



Courting Female Philanthropists Makes Good Financial Sense

It's time to throw out old assumptions about women and giving. Here's what you need to know.

BY ANNE M. CONNOR

So you're looking for funding, and have contacted many of the philanthropists and foundations that you've used in the past, many of them run by men.

Traditional wisdom has held that when it comes to philanthropy, men give money and women give time, but that's a trend that has been rapidly changing since the 1970s, and may never have been completely true to begin with. The only thing left to change, for those seeking funds, is the perception that they should go to the men first.

Trends Are Shifting

While it may be true that, historically, most financial donations have been made in the name of men, it is often women who have driven those donations, and increasingly more women are giving of their own accord, and in their own names.

As women continue to drive the work force and have children later in life, their time becomes more of a commodity, but money is more plentiful, making financial donations a natural, especially for women who grew up in philanthropic households and have witnessed families with a strong history of giving.

So what should you know when soliciting funds from women? Research has shown that there are definite differences in giving patterns between men and women, and that more people are learning how to solicit funds from female philanthropists, leading to a boon to their bottom lines.

"A generation or two ago, women were less likely to be in charge of money than they are today," says Cynthia Jasper, chair of the Consumer Science Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Human Ecology and director of the University's Center for Women in Philanthropy. Jasper stresses that in the past, women were responsible for giving but often did so in their husbands' names.

"These days," says Jasper, "more women are making their own money, and since women still tend to outlive their husbands [by an average of seven years], they often also inherit

the family's wealth and make financial decisions regarding giving with those funds."

New Perceptions Are Needed

Some common perceptions that are changing are that it's harder to solicit from women, that they're less inclined to give, and that they give in smaller amounts. While it's true that women tend to give smaller amounts to more numerous charities, says Jasper, that too is changing as women become more educated about giving.

Regarding the perception that it's harder to solicit from women, research shows that women do take more time to make decisions on large donations, but that once they form a relationship with a nonprofit entity, they are more likely to become repeat donors. The key to soliciting money from women is to take the time to build relationships with them.

Fundraisers are finding that they need to appeal in different ways to women than they do to men.



Tips to Remember when Soliciting Funds from Women

- **Women tend to give more readily to specific causes** that strike them personally and less because of tax breaks, although tax incentives are still a major factor in contributing.
- **Relationship building is more important** to female than male philanthropists. Like males, female philanthropists tend to make long-term commitments to serving on boards that expect them to make large donations.
- **A major obstacle to giving for female philanthropists** is the concern that donations won't be used in productive ways. Women, more than men, want to see results from their donations.
- **Women tend to take longer to commit** to a certain charity, but once they do, they tend to be repeat donors.
- **Causes that benefit women**, such as the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, are highly successful because they target women but include men in their fundraising efforts. Be careful not to be exclusive in your solicitations, especially when the cause could include a mother, wife, sister, or daughter.
- **Recognize that women these days are juggling multiple responsibilities**, including jobs, child rearing, and the upkeep of households. Try not to schedule events for times that family schedules will be stressed, such as the holidays.
- **Remember to include other demographic data in addition to gender** when soliciting funds from women. Regional and behavioral data should be taken into consideration just as they should with men.

Education Is Crucial

In her philanthropy research, Jasper focuses mainly on women's giving patterns, which are constantly evolving. She feels that women not only have a responsibility to give, but need to be educated, both about that responsibility and how they can make a difference. Like most philan-

thropy researchers, she believes that most women want to give of themselves, either through time or money, and simply need to be educated on how to be effective philanthropists.

That's a lesson that isn't lost on Kay Vaughan, an avid philanthropist and former member of the School of Human Ecology's Board of Visitors. Now in her 70s, Vaughan learned her

giving ways as a young girl, starting with her years in the Girl Scouts, where you "didn't get a badge if you didn't share what you had learned." Vaughan feels strongly that we need to educate women on their social responsibility to give.

To reach this end, Jasper applied for and received an innovative grant to teach a course titled "Women and Philanthropy: Theory and Practice." The course, designed to educate both young women and men on the benefits of philanthropy, featured guest speakers that covered topics ranging from simple giving to estate planning and family trusts.

"No matter what you've been blessed with," says Vaughan, "be it knowledge, time, or money, there is someone who needs what you have to offer." This rings especially true today.

"There seem to be more family trusts these days," says Jasper, who views this as a positive trend and a reflection of strong economic times in the 1990s. "There are different ways of setting up these trusts," she stresses. "Some are too restrictive, an example being a Texas trust that was set up for wildlife issues in four counties in the amount of \$300 million. This really tied the hands of those running the trust." But, adds Jasper, most trusts are quite flexible in how the funds are distributed.

"With the economic boom of the 1990s, trusts became a more organized way to dole out the wealth. This is why women need to be educated, not only in savings practices, but in how to give money," Jasper says.

Giving Patterns Are Different

At the University of Wisconsin Foundation, which raises funds for departments and programs campus-wide, there is even a woman in charge of raising money strictly from women. The reason for this, Jasper says, is that groups of fundraisers are

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CREATIVE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

Sell Discount Cards

Sell small cards, the size of credit cards, listing discounts available at local businesses. The businesses that agree to participate by offering discounts may also help sell the cards. You might publicize the cards especially at holiday time, marketing them as stocking stuffers.

Hold a Couch-Potato Contest

Sell raffle tickets at athletic events. Winners have the privilege of becoming couch potatoes at a sports activity by sitting court-side on a couch with two friends. For more creative fundraising ideas, see *FundRaising Made E-Z* (www.MadeE-Z.com).

Try a Tie-a-thon

Produce and sell ties with your organization's colors and logo (or other suitable design) to supporters and the general public. The key to this fundraiser is to secure enough volunteers to sell the ties. You might organize volunteers into sales teams which then compete against each other.

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Among such findings, it was discovered that women are interested in different issues than men, many of which have affected these women or women that they have known. These issues include women's rights, children, shelters for battered women, food pantries, and single parents. Female philanthropists seem to be more focused on family issues, while men are more likely to be drawn to the arts, health, and political causes. However, it's important to note that not all women's issues appeal to all women, a good example being the pro-choice and right-to-life movement, so it's important to find out the giving patterns of your philanthropists before making your solicitations.

Even among women, however, politicians are making inroads. Take for example, EMILY's List, the nation's largest political action committee with 68,000 members, the vast majority of which are women. The group's aim is to help elect pro-choice Democratic women to the House and Senate and as governors. This group targets women in its

fundraising efforts. In the year 2000 this female-driven group was instrumental in approximately \$9.3 million in donations to female candidates.

Although EMILY's list is a success story, Jasper says there are very few well designed studies in the area of women in philanthropy, and even those that are out there are often skewed. "We don't like to talk about money," says Jasper, supporting the adage that people are more likely to talk about their sex lives than their finances.

Solicitors targeting women would be wise to look at trends in giving patterns. For example, there is some sense that giving patterns change with political administrations and the anticipation of such changes. Women also become more philanthropic based on giving patterns they've seen in their own families.

"There's no doubt that what I give to is what influenced me growing up," says Jasper. "It's no accident where we give." To that end, like-minded women are starting to pool their resources to give larger amounts to causes about which they feel strongly.

One trend among female philanthropists is the growing occurrence

of giving clubs, which follow the same tenets as investment clubs. In such situations, female members each contribute \$1,000 or other pre-set amount to a fund. The group then solicits proposals and decides as a group whom to fund. Some members take other proposals to fund individually. This is a highly social activity and is best suited to smaller donations, but it's a new take on social gatherings that reflects the changing role of women, from sewing bees to savvy investors and philanthropists.

Resources

Alford, Jimmie, *Resource Development Videotape*.

Keller, Thomas, "Getting Personal with Donors, Members, and Clients," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 10, No. 5.

Muehrcke, Jill, *Are You Sitting on a Gold Mine? Fundraising Self-Assessment Guide*.

Muehrcke, Jill, ed., *Fundraising and Resource Development, Leadership Series*.

These resources are available through the Society's Resource Center, www.snpo.org.

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