

Update: Giving During This Recession

As reported in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, here are some results from a recent poll conducted by Cygnus Applied Research:

Of 22,000 people polled, with a median \$2,000 in contributions last year (half gave more and half less):

- 52% indicated their gifts would be at least as large as in 2008, and 17.5% planned to give less
- 30% said it too soon for them to know how much they would give
- 87% who had made pledges indicated they would be making their payments on time as contrasted to 95% in better times.
- Volunteers play a key role in securing gifts
- Donors said they were prepared to make sacrifices to sustain their philanthropy

From these poll results along with our firm's experience over the past 18 months the observations I offered last September still apply:

- Organizations that postpone or ease-up on fundraising initiatives for reasons of "the economy" are likely to be out-hustled by other worthy charitable organizations seeking support. The economy is down, but the competition for charitable gifts and grants is not.
- When an organization delays or scales-down fundraising initiatives it may well signal to supporters that perhaps the funds weren't really needed after all.
- When the economy improves, and the question is not whether but when, the loss of fundraising momentum may make it difficult to catch-up.

As an added observation, while Americans have lost value in their assets over the past months, they certainly have not lost their generosity.