

What's the Best Way to Sign a Pitch Letter?

How can you assure a good response?

Q We're preparing to announce a major event and have prepared a pitch letter for potential sponsors. Obviously we'll strategically choose who approaches whom. One of our board members feels the letter should be signed by whichever name will resonate best with the prospect. This means the same letter will be floating around signed by different people. I've never done this before and have mixed feelings about it. What are your thoughts?

A I believe such letters only "soften" the market rather than bring in tangible responses. You might address your concern this way: Have a standard letter printed that describes the opportunity and have a smaller note card printed on which each individual writes a short note by hand and signs with their signature. Have them use blue pen so it will look less like a printed or copied signature. Attach the appropriate notes to the mailing piece, package it up, and off you go.

Then comes the real effort: Someone needs to follow up each mailing with a phone call saying, "I'm calling at the



request of _____, who recently sent you _____ Etc." And get the commitment. *Then*, follow through with a written confirmation from the one who made the phone call. I used this technique effectively for a major-gifts effort during a \$21-million campaign.

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Must You Register If You Don't Raise Much Money?

What are the solicitation laws – and the exceptions?

Q Many states offer exemption from charitable solicitation registration if a charity raises less than a specific dollar amount. Do these dollar limits apply to funds raised within each state? Or do they apply to funds raised in the aggregate in all states?

A Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia have charitable solicitation registration statutes that require many charities to register before soliciting donations within the state. While similar in approach, the statutes aren't identical. In general, they contain an exemption for charities that raise only a small amount in gifts, but they also base that exemption on the aggregate contributions

received from all sources, not just the funds raised in the specific state.

Some states have additional conditions as well. In Pennsylvania, for example, a charity need not register if it receives less than \$25,000, but only if no person is paid in connection with solicitation. If the organization has a paid executive director whose job includes asking for donations, the organization is required to register even if it never raises a penny. The \$25,000 safe harbor applies only to totally-volunteer organizations.

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