

THE Major Gifts REPORT

MONTHLY IDEAS TO UNLOCK YOUR MAJOR GIFTS POTENTIAL

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CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS

Craft Impactful Messaging for Your Campaign

By Megan Venzin

Capital campaigns call for bold commitments — but what's in it for the donors? When crafting campaign messages, it's important to recognize that not all motivations are created equal. Individuals, couples and foundations alike are driven to give for varying reasons, whether it be personal attachment to a cause, perceived return on investment or even tax implications. Understanding the driving forces behind a major gift donor's generosity is the first step in building stronger capital campaign communications.

"I start every meeting with this question: 'What do you already know about our organization?' A donor's response gives me a clear starting point for the discussion that meets them where they are," says Cindy Elifrits Peterson, founder of Maximizing Excellence, LLC (Sioux Falls, SD), a consulting firm that partners with organizations who want to improve their effectiveness and achieve high impact in the areas of architecting and managing capital campaigns. "Next, I pause and ask, 'What are you hearing that compels or motivates you?' Their response will directly inform my appeal to them."

Peterson identifies three components for crafting an organization's message:

1. **Need:** What specific need does the project/campaign meet?
2. **Value:** How does the project/campaign provide value to those who will benefit from it?
3. **Differentiation:** What makes this project/giving opportunity stand out from all of the others available to the potential donor?

"When an organization can clearly articulate these three things, then everything else they present to the potential donor will simply reinforce that initial desire to be supportive," Peterson says. "Now you have a central message from which you can build the rest of your campaign messaging." Supporting materials like statistical data, renderings, impact outcomes, a personal story or testimonials serve as augmentations to need, value and differentiation. "Each element should complement and balance the identified motivator for your audience," Peterson says.

Listening carefully to donors is key to creating capital campaign messages that resonate on a personal level. "You won't have to tell your donors how their gifts will make an impact on your campaign, because you've already taken the necessary steps to show them," Peterson says.

Including a convincing call to action is the last step in creating campaign messaging from which prospects can't shy away.

Source: Cindy Elifrits Peterson, Founder, Maximizing Excellence, LLC, Sioux Falls, SD. Phone (605) 271-9970. E-mail: cindy@maximizingexcellence.org. Website: www.maximizingexcellence.org

BEGIN SOLICITATION EFFORTS EARLY

Too Young for Planned Giving? Think Again!

If all of your planned giving pieces target older people, you may be missing a whole generation of donors. Consider featuring younger individuals, couples and families in a targeted appeal for planned giving.

Why make the effort to attract this demographic? Because getting married and having children causes many people to focus their attention on future security. Life insurance, wills and other planned giving opportunities can be a part of those considerations. Targeting those individuals may get you in on the ground floor, before other organizations have even thought about approaching them.

If you have younger individuals who have already made a planned gift to your organization, consider asking them to give a testimonial about how and why they came to that decision. Just seeing someone younger on your planned giving materials might strike a chord for those who thought they were too young for such discussions.

Tip for Working With Volunteers

- If you want volunteer or board solicitors to become fully engaged in fund development, never miss an opportunity to applaud their successes, especially in front of their peers. Doing so will make them more committed to the task at hand and motivate others who hear your praise to follow suit.

THE MAJOR GIFTS REPORT, (Print ISSN: 1527-7712; Online ISSN: 2325-8608), is published monthly by Wiley Subscription Services, Inc., a Wiley Company, 111 River St., Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774 USA.

Postmaster: Send all address changes to *THE MAJOR GIFTS REPORT*, John Wiley & Sons Inc., c/o The Sheridan Press, PO Box 465, Hanover, PA 17331 USA.

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View this journal online at www.wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/mgr.

Editor: Scott C. Stevenson

Production Editor: Laura Aberle

Editorial Correspondence: Scott C. Stevenson, *The Major Gifts Report*

For submission instructions, subscription and all other information: www.wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/mgr.

Printed in the USA by The Allied Group.

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Study Past Call Reports to Gain Valuable Insight

If you've just changed positions or are new to the profession, here is a way to gain valuable insight into how to go about asking the right questions, cultivating relationships and successfully closing gifts: Review completed call reports — written summaries of visits on prospects and donors — of veteran development officers in your department.

Doing so will provide valuable history on prospects and donors while allowing you to learn key techniques from accomplished development officers, such as:

- The conversation flow. Learn from what was said and when.
- Closing techniques. Pick up on new methods of making the ask.
- Techniques used to surface donors' funding interests.
- Open-ended questions that provide valuable insight into donors. Review questions posed that invited prospects to share helpful information.

DONOR RETENTION

Learn From Your Donor Experiences

Are you tired of hearing about donor retention and ready to actually do something about it?

"I think all development professionals and leaders of charitable institutions clearly understand the importance of retaining donors and taking steps to quarter by quarter and year by year improve their donor retention rates," says Brittney Williams, assistant director of leadership annual giving at Ball State University (Muncie, IN). "But the truth is that donor retention of annual giving and other donors continues to be problematic across all charitable sectors."

Williams recommends that leaders of charitable institutions step outside of the industry to seek answers. "Ask people in various professions, from bankers to accountants to store managers, about their customer retention rates, what they are expected to be, what they actually are and what they are doing to improve," suggests Williams.

Once you have a sense of what is being done in other industries to retain customers, according to Williams, it is critical to take practical steps to learn more about the thoughts and experiences of your donors, including the following:

- Invite donors, volunteers and community leaders to share their best and worst customer experiences. Focus on marketplace customer experiences and not experiences related to charitable giving and interaction. Identify similarities and key concepts and engage the participants in conversation about how the concepts apply to charitable giving and donor experiences.
- Follow up by inviting the participants and others to share their best and worst charitable donor experiences and explore how their donor experiences are similar to or different from customer experiences. Focus on identifying the concepts from the marketplace and the charitable sector that build trust and loyalty, and relate to customer/donor satisfaction and fulfillment such as communication frequency, transparency and organization-wide kindness and politeness in donor interaction.
- Focus on your organization by asking participants to compare their donor experiences elsewhere with their experiences at your organization. Learn from the successes and mistakes of others and identify the barriers that exist internally to creating optimal donor experiences, such as phone and reception skills of front-line staff, too frequent or infrequent communications, general messaging about need and mission, financial and other reporting, donor recognition, donor access to leadership and volunteer opportunities.

Source: Brittney Williams, Assistant Director of Leadership Annual Giving, Ball State University, Muncie, IN. Phone (765) 285-8388. E-mail: bwilliams@bsu.edu. Website: www.bsu.edu

Be Intentional in Uncovering Donor Motivation

A person's lifestyle can say a lot about their potential for giving. For example, it's been said that those who have invested more than \$2 million in real estate are 17 times more likely to give philanthropically. Similarly, those who have donated more than \$2,500 to political organizations are 14 times more likely to contribute to a nonprofit organization who shares with them an enticing cause. However, an influx of disposable income doesn't always line up with philanthropic outcomes, and sometimes major gifts can come from those who have much less to give.

While these statistics might serve as indicators for potential giving, only intentional research can illuminate the personal motivational drivers behind a donor's generosity. "The first thing any major gift officer (MGO) must do is ask questions to understand why that project or initiative is important to their prospect," says Kristin Priest, vice president of client strategy for PURSUANT (Dallas, TX), a fundraising agency that specializes in helping nonprofits leverage data, experience and creativity to have greater impact. "More important than delivering a great elevator speech is balancing your presentation with great questions. When we go 'from our case to their case' for support, that's when we identify true motivations."

Priest notes that too often MGOs want to learn facts about a person in order to connect, when in reality they should be taking steps to understand the philanthropist within that person. She says sometimes that means asking difficult questions:

- "What do you want your money to say about you?"
- "What do you hope to accomplish with your gift that is meaningful to you?"
- "How do you want to continue making an impact after you've passed away?"

"We have an obligation to step into a place that sometimes feels uncomfortable to us as we invite donors to reflect on what they believe so deeply, that they often haven't articulated before," Priest explains. "When this happens, we now not only understand their motives, but the values that drive those motives."

While MGOs should recognize the limitations reflected by their datasets, they can also use this kind of information to begin meaningful conversations. Past giving behavior, ZIP codes, event attendance and other information you already have within your data set can serve as a starting point for examining potential look-alike donor opportunities. "But be careful to avoid confusing causation with correlation," Priest warns. "Just because someone attended an event with a specific cause doesn't mean that's their soft spot. It could just be because you did a good job inviting them." Asking the right questions is often the best way to identify motivation. Whether in private donor meetings, scientifically conducted surveys, or leveraging digital tools to create and observe immersive donor experiences, those questions will aid you in uncovering the one thing you most need to know regarding how to best engage donors.

Source: Kristin Priest, Vice President, Client Strategy, PURSUANT, Dallas, TX. Phone (214) 866-7789. E-mail: kristin.priest@pursuant.com. Website: www.pursuant.com

SHOW OTHERS WHAT COULD BE

Why It's Helpful to Push for Major Gift Publicity

While there are times when pushing for publicity of a major gift is inappropriate — such as when a donor makes it clear he or she wants none — it's generally in your organization's best interest to get all the publicity you can muster when you receive a major gift. Doing so:

- Lets the public know you're in the business of receiving generous gifts.
- Provides the donor with well-deserved recognition.
- Raises the level of credibility in the eyes of other would-be donors.
- Allows for feature stories on your programs and services based on how the gift is used.

Review Others' Top Gift Clubs To Refine Your Own

What's your organization's top giving club or level for annual gifts? How do the benefits of contributing at that level differ from lower-level giving? How do donor benefits from your top gift level differ from those of other nonprofits' most prestigious gift clubs?

Your most generous annual giving donors will obviously be top candidates when it comes to seeking major gifts. That's why it's important to keep expanding that pool. To do so, your top giving level (or club) should be perceived as one to which everyone wants to belong.

Look at the nonprofits throughout your community. Many have prestigious membership levels for those who give at, say, the \$1,000-and-above level. Which nonprofits enjoy the greatest number of donors at that level? Which are perceived to be the most prestigious groups?

To refine your own top gift club, learn and evaluate what others are doing by:

1. Picking up literature from other nonprofits to see how they market their top gift club and determine what benefits they offer donors at that level.
2. Finding out who, among your donor constituency, also gives generously to other nonprofit groups. Visit with them to gain insight into their perceptions of other nonprofits' top giving groups. What do they find most appealing about them? What do they least like? What events do they make a point to attend and why?
3. Conducting a focus group discussion — or distributing a survey — with a handful of your donors who are presently contributing at your top level. Ask them questions that reveal perceptions about your current club benefits.

Closing Techniques

- **The written close.** If you have properly led the prospect to the point of solicitation, you can sometimes begin walking through the paperwork associated with a gift and not even have to pose the question. Unless the prospect stops you, it's a done deal.

Seek Out Transformational Gifts

“Small plans lead to small gifts” is an often-repeated adage in charitable fundraising.

“With many donors, they give to the goal and not to the charitable institution or person associated with the institution,” says Cassie Warman, vice president for university advancement for Pacific University (Forest Grove, OR). “They give to the vision and to the impact they believe their gift will make toward that vision, and if the vision is small, donors will behave accordingly, and if the vision is dynamic and transformational, donors will often step up in major ways.”

The first steps in encouraging major and transformational gifts, according to Warman, involve ensuring that your vision is clear, relatable, large in scale and fundable:

- The strategic plan for your fundraising effort is where you will discover the biggest, most visionary story you can tell about the impact the initiative will have, the vision for the future, how many will be impacted and in what positive ways, and what will change for the better.
- Secondly, out of the story will develop your case for support: What the cause is, why donors should care, why your organization is best equipped and why now.
- And thirdly, define what it will take to get there, how much, who and in what structured way.

“Truly significant and transformational gifts are situational and dependent on the charitable institution’s circumstances and may be defined by the impact on constituents, and opportunities for future growth and achievement of aspirational goals,” says Warman. Defining transformational gifts allows for:

- A clear understanding of the impact these gifts would make.
- Identification of those prospects capable of making such gifts.
- Preparation of the cultivation and solicitation strategies for each prospect based on alignment with their interests and the vision of the organization.
- Determination of the size of each gift prospect’s ask and gift capacity.
- Establishment of unique recognition and stewardship opportunities for donors who give major and transformational gifts.

“Creating a vision that inspires, awakens and motivates donors to transform the institution and alter the future in powerful ways is the overarching goal of a major gifts program, and the vision will help to identify prospects capable of giving at those levels, and also prepare the institution to utilize major gifts effectively,” says Warman.

Source: Cassie Warman, Vice President, University Advancement, Pacific University, Forest Grove, OR. Phone (503) 352-2211. E-mail: warman@pacific.edu. Website: www.pacific.edu

The Risks and Opportunities of Giving IRAs

By Thomas Schroeder

Retirement plans can be tax-efficient ways for donors to include charitable institutions in their estate plans.

“The Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015 allows Americans over the age of 70½ to distribute up to \$100,000 in a calendar year to charitable organizations of their choosing,” says E. John McKee, assistant vice president for planned giving and philanthropy at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (Baltimore, MD). “The distribution to charity can be a significant benefit for individual retirement account owners who are required each year to take minimum required distributions included in their gross income for tax purposes.”

The distribution to one or more charitable institutions counts toward the IRA owner’s minimum required distribution, according to McKee, but is not included in his or her income for tax purposes.

Guidelines for IRA distribution to charitable institutions under the PATH Act include the following:

- The donor must be at least 70½ years old at distribution.
- Transfers must come from IRAs directly to charity. If, for instance, the donor has assets in a 401(k), or 403(b) retirement fund, the assets must be first rolled into an IRA before the transfer to a charitable institution.
- Federal tax implications are that the distribution is not recognized as income provided it goes directly to charity, and consequently, the donor is not eligible for an income tax charitable deduction.
- State tax laws differ from state to state. Some states have a state personal income tax and will include the distribution as income, some states will allow a charitable deduction and others will not, and other states have no personal income tax at all.
- Transfers may not be used to fund life-income gifts such as charitable remainder trusts or charitable gift annuities.
- IRA rollover transfers to charitable institutions are counted as the required minimum distributions from retirement plans for individuals who are at least 70½ years old.

“The PATH Act provides an opportunity for many older Americans to support their favorite charitable institutions and also fulfill the minimum requirement for distributions from their accounts, but it is very important that those considering the donations to charity from IRAs are absolutely certain that these funds are not necessary to comfortably fund their retirements and meet their needs in the future,” says McKee.

Source: E. John McKee, Assistant Vice President for Planned Giving and Philanthropy, University of Maryland, Baltimore, Baltimore, MD. Phone (877) 706-4406. E-mail: plannedgiving@umaryland.edu. Website: www.umaryland.edu

Invite Board Members To Introduce You and Your Cause

Do you have a method to encourage board members to introduce you and your organization to individuals, businesses and foundations?

If your board is made up of movers and shakers, they should be in positions to help introduce your organization and assist in prospect cultivation. And for those board members who shudder at the thought of asking people for money, you can assure them that their primary role is simply to help make introductions and cultivate friendships. You or another advancement official can be prepared to make any asks.

Formalize your procedure for involving board members in this friend-making process by developing a form similar to the example shown. At a scheduled board meeting, ask board members to complete it and return it to you within a specified number of days. Then be prepared to begin following up with each board member immediately. (It's important to act while the assignment is still fresh in their minds.)

When you distribute the form, be sure to include your last honor roll of contributors, so board members will be sure not to include names of those who are presently contributing to your organization. Better yet, also include a list of non-donors who would be likely prospect candidates.

FRIEND-MAKING OBJECTIVES FOR BOARD MEMBERS ~ Confidential ~

The purpose of this project is to involve all board members in making introductions and cultivating relationships with non-donors capable of making gifts of \$10,000 or more. Your ability to help establish a positive relationship with friends and associates will help broaden our base of future major gift support.

Our goal is to make individual introductory visits with each person you have identified within the next three months. Subsequent visits and objectives will be determined once initial calls have been completed.

Please identify three or more prospects (individuals, businesses or foundations) — who are presently not donors — capable of contributing \$10,000 or more to our organization. We ask that you complete this form within the next week and return it to (Name).

Once your form is received, a development officer will contact you to begin coordinating available dates and times to set appointments with the persons you have identified.

Your name: _____ Date: _____

1. Prospect: _____

Your relationship to the prospect: _____

Helpful background information (e.g., occupation, title, source of wealth): _____

2. Prospect: _____

Your relationship to the prospect: _____

Helpful background information (e.g., occupation, title, source of wealth): _____

3. Prospect: _____

Your relationship to the prospect: _____

Helpful background information (e.g., occupation, title, source of wealth): _____

Key Discovery and Prospect Qualification Steps

All the heavy lifting comes in the donor discovery and prospect qualification phases of cultivation. If done well, the personal solicitation visit will often result in success.

“Discovery is vital and will help to determine not only the passions, values and interests of prospective donors, but also define how, when and who will be involved in the solicitation process,” says Cheryl Balchunas, senior director of development for the School of Medicine Cancer Center of the University of Colorado (Aurora, CO). “Often, as well, qualification of prospective donors will inform about capacity to give, giving history and a determination of an ask amount.”

Discovery involves the application of one-on-one calls, according to Balchunas, providing valuable information about:

- The prospective donor’s passions and vision for philanthropy, helping to determine what project, campaign or program to ask for funding.
- What the prospective donor needs to know in detail about the institution in order to make the giving decision.
- Whom the prospective donor may have a relationship or connection with among the institution’s staff or volunteer leadership, and if other family members need to be involved in the process and decision.
- The communication preferences (e-mail, phone calls, personal visits, newsletters) of the prospective donor which will form the stewardship model.
- Desire of the donor to be recognized, formally or informally, or provided with confidentiality in giving.

The one-on-one discovery call must be well-orchestrated with specific outcomes in mind, according to Balchunas. “It’s important to have a game plan when preparing for the call, including several key talking points, crucial things you need to know about the prospective donor, any connections he or she may have with your institution and how engagement may occur, and finally a locked-in appointment for a personal visit.”

The call is also an opportunity to qualify, or in some cases disqualify a donor based on the donor’s expression of interest and the institution’s alignment with her or his values and philanthropic goals. Disqualification can occur when:

1. There is no clear next step or confirmed appointment at the end of the call.
2. The prospect declined all invitations to further engagement (special events, tours, concerts/lectures/sporting events) and has not responded to follow-up.
3. The prospect expresses the belief that he or she is not a major gift or planned giving prospect.
4. The donor confirms an interest in continuing current giving through the annual fund, but nothing more extensive.

Source: Cheryl Balchunas, Senior Director of Development, School of Medicine, CU Cancer Center, University of Colorado, Aurora, CO.
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Draw Attention to Planned Gifts With a Blog

By Megan Venzin

People often misconceive planned giving as an option concerning only the elderly or very wealthy, but that simply isn't true. Duke University (Durham, NC) is shining a much-needed light on the versatility of planned gifts through their "Blueprints" — an informative blog that addresses topics such as planned giving options, philanthropy and estate tips, tax reform and its impact on charitable giving, campus news and donor stories.

"The Blueprints blog is a great way for us to engage and inspire donors to bring their love for Duke to life through a planned gift," says Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications Brandy Chieco. "It also enables them to see the bigger picture of giving at the university." Blueprints can be viewed here: www.giving.duke.edu/blog.

The blog has four primary purposes:

1. Establish gift planning staff as experts.
2. Keep current donors engaged.
3. Build community with younger donors.
4. Break down barriers to giving.

Staff can easily measure the effectiveness of this tool. "Because of its online presence, the Blueprints blog is trackable and shareable," Chieco explains. "This means we can easily track visitors, uncover insights on what's compelling to our audience and tailor content accordingly. The blog also allows readers to easily share content with their networks, thereby expanding Duke's reach and planned giving message."

Because relevant, up-to-date content is critical to any blog's success, Chieco urges organizations to consider the workload a project like this can create. "Before launching a giving-focused blog, make a plan!" Chieco says. "Ask yourself and your team the following questions to give your blog a clear direction: 'Why do we need a blog? How often will we publish content, and who will contribute? What topics will we cover and when? How will we get people to read it?'" Nonprofits who can clearly answer these questions may then begin to outline the next steps, assign responsibilities and make their own teams aware of their roles in the implementation process, Chieco adds.

"Posting weekly is highly recommended, but this task is often too time-consuming for one person to accomplish," Chieco says. "To overcome this, create a content calendar and split the blogging responsibilities among several team members to distribute the workload and highlight a breadth of expertise." Incorporating posts from guest contributors is another great way to bank content and add variety to a planned giving blog.

Source: Brandy Chieco, Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications, Duke University, Durham, NC. Phone (919) 681-8030. E-mail: brandolyn.chieco@duke.edu. Website: www.giving.duke.edu/giftplanning

Create Effective Gift Acceptance Policies

A well-designed gift acceptance policy can help manage the expectations of donors and serve as guidance for staff and board members when asking for or receiving both traditional and non-traditional gifts.

"A well-executed gift acceptance policy provides for flexibility, both in evaluating potential gifts to determine if their acceptance will be beneficial to the charitable institution, and also in providing for future amendments for growth," says Gail Ferris, assistant vice president for advancement administration and compliance for George Washington University (Washington, D.C.). "The adoption of a gift acceptance policy will, in the long run, provide immeasurable value to an institution by providing guidance and preventing costly and time-consuming but well-meaning mistakes."

The truth is that there are certain types of gifts, according to Ferris, that your organization simply may not, or should not, accept, such as some real estate and gifts that may not reflect the organization's values and mission. Reasons to adopt a gift acceptance policy include the following:

- ❑ Some gifts may lead to legal obligations that must be carefully studied and considered, such as gifts of real property that may raise property tax issues, issues about disposal of hazardous materials (asbestos or volatile material) or issues of licensing.
- ❑ The IRS form 990 asks whether charitable institutions have a board-approved gift acceptance policy in the reporting of non-cash contributions and in-kind gifts.
- ❑ There are gifts that may be objectionable to constituents and the general public, such as gifts of controversial works of art, which may be troublesome to defend or sell.
- ❑ A gift acceptance policy is important in clearly defining gift acknowledgment procedures and the recognition of donors.

Additionally, the gift acceptance policy should incorporate the following aspects:

1. Statement of the values and mission of the organization, and a clear description of the types of non-cash gifts that will be accepted, such as securities, real estate, minerals, gifts of grain, automobiles, certain works of art, etc.
2. Legal reporting and documentation procedures to protect the donor and the organization.
3. Written procedures for acknowledging gifts and possible ways of recognizing donors that reflect their wishes to be publicly recognized or to have their privacy respected.
4. Policies for acceptance of restricted gifts that clearly outline the restrictions.
5. Procedures for monitoring and governing gift acceptance, outlining staff involvement and board-level oversight.

Source: Gail Ferris, Assistant Vice President, Advancement Administration and Compliance, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Phone (202) 994-6415. E-mail: giving@gwu.edu. Website: www.gwu.edu

To Keep or Rename a Building — That's the Question

Do you think a charity has the right or obligation to replace the name on a building whose namesake has been found guilty of moral turpitude?

“The issue of renaming facilities or rescinding a name from a building, endowed fund or similar (entity) is certainly a topic of concern for many colleges and universities. Regretfully, we have seen several situations nationally where an individual is in the news for doing something controversial, inappropriate or even illegal. We’ve also seen student groups protest historic names on campuses, because the individuals honored were former slave owners, known segregationists, etc.

“We have not experienced such a challenge at Campbell University, but I suppose it could happen. We added a disclaimer to our major gift agreements a couple of years ago to help guide us moving forward as follows: ‘University naming opportunities, including named endowment funds, shall only bear the name of individuals or entities that exemplify attributes of integrity, character and leadership consistent with the highest values of the University. Should those standards be violated, the University reserves the right to remove the donors’/honorees’ names from such naming opportunity.’

“I don’t believe we’ll ever have to act upon this language at Campbell University, but it’s better to establish mutual expectations from the beginning.”

— *Britt J. Davis, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Campbell University, Buies Creek, NC. Phone (910) 893-1350. E-mail: davisb@campbell.edu. Website: <https://campaign.campbell.edu>*

“Naming gifts both past and present are in the news, presently hinging on what has been revealed about the donor for whom it is named. In the past, naming gift issues usually centered around a nonprofit’s failure to perform a gift restriction to the donor’s satisfaction and also to investment principles, where endowment could not be invested.

“But this is a new issue, having to do with today’s sensibilities about speech, about viewpoints, about history and perspective. In this new territory, it seems that each nonprofit is making its own judgment; organizations have even changed their stance, like Ball State University, with a naming gift from the Papa John’s founder, accepting it before later rejecting it. Purdue University had at the same time changed his naming gift on a center and then even returned the funds to the donor, making national news.

“These issues are bound to keep arising as the Internet reveals and shares more, and as donors and the public ask for accountability and appropriateness. Charities are wise to start contemplating what this could mean to its current donors and to its reputation, if a pivotal issue stays active. Stay tuned, for similar circumstance could be coming to a charity near you.”

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Get Fellow Employees Involved in Stewardship

At the University of California, Davis (UC Davis; Davis, CA), stewardship is integrated into the fabric of the university’s relationship with its faculty and staff, and is changing how supporters and donors are engaged.

“Stewardship is such a major aspect of donor relations and the whole process of strengthening relationships and connections with supporters, volunteers, friends, alumni and others,” says Casey Becker, recognition and stewardship program manager for the University of California, Davis. “At UC Davis, we understand and seek to acknowledge the important role that faculty and staff play in stewardship at every level and during each step of the stewardship cycle.”

The university has established the Faculty and Staff Stewardship Award through the Office of Development and Alumni Relations and the UC Davis Foundation Board’s Stewardship Committee. The annual award, according to Becker, recognizes employees whose exceptional skills in building and strengthening relationships with donors, friends and supporters produces results. Learn about the award program at: www.giving.ucdavis.edu/recognition-resources/stewardship-award-program.

Why involve and recognize faculty and staff for stewardship? “Often the connections, engagement and interaction that faculty members and other key staff initiate with either existing donors or supporters and friends of the university and specific departments and programs can directly lead to giving,” says Becker. “Just as importantly, faculty and staff members play a crucial role in honoring the intent of donors and exhibiting the transparency needed to assure supporters that their gifts are being utilized efficiently and prudently.”

The 2019 award process, according to Becker, will kick off with the call for nominations in February, a deadline in May and award winners announced in the summer of 2019. At least one faculty member and one staff member will be recognized at the Leadership Giving Society annual gala and featured in the UC Davis newsletter.

“Faculty and staff members throughout the university are encouraged to work closely with the Office of Development and Alumni Relations in building connections and engaging with alumni, friends and supporters who may be prospective donors,” says Becker. “Cultivation involves a long process, and the trust and working relationships that employees form are valuable and unique.”

Becker believes that the award directly impacts giving to the university in another key way. “When faculty and other staff look toward retirement and estate planning, their involvement in donor relations and stewardship often links to a natural transition from employee to donor.”

Source: Casey Becker, Recognition and Stewardship Program Manager, University of California, Davis, Davis, CA. Phone (530) 754-4438. E-mail: cshell@ucdavis.edu. Website: www.ucdavis.edu

Endowment Gifts Beget Gifts

Gift Opportunity — Establish a creative awareness fund — an endowed gift from which annual interest would underwrite the cost of testing creative new ways to attract wealth.

Solution — First, develop a printed menu of creative ways in which annual interest could be used for reaching and cultivating the wealthy: an ad (or a series of ads) in the Wall Street Journal, direct mail targeted to wealthy enclaves, membership for your CEO in exclusive clubs, etc. Then identify those persons who might be more inclined to make a venture capital investment, persons who, through their own experience, understand that it takes calculated risks to generate new major gifts.

Donor Benefits — In certain instances, you could give the donor credit: “This ad sponsored by” In addition, the donor will be able to follow the results of your targeted strategies and take pride in those that produce desired results. This fund would be especially appealing to certain entrepreneurial types.

Boost Major Gifts With Words Donors Like to Hear

Although much more than words goes into the making of a major gift, certain phrases help attract major gift prospects’ attention.

Here are a few of them:

- ❑ “We have experienced more than a decade of balanced budgets.”
- ❑ “We’re fortunate to have a reserve in place that, as of yet, we have not had to use.”
- ❑ “We use a conservative percentage of endowment income for annual programs, so as to return a portion of it to keep growing our endowment.”
- ❑ “We have a highly reputable group of trustees on our investment committee who include”
- ❑ “We never take on a capital project without also raising sufficient endowment to underwrite future operating and maintenance costs of the new or renovated facility.”

Practical Ways to Improve Donor Relations

By Thomas Schroeder

What practical steps can any nonprofit take to improve its stewardship and donor relations practices?

“The timing of gift acknowledgment is critical. Whatever your institution is doing currently, step it up a notch, acknowledge gifts more promptly and in a more personal manner, and through multiple channels, such as a phone call from a key staff member or volunteer, an e-mail that includes a gift receipt and a high-quality letter that arrives within days of the gift and is personally signed. Major donors in particular are not interested in appreciation trinkets, they generally won’t display plaques or other commemorations in their homes, and they view such small gifts as a waste of the organization’s money — meaning their money. Corporations and businesses, however, often are appreciative of public recognition of their giving, as it highlights their corporate philanthropy and community involvement. Orchestrate a gift acceptance event and invite local media, but also provide photos, video and a short article on your website and newsletter.”

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“Charitable organizations in the performing or visual arts arenas are provided with excellent opportunities to improve stewardship by offering major donors the chance to engage with performers, musicians or artists. For instance, a \$25,000 donation to underwrite an event comes with a post-performance reception where the donor is given the privilege of inviting their guests to meet the performers. The goal is to allow donors to feel like they are part of the family of the organization, and to experience the impact of their giving in personal ways. This concept can also work with other charitable organizations, scholarship recipients and endowed faculty. Grateful patients and family members of service recipients can also play similar roles and allow donors to experience the direct impact of their giving.”

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“One simple way to better understand donor recognition is to experience it firsthand. Identify two charitable organizations in your community whose missions you support and which appear to be successful and growing. Make a donation to each at a level you are comfortable with, sit back and make a point of recognizing the feelings that arise from each and taking note. Were you promptly thanked, addressed personally, invited to participate more fully, helped to understand the direct impact of your gift, inspired to give further and become more involved?”

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SOLICITING MAJOR GIFTS

Written Proposals Legitimize Your Request

While there may be instances when a written proposal is unnecessary, a formal written proposal — even if only one page in length — adds a certain leveraging quality to the solicitation process. Written proposals should:

- Describe in detail how the gift will be used.
- Delineate donor benefits.
- Suggest naming options.
- Clarify perceptions between prospects and solicitors.
- Serve as continual reminders in the absence of staff visits.