

The Art of Engagement

Most non-profit organizations eventually (and often reluctantly) face what I consider to be the single most important reality of fundraising: ***"In order to secure meaningful gifts, we need to engage potential donors in meaningful conversations."***

Obscuring that realization is that most people, however generous with their own time and financial resources, are reluctant to “impose” on others to contribute; even to the most worthy organizations and causes. In my view, every person in a leadership position – volunteer or staff – should be expected to engage people in meaningful conversations about their organization; to speak “loud and proud” about its good works. I have found that most donors expect this level of engagement and are often puzzled by the lack of enthusiastic endorsement from those closest to the organization.

The fact is that effective fundraising is not the art of asking; it’s the art of engagement. And both volunteers and staff are more likely to master that art if they share certain key assumptions:

- ❖ We are always on the alert for opportunities to engage potential donors in meaningful conversations about the good works of our organization and the fulfillment of its fundamental mission.
- ❖ It is important to listen carefully to a potential donor’s personal interests and concerns, which will undoubtedly have a significant bearing on their eventual support of the organization.
- ❖ We recognize the need to prioritize our organization’s funding needs both for our financial planning purposes as well as to focus a potential donor’s interest in supporting us.
- ❖ We bring conversations and the exchange of information to a conclusion with a specific request for support when the potential donor has in our judgment been well-prepared to give a thoughtful response to our request.

Has your organization mastered the art of engagement?