

The Art of Fund Raising

The following excerpts are provided for staff and volunteers wanting an overview of the information in **The Art of Fund Raising**® by Irving R. Warner (New York: Harper & Row, 1975; New York: Bantam, 1985), who was our mentor. The book is available through Association of Fundraising Professionals (www.afp.org) or Amazon.com. Audience: volunteers, staff

Before You Get Started

There is only one way to raise money: *ask* for it. And before you can be an effective asker, *you* will have to *give* as much as you can afford. This is the hardest thing I will tell you to do.

Unless *you* as a leader are prepared to make the first gift and make it sacrificial, your campaign may not succeed. We're not talking about time, energy or thoughtfulness. We're talking about dollars. You must be willing to make a gift that will be a real sacrifice for you.

How much is adequate? If your gift doesn't force you to make any change in your budget, it isn't enough. Leaders must set high levels of giving. Rarely will your peers give more than you. After all, you are the leaders, and they are just helping.

The Art of Fund Raising

People hate to ask other people for money face-to-face. Every fund raising method ever devised was done so to ease the agony of asking somebody for money.

Here's my definition of the art of fund raising: *you raise money when you ask for it, preferably face-to-face, from the smallest number of people, in the shortest period of time, at the least possible expense.*

Leadership and Case

The most important ingredient in a fund raising campaign is *leadership*. Here's a profile of a board leader or campaign chair: wealthy (has financial "clout"), is well organized, is a good speaker, is fearless. Above all, he/she must have "*clout*." It overcomes most obstacles. The only substitute for wealth is extraordinary visibility.

How to get a campaign chair? This is where fund raising approaches an art. You must evaluate and diagnose, learn as much as possible about him/her. Never ask by mail or telephone; get an appointment, but avoid telling him/her why.

Don't recruit alone. Bring at least one other person—preferably two people—and don't bring just anybody. Do your homework and select your askers with care.

Do everything you can to get an answer then and there. If he/she says "no," retreat to a new position and ask his/her help to serve on a committee involved in your campaign. If that fails, ask directly for his/her pledge to help kick off your campaign.

Goals and Costs

Setting goals is more important than it might seem. You can set a low goal, high goal, no goal or an on-target goal. You may wish to have an external goal and internal goal. Goal-setting depends on your strategy and objectives.

Costs: The more you deviate from the definition of fund raising, the more your costs rise and net income drops.

Costs associated with fund raising depend on two major factors:

- the cause and how easy it is to explain or "sell"
- the fund raising methods you use

Constituencies, Lists and Direct Mail

Your constituency is everyone who is touched by your cause and/or your leadership. A strong board can develop a loyal, supportive constituency.

Beware people bearing lists of donors who will give to your cause. More often than not, they won't. Direct mail, while still a legitimate means of identifying new supporters and upgrading old ones, is becoming increasingly expensive and less effective. The market place is saturated with appeals. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't follow through with a carefully planned effort. Rely on professionals to help you in this competitive arena.

Rating and Assignments

Your board or committee should determine who are your potential contributors, how much each could give, who will ask whom and when. How much should a prospect give? How much was the largest gift of your board?

Be sure the right person does the asking. Don't assign a \$1000 prospect to an asker who is giving \$100. A board member always should tell a prospect how much he/she [the solicitor] gave first, before asking for a gift.

Why People Give

People give for many reasons, but *the most important reason is because the right person asked for the gift*. The second most important reason people give is to help other people. People do *not* give to needy institutions.

Publicity

One mistake organizations make most often: they think publicity raises money. Publicity does *not* raise money. It never did and it never will. The best it can do is create a favorable climate for your campaign. Publicity is a fund raising tool. Depending on publicity is the mark of an unorganized, lazy campaign.

Those promoting mass publicity usually are the ones who do not want to do anything for the campaign. And if the campaign fails, lack of publicity is the excuse. Media exposure is valuable when used properly. Always rely on a professional to assist you.

Methods and Tactics

AUCTIONS, ART SHOWS AND SALES — Test the water first, keep them small and exclusive [in private homes] with wealthy prospects.

BINGO — Bingo is gambling and I don't recommend gambling of any kind as a fund raising method. Aside from moral considerations, you risk losing money and image.

CARD-CALLING — The next best method to eyeball-to-eyeball solicitation is card-calling. A group is asked, one by one, what each member's pledge is to the campaign.

COIN BOXES — Don't use them.

CONCERTS — I don't recommend them; expensive and time-consuming, you risk losing money.

DINNERS — Have some shortcomings, but may be used very successfully to reach new prospects. Can be time-consuming and expensive.

EYEBALL-TO-EYEBALL — There is no better way to raise money.

FASHION SHOWS — Not very productive, considering the time and expense involved.

STAR-STUDED GALAS — The nightmare of the professional fund raiser, they make the Society Page and little else. Too costly in time and money.

GARAGE SALES, GIMMICKS AND GAMBLING — I do not recommend any of them.

GIFTS IN KIND — Accept them when you're sure you won't get any money.

HOLIDAY CARDS — A good tactic.

LETTERS, DIRECT MAIL — Use it if you can't ask

face-to-face or if your gift prospect is less than \$100. Never solicit a major gift prospect by letter unless you have no alternatives.

LUNCHES — The same as for "dinners."

MATCHING GIFTS — An excellent fund raising technique.

NEWSPAPER ADS — Not recommended for most causes, particularly established ones.

OPEN PLEDGES — Potentially serious pitfalls, including time, cost and risk.

RAFFLES — Not recommended [and are illegal in some areas].

TELETHONS — Avoid. If you get one handed to you, refuse it.

TESTIMONIALS — Trite and dreary — but they raise money.

THRIFT SHOPS — I don't recommend them.

WILLS AND BEQUESTS — You owe it to your organization to develop a strong program.

Foundations: Myths and Facts

Foundations are overwhelmed with requests for funds. Nationally, they represent about five percent of total giving, the same as corporations. The other 90% of giving is done by individuals.

The best way to be successful with foundations is to develop relationships with their trustees. If you know any of them socially or through business, your chances improve substantially. The same is true for corporations, essentially.

Clichés and Caveats

If there is some way of getting the name of a well-known, big donor involved in your organization, do it.

Psychologists suggest light blue may be the color people respond to best in fund raising.

Never tell a prospect your organization might fail without his/her help. People do not like to think their money could go down the drain.

Never ask a major donor for advice about how to run your campaign, unless you really want it.

In families of great wealth, the founder of the fortune and the grandchildren are more generous than the generation in between. If you are

forced to make a choice between a widow and widower of equal wealth, go after the widower. Men are better prospects than women. However, women give more *time* to fund raising.

Doctors and lawyers are, with some exceptions, your toughest campaign prospects.

Fear is the greater force for giving than love.

There is no such thing as a bad time of the year or month to have a campaign.

If you talk about vague concepts and objectives, you will get vague pledges and vague checks. Be specific, be direct.

Nobody ever went without a mink coat or Cadillac because he/she gave too much money to the

Cancer Society.

When arranging seating for a meeting, set up fewer chairs than you think you'll need. An empty chair looks as though someone was expected and didn't care enough to come. If you bring in extra chairs just before the meeting, it looks as though more people care than anyone thought.

Always assume your prospect has more money than your original estimate. You may be right, or he/she may be flattered at your request. In either case, you could get more than you thought you would.

Always set your sights high! ✧