

Preaching to the Choir:

Finding Major Gift Section Leaders and Soloists in your Annual Fund Chorus

Presentation to Greater Boston Choral Consortium

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Presentation Outline

- 1) Introductions
- 2) A breakdown of what you'll get from the session
 - A path that will hopefully help you to see where their potential major donors will likely come from
 - Ways to identify people along that path who can help you expand your donor base, both at the annual fund and major gift levels
 - A magic bullet that will immediately explain everything you need to do to cultivate, solicit, and steward major donors! (Note: not happening!)
- 3) A few Board of Directors questions:
 - Does your organization have a Board minimum? If so, what is it and roughly what percentage of your annual giving comes from your Board? (Note: it's okay if you don't know this – don't panic – but that said, 1/3 of what is raised annually is often contributed by members of the Board of Directors)
 - More important than a Board minimum: Does your organization have 100% participation in annual giving from the members of your Board? If the answer is no, that's a topic for a session on Board development!
- 4) How many organizations in the room have solid annual fund bases?
 - Number of mailings per year?
 - A good mix of email and snail mail?
 - What does your organization raise annually?
 - What does your organization consider a major gift?

5) Why so many questions about your Board of Directors and your annual fund mailings:

- They are your sources of major gifts!
- Through them, you will find people to take through the four main steps in building your major donor base: **identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.**

6) The four main steps in building your major donor base:

- Identification: What is it? How do you do it?
 - Board member introductions to your contacts who might be interested in supporting / have the capacity to support your organization
 - Direct mail / email contributions
- Cultivation: What is it? How do you do it?
 - Cultivation is getting to know the prospect. SOMETHING brought her to you, whether it was a direct mail appeal, a concert that she attended, a Board member who brought her to a concert, etc. The donation is her “declaration of interest” – she is telling you she’s interested in what you do and she’s inviting you to tell her more.
 - What is your organization’s story? This is an important part of the cultivation process – you have to be able to articulate your organization’s mission, history, and future plans in order to expect someone to invest in that future.
 - NOTE: Cultivation is an art, not a science. There is no set time frame for getting your donor to move from one level gift to the next – it could take weeks for some people and years for others. That’s okay.
 - What does your organization currently do to cultivate donors? Again, no one answer – throw anything and everything out there!
 - Good cultivation conversation starters: “Tell me why you enjoy being a part of X.” “Tell me something about X that audience members / patrons know that staff members / volunteers might not.” “Let me tell you about something that I think will interest you about X.”
- Solicitation: What is it? How do you do it?
 - Solicitation is exactly what it sounds like: making the ask. You’ve gotten to know the prospect, you know her interests and how they align with your organization’s interests and mission, and you’ve made her aware of the opportunities for support within your organization.

- How much do you ask for? That depends. Do your homework! What has your prospect given to other organizations? If it's a specific project, what is the cost of the project, and does the prospect want to be a leader or one of many donors?
- If you're not sure what to ask for (because sometimes people don't want their giving information to be found), suggest that the prospect make a stretch gift that would be meaningful to both herself as a donor and to the organization.
- **WARNING:** Don't create giving opportunities where none exist. That is a recipe for disaster. Example: a prospect wants to start an outreach program where your chorus members develop in-depth partnerships with a local school system, but your chorus members are volunteers, most of whom are working full time jobs in addition to singing. Chances are what this prospect wants isn't realistic, and taking a contribution from a prospect with unrealistic expectations is a recipe for disaster. Sometimes you have to say no, and sometimes the prospect says no as well.
- And to co-opt an unpopular phrase, no doesn't always mean no. Sometimes no means not yet. When a prospect turns down a solicitation, it's always a good idea to ask why. This just means you're still in the cultivation stage. Sometimes the no has nothing to do with the organization, and sometimes it's an opportunity for the organization to examine its fundraising efforts with an eye towards future successes.
- **Stewardship: What is it? How do you do it?**
 - You've gotten the gift – congratulations! Now you're done, right? Ummm...
 - Not in the least – you're just entering a new stage of the relationships with the once prospect / now donor. And this stage is often longer and more challenging than the cultivation and solicitation stage.
 - Think of stewardship as an extended thank you. Your donor has made a commitment to your organization, and in return, you are making a commitment to the donor to keeping her informed as to how her gift is being used, its impact on your organization, and her role in your organization's success.
 - **YOU'RE ALSO PREPARING HER TO MAKE HER NEXT GIFT!**
 - What can an organization do to steward a donor?
 - A. Keep the lines of communication open. There is nothing worse than ignoring a donor once a gift has been made! Invite her into the office; have coffee with her and tell her about your organization's successes; send her a press release before it is released by the press. These are all

examples of easy things an organization can do to keep a donor engaged.

- B. Provide experiences that aren't open to just anyone. Have a donor sponsoring an artist? Give her an opportunity to meet the artist. Is your donor a major force behind a new commission? Introduce her to the composer. Access is key!
- C. Listen to your donor! Donors are always giving clues as to what they are happy about, what they are unhappy about, and what they might be interested in supporting next. A major donor should have your ear – and you should listen.

7) Questions? (15 minutes)

Helpful Resources:

www.networkforgood.com/nonprofitblog - Network For Good is a software company, but the company's nonprofit blog is full of great information and is written in a very accessible manner.

Women in Development of Greater Boston – www.widgb.org – Women in Development offers great programming, primarily for development professionals but also for volunteer fundraisers.

<https://bloomerang.co/resources> - Also a software company, Bloomerang has a blog, downloadable guides that cover all aspects of fundraising, articles, etc.