

Michael Kaiser fundraising seminar

Twenty-five rules for fundraising

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1. Fundraising is most successful for organisations that create exciting art, pursue aggressive marketing campaigns and are welcoming to new members of their 'families'.
 2. Fundraising is not begging; it is matching the needs of the donor to the needs of the organisation.
 3. Always have a menu of projects to suggest to a donor. Do not come with a presentation geared to a specific project unless you know upfront that this is the one project they may fund.
 4. The key to good fundraising is to listen. Listen to what the donor wants and gets excited by. Then take time to respond with an appropriate proposal. Fundraising is strategic – you are matching your needs to the donor's needs.
 5. If you do not have a project that would interest a donor at this time, tell them. You will impress them and will be sure to be funded when you do have a project that meets their needs.
 6. There are four phases to fundraising: prospecting, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.
 7. Fundraising takes time; this is one reason for doing longer-term artistic planning.
 8. Donors respond to positive information, not to threats of bankruptcy.
 9. Corporate donors are looking for visibility for their products and services. Create a tailored visibility plan for every prospect.

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10. Foundations tend to be mission-driven. Make sure your project matches the mission of the foundation.
 11. Over time, gifts from individuals should become a larger portion of your contributions. Remember to separate your major gift campaign from your membership campaign and run them differently. Don't spend more money on solicitation and fulfillment than the donor is giving you.
 12. Individual donors tend to value experiences more than tangible items like mugs or t-shirts.
 13. There are four major reasons major donors support the arts: love of the art form, joy in meeting artists, prestige or the desire for a social life. Make sure to understand the giving motivation for each donor.
 14. Find the right solicitor for each donor. It might be a board member or friend. The proper solicitor can frequently get an extra 0 added to a cheque. Use your board members, or other friends, to open doors. Spend time getting to know who your board members know and are willing to solicit.
 15. If board members are excited about your progress and not embarrassed by your organisation they are more likely to be helpful. Implement your institutional marketing campaign before you implement your fundraising efforts.
 16. Events are an easy way to get to new donors, since the quid pro quo is so simple to understand. Make your galas as special as possible to create a strong impression with new donors. A poorly planned gala can hurt you forever.
 17. Each prospect is precious. Don't waste a prospect by being ill-prepared or sloppy. If the prospect feels comfortable with you, they are far more likely to give. You are competing with the largest and best staffed not for profits – don't appear to be 'small time' with your donors: never make a typo, never forget to return a call, never appear unfriendly.
 18. Don't ask any one donor for a gift that is out of proportion with the rest of your donations. You look naive.

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19. Don't let a donor off easily. If a corporation says they are already sponsoring another organisation, find a way to get a contribution that helps both.
 20. Don't waste too much time writing hundreds of cold call letters. Rather, invest your time getting to know a few donors.
 21. Don't use 'lingo' when speaking with donors. Remember they probably have no idea what your project names mean. Explain using simple language and avoid theatrical jargon.
 22. Research your major donors. It is easy to do online and impresses.
 23. Small donors can grow into big ones. Deliver on what you promise, and over-deliver if possible.
 24. Do not only contact your donors when you want more money.
 25. We use the word development as a synonym for fundraising since what we are trying to do is develop relationships with our donors over time. If you are in it for the long term, and treat the donor accordingly, they will be in it for the long term.