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Turning Donor Objections into Gift Opportunities

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PRESENTATION TOPICS

- Why Do we Hate to Ask?
- The Role of Solicitors
- Overcoming Donor Objections
- Role Playing
- Keeping the Door Open after a “NO”



HEARING THE WORD “NO”

- “No” rarely means *never*.
- A “good” no is better than a “bad” yes.
- Learn from every “no.”
- Celebrate every “no”—sometimes it’s a triumph just getting to this point with a donor.

**Don't be afraid of the word "no"...
be prepared to respond.**

A Brief Story:

**A Donor Solicitation,
Objection, and Learning from
the Experience.**

“We should never forget that no fundraising effort ever succeeds unless one person asks another person for money.”

~ Andrew D. Parker, Jr.

Why Do We Hate to Ask?

WHY DO WE HATE TO ASK?

- Fear of rejection.
- Lack of confidence.
- Concerns about offending.



HATE TO ASK: FEAR OF REJECTION

- Nobody wants to be turned down.
 - We may take it personally.
 - We may *expect* our donors to say “no”—aka, the Debbie Downer syndrome.
 - We may treat donors as adversaries.
- Do we secretly feel that we are forcing donors to give?
 - The very best fundraisers can't *make* people give, but they can facilitate the giving process.

***“You must do the thing
you think you cannot do.”***

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

HATE TO ASK: LACK OF CONFIDENCE

- Create a cycle of:
 - **Awareness:** Don't assume your unique organization and funding needs are understood.
 - **Interest:** Make your organization come alive!
 - **Involvement:** Building commitment takes time and donors want/need to be involved.
 - **Commitment:** Loyalty must be nurtured over time.

HATE TO ASK: LACK OF CONFIDENCE

- What you *believe* in has to be bigger than what you are *afraid* of.

HATE TO ASK: CONCERNS ABOUT OFFENDING

- To some, money is a bad word—a deep, dark secret that no one wants to talk about.
 - As fundraisers, we may worry that asking someone to give more than they are capable of giving is offensive.
 - Most individuals are flattered, rather than offended, when we ask them to be a donor: *“You want me to be part of the solution?”*



HATE TO ASK: CONCERNS ABOUT OFFENDING

- We may project our own insecurities about money onto donors.
- If we could not or would not give a particular gift amount, then our donors cannot or will not either (*right?*).
- We need to understand the difference that philanthropy makes to a donor so that they feel fulfilled in their own life.

The Role of Solicitors

THE ROLE OF SOLICITORS

- A solicitor should provide information and personal experiences that can help a donor make an informed decision about their contributions.

THE ROLE OF SOLICITORS

■ **Primary Solicitor:**

- Person in the *best* position to help guide donors to make a contribution.

■ **Secondary Solicitor:**

- Others in a *good* position to help guide donors to make a contribution.

■ **Liaison:**

- Staff person who works with both solicitors to ensure successful solicitations and fulfilled donors.

THE ROLE OF SOLICITORS

- How do solicitors perceive donors?
 - I → We → Us
 - They → Them → Those

~ David Dunlop, Cornell University

THE ROLE OF SOLICITORS

- In other words, do you view donors as friends or enemies?



Overcoming Donor Objections

Don't be yourself...
Be your donor—and listen carefully!

OVERCOMING DONOR OBJECTIONS

- Am I the right solicitor or natural partner for this donor?
- Is the objection about:
 - The organization or cause?
 - The right philanthropic “fit”?
 - The project?
 - The program?
 - Is it who we are serving?
 - Is it the timing?
 - Is it the amount we are requesting?
- How would the donor like to make the gift?

OVERCOMING DONOR OBJECTIONS

- Listen without interrupting to *really* hear the objection.
- When you hear a “no,” encourage the donor to talk about the reasons and emotion behind the “no.”
 - *“Tell me your story...”*
- A donor objection is really a window of opportunity for the solicitor to listen and draw the donor closer to the mission.

OVERCOMING DONOR OBJECTIONS

- Empathize.
 - *“I appreciate your honesty and sharing...”*
- If it’s a money issue, offer alternative methods of payment or an elongated time schedule.
 - *“What if there was a way to spread your gifts out into payments...”*

OVERCOMING DONOR OBJECTIONS

- Use “and” rather than “but” statements and stay positive and encouraging.
 - *“Our entire community is appreciative of your commitment to our retired sisters and we believe you could make a similar impact with the chapel renovations...”*

OVERCOMING DONOR OBJECTIONS

- Offer additional information or opportunities:
 - *“Would you like to meet with Sister Mary to hear first-hand how your gift will impact our vocations program?”*
 - *“We would like to invite you to meet with our Provincial Superior to discuss...”*

OVERCOMING DONOR OBJECTIONS

- Schedule another meeting.
 - *“Could we meet again to discuss this gift opportunity?”*
- Many people take more time to make a financial decision and will want to consult with a spouse or other trusted advisors.
 - *“Would you like to meet with Brother Bob to discuss the formation program and their funding needs?”*
 - *“After you speak with your wife, can we meet on...?”*

OVERCOMING DONOR OBJECTIONS

- Don't turn into a *needy* fundraiser...



Your Stories:

**How do You Turn Donor
Objections into Gift
Opportunities?**

Role Playing

ROLE PLAYING

- **I just don't know.**

- *“What are your concerns?”*

- **I can't make up my mind.**

- *“What have I left unclear about the project?”*
- *“What questions may you have?”*
- *“Is there additional information that you would find helpful?”*

ROLE PLAYING

- **I'm not ready to give.**
 - *“When would be a good time?”*
- **No!**
 - *“May I ask why?”*

ROLE PLAYING

- **Your request is too high.**
 - *“Could you please explain?”*
- **I’d like to help but that dollar figure is out of my range.**
 - *“Is there a dollar amount that you had in mind?”*
 - *“What would you feel more comfortable giving at this time?”*

ROLE PLAYING

- **I'm going to retire in a few years and I'm worried that I won't have enough money.**
 - *“What if I could show you a way to make a gift that fits into your retirement plans?”*
- **I have to talk with my spouse first.**
 - *“When would it be convenient to get together and talk?”*

ROLE PLAYING

- **I need to make sure my spouse is provided for in the future.**
 - *“What if we talk about gift plans that may help you provide income for your spouse and support our organization too?”*
- **I don't give lump sums to charity.**
 - *“How would you prefer to give a gift to our organization?”*

ROLE PLAYING

- **I don't make pledges.**

- *“What would work better for you?”*

- **Planned giving is just too complicated.**

- *“We have professionals on staff who can help sort out the complexities for you.”*
- *“We encourage you to talk with your attorney or tax professional to make sure a gift to our organization fits into your gift plans.”*

YOU FIRST!

- Make your own gift first.
- Then ask yourself:
 - *“How did making this gift make me feel?”*
 - *“Did I object to making my own gift?”*
 - *“What questions do I have about my gift and the organization?”*
 - *“Do I see myself as part of the solution?”*

KEEP THE DOORS OPEN

- If the donor is still saying “no,” always keep the door open for future conversations.
- Donors that decline a gift today may feel compelled to give a gift tomorrow.
- Be true to yourself and your organization...and if a door closes, look for a window of opportunity!

Question and Answer Session



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