

Cycle of Major Gift Fund-Raising

1. Identify your prospects.

Major donor programs flourish when you have a well-developed database.

2. Qualify your major donor prospects.

Focus on your top 10-25 donors who have the greatest capacity to make a major gift.

3. Cultivation

A donor honor roll, highlighting the major donors can be a great cultivation tool to push donors into higher levels. Make your case at events, but don't turn a cultivation event into a solicitation. It just leaves people with a bad taste after the party.

4. Solicitation

Strive for peer contact, face-to-face. Or just ask! It's better than leaving money on the table.

5. Recognition

Find ways to say thank-you that are creative & meaningful to your particular group of donors.

6. Stewardship

Love your donors. Thank them in varied and creative ways. Always communicate with them in a fashion that says "We know who you are."

Common Solicitation Pitfalls:

- We talk too much
- Our request is off-balance
- We use words like “should” and “ought”
- We ask apologetically and/or are embarrassed
- Personal connection is broken
- The ask is rushed
- We break the silence too soon after ask if made

Be prepared to respond to these common objections:

- *I'm a bit strapped right now.*
- *I give to so many different causes. I don't know how I can expand any more to include _____.*
- *I don't have that kind of money.*
- *The last time I gave to _____, I didn't even get a thank-you letter.*

When you hear “no”

- Don't take it personally.
- Realize there are many reasons for a “no” that have nothing to do with your cause or organization.
- Plan ahead for following up.
- Before the meeting ends, make the potential givers knows the next step: who will contact whom, when, contingencies.

What abilities and talent do you already possess to ask for donations for your organization?

- Your Knowledge
- Your Commitment
- Your Passion

What material success does is provide you with the ability to concentrate on other things that really matter. And that is being able to make a difference, not only in your own life, but in other people's lives.

Oprah Winfrey