



## An Initiative of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team

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# Ask & Receive

## Raising Funds and Friends for Campus Ministry

*Ask & Receive*

January, 2011

### HOW TO ASK FOR A GIFT

It has often been stated that development is the whole process of earning the right to ask someone for a gift. This means that the “friendraising” dynamics have to be worked at over time and have enough integrity, so that when the time comes to approach a potential donor, the right to this “ask” has been earned.

As the donor visit is being planned, a primary concern should be who has the best relationship with the donor. It needs to be someone who knows the ministry and can present the case with knowledge and enthusiasm. The visitor is there to listen carefully to the concerns and interests of the donor, as well as present the opportunities the ministry offers for the donor to fulfill their needs.

Professionals in the field often say that it may take as many visits as there are 0s in the “ask”. Therefore, the first visit may be one of introduction and careful listening—nothing more. The visit will be successful if the donor has asked pertinent questions, stated their values and concerns, and has made a connection with the core values of the ministry.

A second visit may be necessary to present requested information or answer significant questions. A third and subsequent visits will move toward the “ask,” not until the donor is ready, but certainly when the time is right. Useless meetings will put the donor off and give the impression you are wasting time. At some point the “ask” will need to be made. Timing is all-important.

If you do not know the donor well, ask someone who does to set up the first meeting, perhaps going with you. Or, the acquaintance can say that you will call soon to make an appointment or will write a letter of introduction for you. If you make

the initial contact, perhaps you can say, with permission, “Dr. Jones recommended that I call you about our Centennial Campaign.”

For current donors, who already know and support your ministry, you might ask if you and a board member might visit with them to talk about a new ministry venture or a new campaign. If there are objections, such as “we just can’t give anything right now,” you can simply ask if they can give you some advice or feedback to your campaign—no strings attached. They may give a future gift or know of someone who may be interested. A feasibility study operates somewhat like this. You want to put yourself in front of as many potential donors as you can, with the hope that many of them will connect their dreams with your vision.

Try to meet in as neutral a place as possible, such as a restaurant or coffee shop, especially for a first visit. Be sure that you pick up the tab. If the donor insists on meeting in their home, be gracious and don’t overstay your welcome. You might also suggest the ministry center if they haven’t been there (and it’s clean enough).

Before the visit you and your board will have done some thinking about the potential gift from this donor. It could be 10 to 20 times higher than the consistent annual gift. Generally it’s OK to ask high. Be specific if you can. The donor will let you know if they are able to consider your request, maybe with a smile on their face. Otherwise, you might ask, “What would it give you joy to do at this time?”

Set up the next visit if it’s called for. If there are objections or concerns, ask for a time to address them. Keep the door open for additional opportunities. Say thank you!

*“Don’t depend on strangers to make extraordinary gifts!”*

## SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR SPECIAL DONORS

Certainly every donor is special because they choose to make a gift to your ministry out of their sense of connection and commitment. You are one of their cherished causes, their best friends. How you respond to their generosity is as important as the gift itself.

I have suggested often that it’s like receiving a special gift from “Aunt Martha.” She has come to know you and appreciate what you do. She cares about you and desperately wants you to succeed. In return, she wants to keep her relationship with your ministry up close and personal. She wants to know about your successful programs and how lives have changed and faith has been expanded. She’s on your side all the way, regardless of the size of the gift.

Here are some things that you can do to enhance and deepen the relationship with Aunt Martha, inviting her to become an even stronger supporter.

- ◆ Make sure any gift of a certain size, like \$25 and above, receives a thank you note within 3 days. A phone call is even better because it personalizes the connection more.
- ◆ Use first class postage for all current donors. Use bulk rate mail only for those who are “names” but not “donors”.
- ◆ Pen personal notes on letters as often as possible. Students and board members could do the same.
- ◆ Send birthday cards and anniversary greetings if you have that information on file. Recognize any accomplishments or achievements of the donor.
- ◆ Provide a way in your communications for donors to share information about their personal lives.
- ◆ Send copies of clippings about your ministry or quotations from students who value their participation in your programs, the spring break trip, for example.
- ◆ Invite donors to a special annual event just for them, where they can meet students and hear about the ministry. Provide good food and a memorable presentation.
- ◆ Invite groups of donors to visit your ministry for a lunch and conversation.
- ◆ Invite major donors who have the appropriate skills and experience to serve on your board or on a special committee.
- ◆ Invite donors to serve as volunteers in your ministry. Include them as members of advisory or honorary committees.
- ◆ Call or visit donors to ask their advice or feedback on a particular issue or on your campaign vision.
- ◆ If you have bad news of significance, share it with them in an appropriate way (no whining!). You might say, “Because of your special relationship with our ministry, we want you to know...” Be the first to be in touch, lest the rumor mills grind you up.
- ◆ Establish a program for memorial gifts or appreciation gifts and encourage donors to contribute to it.
- ◆ Set up a program where a board member “adopts” a major donor and takes special care to keep the donor informed, invite them to events, and communicate all new visions.
- ◆ Although this may seem exclusive to some, you may want to set up a “giving club” that would encourage donors to target a certain amount each year. A recognition dinner or special event might be held for club members. Major donors interacting with other major donors is a good thing.

Aunt Martha will be gratified to know that her gift, no matter how small, is appreciated and used responsibly. Don’t be surprised if she finds a way to make another one.



## FUND RAISING/BOARD DEVELOPMENT SEMINARS ANNOUNCED

The Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team is pleased to announce the dates and venues of the fund raising seminars planned for 2011. These seminars are open to all campus ministry leadership, including staff, board members, denominational representatives, and student leaders. There is no cost for the seminars, except for the cost of travel to the location. Contact the coordinators listed below for more up to date information. Currently there are several seminars scheduled.

- ♦ **February 26, 2011 in Houston, Texas**  
Location to be determined  
Coordinator: Brad Fuerst [pastor@lcmhouston.org](mailto:pastor@lcmhouston.org)
- ♦ **March 5, 2011 in Palo Alto, California**  
Episcopal/Lutheran Campus Ministry, Stanford University  
Coordinator: Greg Schaefer [prgreg@stanford.edu](mailto:prgreg@stanford.edu)
- ♦ **March 19, 2011 in University Park, Pennsylvania**  
Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, Penn State University  
Coordinator: Alicia Anderson [ara2@psu.edu](mailto:ara2@psu.edu)
- ♦ **May 14, 2011 in Chicago, Illinois**  
Brent House, University of Chicago  
Coordinator: Stacy Alan [stacyalan@brenthouse.org](mailto:stacyalan@brenthouse.org)

Successful seminars have already been held at Columbus, OH, (January 15) and Charlotte, NC (January 22). As time and budget permit, more seminars or smaller consultations may be offered in other locations across the country. For more information about hosting contact your denominational representative to the ECMT or Galen Hora, who serves as seminar leader and consultant, at [Galen.Hora@elca.org](mailto:Galen.Hora@elca.org)

Fund raising is the *right person* asking the  
*right prospect* for the *right amount* in the *right way*  
at the *right time* with the *right follow up*.

### ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

*Ask & Receive* is a newsletter designed to supplement the Fund Raising Initiative of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team. It will present a series of ideas and resources on a monthly basis to address the challenges of fund raising and board development. Each issue will deal with an aspect of fund raising, such as the annual fund, visiting donors, or tuning up the board.

There will also be "Voices and Venues" section, helping us encounter the people and places where good fund raising practices are being lived out. Readers are invited to contribute to this section by sending information and ideas for inclusion. *Ask & Receive* is published on behalf of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team at 2481 Como Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55108. The editor is Galen Hora. Phone: 651.649.0454 ext. 228 E-Mail: [Galen.Hora@elca.org](mailto:Galen.Hora@elca.org)

“A sleepy board spells disaster. More often than not, drives don’t jell because the governing body can’t or won’t take an active role as donors, cultivators, and solicitors.”

L. Peter Edels, Fundraising

## WAKING UP SLEEPY BOARDS

**S**leepy, inactive, ineffective boards can be disastrous to the health and well-being of a nonprofit organization or a campus ministry. Like the driver of a bus, who falls asleep at the wheel, a board that is exhausted and complacent may allow the ministry to slide off into the ditch, injuring not only the board, but the program recipients and the very future of the ministry itself.

Boards in this condition are often called “rubber stamp” boards, because they can only be expected to put the stamp of approval on what is happening or being reported, without taking the time and energy to connect it with the core values and vision.

Rubber stamp boards happen for a number of reasons.

- ◆ Their role or job description is not carefully defined. Members are recruited to be on the board with the sense that not a lot would be required of them. Later they are surprised—but not pleasantly.
- ◆ They are friends and family of staff or other board members, often quite literally. They took on the board role to be supportive, but not with the expectation that their work in that capacity would be evaluated or that hard decisions would be required of them. They certainly don’t remember hearing the expectation to ask for donor support or give themselves.
- ◆ They felt fortunate to serve where there is a very capable campus pastor who has been there for many years. This staff person knows the ministry, takes care of everything, and just needs the board to support their decisions.
- ◆ The sleepy board does not have or care to have a larger vision of the ministry. They have not been asked to dream or plan. They spend all of their time and energy getting from one meeting to the next, often fretting with small details rather than working on major decisions.

- ◆ The relationship between board members has not been defined. Often one or two “long-term” members make the decisions, leaving the rest of the members to simply acquiesce.
- ◆ The judicatories, who often appoint board members, do not request or expect feedback from them in any meaningful way.

Les Stahlke, president of Governance Matters, states in a recent article about rubber stamp boards: “A CEO (read campus pastor) who wants to drive board decisions or who thinks the board is a ‘necessary evil’ does great disservice to the organization and is certainly abusing his/her power. In all **four basic responsibilities**, the board must (a) design its own structure and processes; (b) direct the strategic plan; (c) delegate authority and responsibility to the CEO; and, (d) determine progress and measure results.” His solution is to have the board spend time on the agenda discussing the role of the board and the role of the director. When this key relationship is understood, everyone will be happier, he says.

In a related article describing the “**cheer-leading board**,” Stahlke notes the way in which a board that begins as “friends who want to be supportive . . . who agree to serve by helping you, not to give an outlet for their own expertise in the area of your own,” never makes it to a more mature stage without some serious understanding of their role as a governing board. They are like dependent adolescents who never grow up. They have some of the marks of maturity, but they never get there. These are the relationships that so easily go undefined in an organization.

Relationships between the board and staff, between board members, and with other governing bodies must be delineated and maintained. There are assumptions about responsibilities, but never candid conversation or deliberate decisions. There may be a board manual, but it’s not followed. Cheerleaders who enjoy their position seldom aspire to wake up, put on the pads, and be players.