

# Reading a Philanthropist's Mind

By Rika Peterson

*Is there a way to gauge the choices, motivations, and influences of a philanthropist?* This question was asked and answered in the recently published “Going Beyond Giving” study.

The study compiled data from 219 high net worth and ultra-high net worth philanthropists. Here are our three key takeaways from the study:

- Exercise caution in applying philanthropic generalizations to donors of the same generation, gender, source of wealth, and level of giving. The study reinforced **philanthropy is a highly individualized and personal journey**. It might be best to take each donor as they come. *And isn't that more fun anyway?!*
- When engaging high wealth donors, you must also talk to the wealth/tax/legal advisors and the personal networks of these donors. Those surveyed are primarily **influenced by their professional networks, families and friends, and peer philanthropists**—these relationships help identify opportunities for investment and assist with philanthropic decision-making strategies. A very broad but very influential target audience indeed.
- It is far from being all about funding. One philanthropic behavior that was consistent across respondents was their contribution of time. **88% of respondents consider volunteering as part of their philanthropy!**

At Maximizing Excellence we see just how valuable it can be for a campaign or organization to be given the gift of wealth, wisdom, and work from donors. Do not be afraid to approach your major donors with opportunities to get actively involved. Ask them to serve on your board, chair a capital campaign, or for their perspective on an idea you are tossing around.

You are not “bothering” them, you are honoring their contribution!