

## Fund Raising 101: The Keys to Success

1. Join or create an organization that is unique and urgently needed. Have a clear cut mission...a dream that can be communicated in both a logical and an emotional appeal. Make sure that the organization and its mission makes a real difference in the lives of those who are served.
2. Don't beg for money. Give the donor an opportunity to "invest" in your organization. Help them to see how such an investment will pay off in the lives of the people served, how it can be sustained over time and how it fosters a self-help approach rather than a culture of dependence.
3. Give every potential donor a chance to participate. Don't make assumptions about who is capable of giving to your cause. Everyone is. Sometimes donors do not fit the stereotype of "great wealth" and you should always remember that, statistically, more money is given by moderate income individuals than by the super rich. Try to get the highest-level donor to the lowest point of service as a way to showing the "on the ground" work of the organization. These experiences are full of motivational opportunity.
4. Do as much research on the donor's giving patterns as possible. Today, the Internet provides a wealth of information including the publicly available 990's that are required of all foundations and not-for-profit organizations. News stories about major grants will also provide valuable clues to the donor's giving history, who they know and what motivates them as philanthropists.
5. Try to relate your work to the donor's priorities. If you are trying to interest a businessperson in your organization, try to describe your work in terms of "social capital" or "venture philanthropy". How can the principles that led to the donor's wealth be applied to the organization's mission and accomplishments? If the program fits the donor's experience and preferences, the "ask" is that much easier.
6. Tell interesting and enlightening stories about the "real life" work of the organization. Make sure that the stories are accurate, that they illustrate basic principles upon which the organization is based and that they help the donor focus on the most important points to consider. The only thing better than a moving success story is to arrange for the donor to become part of the story by traveling to the project to see it first-hand.
7. Let the donor know that there are many ways to support the organization. Be open to long-term commitments, planning grants, demonstration projects, etc. Sometimes donors want to "get a feel" for the organization and its leadership. Let them know that you welcome their interest and support.
8. Share with the donor both the enthusiasm that you feel for your program but also share the lessons learned from those projects that did not work. Nothing communicates openness and transparency like an honest admission of what went wrong and what we learned from the experience.

9. If a donor's interest is not a fit, don't try to force it. There are many more donors whose interest will fit perfectly and it's sometimes better to ask a donor to refer you to others who might be more attracted to the organization's unique work.
10. Always look for the bigger picture. What can society learn from the organization's work? Can the results be scaled up? How can the results be published or disseminated to others? Adding a media or public access feature through the Internet is sometimes the "value added" that a donor is looking for. Will the world be a better place as a result of your work? If, so, how?
11. Always ask the donor for the gift. Make the ask on the "high side of reasonable". No one has ever been insulted by your thinking they are richer and more successful than they really are. If a donor cannot finance the entire project, suggest that others might be invited to match their donation.
12. If the donor wants to "think it over", be open to that but always follow-up both with a phone call and in writing. Lack of follow-up dooms more gifts than any other cause (with the possible exception of not asking at all)!
13. If a donor is just not interested enough to make a grant, try to get their honest appraisal of what they like about your presentation and what they would do differently. Let them know that you value their opinion and welcome their help...even if that help is just to critique the program or its presentation.
14. Finally, never, never, never give up. Keep the donor on the mailing list, stay in touch, invite them to events. Sometimes the opportunity will come unexpectedly and a donor will feel comfortable because of the wealth of information you have shared. Good work, freely communicated will eventually reach the critical mass you need.
15. "In a good cause, you get lucky"!