Ask & Receive

Raising Funds and Friends for Campus Ministry

ASK: The Visit and the Variables

The time has come! You are finally in the brink of paying a personal visit to a prospective donor. Do you feel the excitement? Here are some things to consider as you prepare for the meeting.

SETTING UP THE MEETING

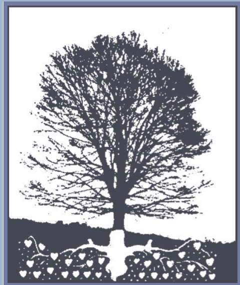
- If you don't know the donor well, ask someone who does to make the connection—a board member, church leader, or someone well-known in the community. A letter of introduction might suffice. Don't go as a stranger.
- Be prepared for initial questions, but don't go into great detail. Let them know that their input is critical to the success of your venture. Remember, you will have to "listen the gift" to its completion.
- Set up the meeting in a neutral location, ideally not the donor's home.
- Include someone else if that's appropriate, like a student or board member.
- Be prepared to pick up the tab.

AT THE MEETING

- Set aside enough time in your visit to do the asking. While listening may be 90% of the first visit, allow time to be direct about the purpose of the visit.
- Ask for the gift only when you are sure that the person perceives the benefits of making the donation and you have responded to any concerns.
- Before asking for the gift, summarize briefly the key benefits to the donor of making a gift or pledge at this time.
- Don't be afraid to ask high. If this is a major fund raising venture, ask the prospect to increase what they have given on an annual basis, perhaps as much as 20 times what they have given consistently. If you seem stuck and don't know how much to ask, you might say, "What would it give you joy to do?"
- In most cases, be specific, such as, "I hope that you will consider a pledge of $5,000. To achieve our goal, we need 12 persons to make pledges of $5,000 each. Can we count on you to be one of those twelve?"
- Another way to be specific is to talk about the time line of the project and see if the donor would consider a pledge over a period of months/years. If so, ask if they would like to be reminded periodically of their pledge.
- After you have asked, be silent and wait for the prospective donor to respond. Once the response is made, thank them and leave. Don't argue and don't hang around waiting for another opportunity in the conversation to re-ask. The tension for the day has been broken; wait until another time to ask again if that seems appropriate If it is the first meeting, perhaps you need to get to know the donor better. They may request information that you are not ready to provide. Ask for another appointment instead of a gift or a pledge now. Try to make it within the next two weeks, however, so that the energy and information of your visit doesn't dissipate.

FOLLOWUP

Regardless of the outcome, be sure to send a thank you note immediately after the visit and (hopefully) for the gift. If there is another date in the near future, let them know you are looking forward to more conversation.



An Initiative of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team

- The Episcopal Church
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- The United Church of Christ
- The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- The United Methodist Church
- The Presbyterian Church (USA)

ECMT
Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team

Affiliated with the Education and Leadership Ministries of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

To learn more about the Initiative and apply for training or consultation services, go to the ECMT Web site at *www.higheredmin.org*

"The intent is to proceed with the calm confidence of a Christian with four Aces."

Mark Twain

RECEIVE: "No" May Not Mean "No"

The visit is over. Hopefully it went well and you left with a gift or pledge in hand. However, it may be that this will turn out to be only the first of many visits. Perhaps the donor requested more information. You may have discovered that the timing was wrong or that you need to clarify your case. Don't be discouraged. "No" rarely means "No." It may simply mean "Not Yet." Begin to plan your next visit and as you do, think on these things.

OBJECTIONS RAISED

1. Learn to love the objections. The donor is taking you seriously.
2. Always seek the donor's interest. Listen carefully; never argue. The donor is not fighting you. They are trying to convince themselves that your project is worthwhile.

3. Ignore minor objections or excuses. Switch topics and go on to another benefit of the project.

4. If there is a serious concern, respond by saying, "That's an important point. I'm glad that you brought it up." Take some time to calmly respond or, if more information in needed, agree to return with the response in the near future.

5. Restate the objection as a question. Let the prospect give you more information about their real concern. "Do you feel that the endowment won't provide enough direct assistance to student programs now? How could we fix that."

6. Help them feel that you understand: "You know, a lot of people feel that way too, and…" "I thought so too at first, so I asked the campus pastor…"

7. If is seems likely that the donor wants to contribute, but still has a few questions: "That looks like a real problem. I don't know all the facts, but I will check into it and get back to you with the details. Could you consider your pledge while I look into that?"

TURNED DOWN

It may be that you are turned down flat. It happens. Without arguing with the prospective donor or badgering them with continued requests, it may be timely to end the conversation by keeping the door open to future involvement with one of the following responses:

- "Would it be possible to make a contribution of another kind at this time? Perhaps you have stocks or securities or an unused insurance policy you would like to give instead of cash." But tread lightly here, you don't want to give the impression that you are there to strong-arm a contribution
- "I understand that it's difficult to make a gift at this time. One of the ways you can remember campus ministry is in your will. If you like, I can send you some information."
- "I can see that you feel that this is an important project. Would there be a good time in the future to contact you to see if you're able to help then?"
- "You have said that you are not able to make a gift at this time. I'm wondering if there are friends or members of your congregation who might be interested in this project?"
- "What I hear from our conversation is that you are very interested in student life on campus these days. Would you like to meet a couple of our student leaders at the campus ministry center for conversation?"
- "While you aren't able to make a gift at this time, I would like to ask if you could suggest changes to our campaign that would make it more attractive to others."
- "You have been very kind and hospitable and your enthusiasm for campus ministry is certainly encouraging. I can understand your situation at this time. I'm glad we had a chance to meet and talk about campus ministry. I hope we have a chance to meet again."

GIVING TRENDS

This month, Penelope Burk issued her 2011 Cygnus Donor Survey (*www.cygresearch.com*) She received 22,000 responses from participants in Canada and the US. Here's what she discovered:

1. **Donors plan to be more generous in the new year.** An amazing 79% say that they are going to continue or increase their contributions. This means you will need to be cheerfully and consistently in front of your donor friends with clear, urgent, compelling messages.
2. **Donors are supporting fewer causes, although older donors continue to support more causes.** So with younger and middle-age donors, you will have to work to be one of their favorite causes.
3. **Donors are becoming increasingly independent.** They don't like solicitation; they prefer to do their own research—usually online. If you have a finite amount of time, crank up your online presence and turn down your direct mail solicitation.
4. **Donors are rapidly evolving away from direct mail.** While 26% said they plan to give less this year through the mail, only 1% said they planned to give more. They feel over-solicited and don't like the perceived cost of direct mail fundraising. Continue, but don't over-solicit. Keep your copy clean and straightforward.
5. **Donors are increasingly favoring giving online.** While 86% of younger donors stated that they gave online, 53% of donors over 65 joined them. It is more cost effective and time efficient. Be sure that your website has a seamless, secure donation process.
6. **Donors are changing the way they want to give.** Donors want to choose how they give. In the survey, 33% responded to a direct mail solicitation by giving online. Your correspondence should always direct them to your website, where a simple, clear process will be evident for making a donation.
7. **Donors prefer electronic communications over print.** While over 69% preferred electronic media, they want these messages to be brief and to the point. Think about segmenting your email lists so that you can send different messages to different donors.
8. **Donors are becoming more concerned about fundraising costs.** That's why they look online and give online. They don't want token "thank you" gifts or premiums. They don't want money wasted on flashy promotional material. They want as much of their gift to count as possible for the cause.

The bottom line is that donors will give to you if you have a good reputation and are trustworthy, but they'll drop you because they shift to other causes or feel that they're over-solicited.

WORKSHOP APPLICATIONS INVITED

The Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team invites campus ministries across the country to apply to host a workshop on fund/friend raising and board development for both staff and board members. The cost of the training services are shared with the ECMT. In 2012 workshops are scheduled in Chattanooga TN (March 10} and Nashville, TN (March 17), and Billings, MT (April 21). Others are pending in La Crosse, WI, Iowa, and Northern California. For information about attending a workshop, contact *ecmtconsultant@hotmail.com* Application forms are available on the ECMT Website at *www.higheredmin.org*

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

Ask & Receive is a newsletter designed to supplement the Fund Raising Initiative of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team. It presents a series of ideas and resources on a monthly basis, September through May, to address the challenges of fund raising and board development, focused on the particular context of campus ministry. Each issue deals with an aspect of fund raising, such as the annual appeal, visiting donors, trends, or tuning up the board. *Ask & Receive* is published on behalf of the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team at 2358 151st Avenue NW, Andover, MN 55304. The editor is Galen Hora. Phone: 763-350-3898 E-mail: *ecmtconsultant@hotmail.com*

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR BOARDS

Certainly there is no magic in making resolutions for the New Year. However, this may be as good a time as any for the board/committee to pause and consider changes it would like to make to become a stronger, more effective board. Here are 12 suggestions for the year 2012.

1. **Resolve to do more training and mentoring** of board members, particularly those who are new. For most people being a responsible board member is a learned skill, not an inherited gene. Set aside at least one meeting a year for board education—some time at every meeting would be more ideal. Read a common book or article and discuss it together.
2. **Become more engaged with the mission.** This means finding ways for board members to participate in and experience the dynamics of the ministry without becoming intrusive. Help them encounter the people and the stories that fuel the ministry. You want engaged leaders, not disengaged bosses. Open some doors and make some connections happen.
3. **Make meetings count.** While not every meeting can be filled with paramount decisions and evocative presentations, when the board gathers it should spend time on the important matters, not just trivial items. Build excitement into the agenda.
4. **Simplify, scrutinize, and structure the agenda.** Determine what needs valuable time and attention and be sure that the agenda allows for the most crucial items to receive the most attention.
5. **Use a consent agenda.** This serves as a wrapper for a all of those reports and items that can be read in advance and voted on *en bloc* at the meeting. However, you may want to vote on the treasurer's report separately or break out any item of the consent agenda for further consideration.
6. **Involve student members.** Not only should students be present at board meetings, they should be expected to take an active part in the meetings and decisions. While training and preparation are important, students bring unique skills and insights to the board process.
7. **Review the mission statement.** Ask, "Why are we doing this and not that?" A primary purpose of the board is to ensure that the ministry fits the mission and that the mission expresses the core values of the organization. Adjustments may need to be made, even serious ones, to maintain missional integrity. Donors expect it, while the ministry lives from it.
8. **Support staff and student leaders.** While the board will certainly want to have personnel guidelines and job descriptions in place, support goes beyond financial compensation and an annual review. Attention to the dreams, goals, and frustrations of staff and other leaders will give them a sense of mutuality and support.
9. **Review the board job description.** Determine if it is a timely delineation of the current work of the board. Consider how it might be used to inform and recruit new members and how it can be useful for the annual board review.
10. **Build some more bridges.** The board serves as a bridge between the ministry and its constituency. It knows the expectations of the founding/funding partners, such as synods and congregations, and finds ways to make those expectations operational in directing the ministry. Likewise, the board should know the stories and successes of the ministry and help interpret them enthusiastically to the constituency.
11. **Have a vision that is both large enough and realistic.** Board members are responsible for stretching the ministry beyond its day-to-dayness. They must see the larger, longer picture and find ways to accomplish realistic dreams. They do the "gap planning" to move the ministry from where they are to where they need and want to be in the future.
12. **Be ambassadors.** Tell at least one person a month about the ministry you serve and your work as a board member. Be excited and share that enthusiasm with others.

'If change is happening on the outside faster than on the inside, the end is near."

Jack Welch

Welch was Chairman and CEO of General Electric between 1981 and 2001. During his tenure at GE, the companies value rose 4000% and was the most valuable company in the world for a time.