want unrestricted operating support, you can quantify how the money will be spent. If donations pay for X hours of staff time, explain how this helps program recipients. For example: “50 staff hours to train refugees how to find work” or, “\$300 pays for a multi-purpose room where we provide lunch for 50 seniors every day.” If you want to make sure that you have some latitude for spending this money, you can add something like: “Your gift will support these activities and others that assist the people we serve.” This provides the accountability donors want.

3. Let donors know how much you need. Many organizations report improved results simply by telling donors how much money they hope to raise and what time frame is necessary. This is why United Ways and school and hospital funding drives display their progress chart in the lobby. Once donors see that success is possible,

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they're more likely to give. Similarly, other donors may want to contribute the last "boost" to help you reach your goal. Some organizations have reported excellent results when asking for "X" dollars from each individual as a baseline for support. Experiment with different scenarios to see how you can improve your results.

4. Show donors the behavior you want. Sleuth out stories that illustrate model philanthropy. You'll find them everywhere: from the board room to the employee lunchroom.

You don't have to focus on the donor who gives the seven-figure gift. Think about everyday people who have included your organization in their wills. Identify the staff person who cares enough to be on a fundraising committee as part of a volunteer effort. These stories will inspire people to philanthropic action as they see behavior that affirms their own values and interests.

5. Tell donors how special they are. Nonprofit staff often fret over the appropriateness of a thank-you memento or acknowledgment. It's important to consider donor preferences in any public acknowledgment. Still, it's amazing how much simple things, like a personal phone call, delight donors. In your development planning, be sure to include a variety of ways, on numerous occasions, to thank donors.

Regular practice of these five simple ideas will provide the key ingredients for donor and stakeholder development and cultivation. In time, you'll notice an amazing phenomenon: More donors will reward you with their gifts, participation, and praise—without being asked. There's no greater reward for the fundraiser than the totally unanticipated gift. ■

Diane Hodiak is author-trainer-counsel focusing on maximizing results for nonprofits in fundraising and marketing. See her free newsletter at <http://www.drcharity.com>.

Resources

Hodiak, Diane, "Make It Simple to Give," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 20, No. 1.

Remley, Dirk, "Relationship Marketing: Guaranteeing the Future," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 14, No. 5.

Robinson, Andy, "Twelve Ways to Say Thank You," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 16, No. 6.

These articles are available free at www.snpo.org/members. Also see Learning Institute programs online: Resource Development and O for Opportunity: Exploring New Revenue Opportunities for Nonprofits (<http://www.snpo.org/lino>).

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Creative Fundraising Ideas

Volunteer Raffle Offers Funds, Fun, and Service

Round up your volunteers, and have each agree to provide a service of some type—babysitting for an evening, doing yard work, running errands, providing basic computer instruction, just about anything you choose. Take photos of the volunteers performing the services they select. Make up posters showing the ready-to-work crew, and print up raffle tickets.

Expenses are minimal, and the return in community involvement is high. With volunteers matched to the right projects, everyone will have a good time while raising money for your organization.

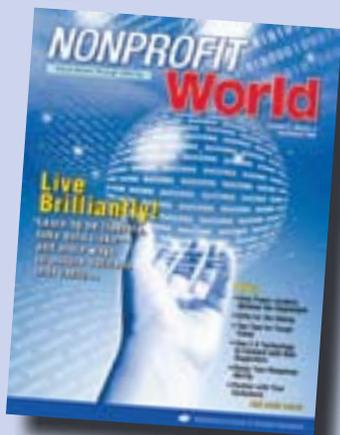
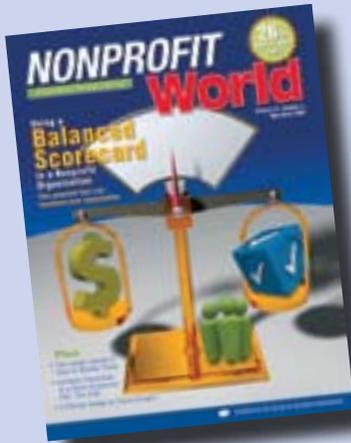
Market Your Event with Foursquare

You can recruit volunteers and market your special events with Foursquare (www.foursquare.com), a mobile application similar to Twitter, which people use to tell friends about places they like. List your nonprofit on Foursquare so users can find it and learn about your special events and volunteer opportunities. Consider creating an event, such as a meet-and-greet or service opportunity, especially for Foursquare users. For more creative ideas, see “Special Events Galore!” (www.stevensoninc.com).

Feature Fresh-Air Events

Outdoor events are a nice change from traditional options. Try these ideas to win supporters:

- Restaurant crawl. People play a flat ticket price and walk from restaurant to restaurant sampling food and drink.
- Concert collaboration. Partner with a local arts charity for an outdoor performance; split costs and proceeds.
- Field competitions, including sack races, tug-of-war, and leap-frog competition.
- Scavenger hunts where people gather digital photos of community landmarks.
- Outdoor yoga event.
- Miniature golf tournament.



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