



BlackBallotPower

Secrets Revealed: Asking for a Donation

Asking in person is the most successful way to raise funds.

Secret #1. Identify people to approach. Friends, relatives, colleagues, co-worshippers: from you, your volunteers and your donors.

Secret #2. Research Skills. Research is vital to your success. The more information you have about a prospective contributor, the better you can tailor your approach. Who are these prospects? Where do they live? What do they do? Who do they give to already? Are they a contributor to your organization and if so: for how long; how much did they give; and to what type of solicitation did they respond to? Why are they interested in your organization? Do their names appear regularly on other organizations donor lists? Do they come from family money? What is a normal gift for them? Google them. Don't feel weird about it. You are not being creepy, you are being smart!

Secret #3. Develop materials. Materials you need include:

- ◆ one page fact sheet on your organization and your fundraising campaign (direct readers to your website for more information)
- ◆ news articles that have appeared on the organization (this shows the reader that your organization is making things happen!)
- ◆ list of board members/contributors (prospective donors what to know who they are joining and that this is a train that is moving!)

Secret #4. Enough already – hit the send button! Whoever has the closest relationship with the prospect is the person who should reach out to set up a meeting. You are getting in touch with them due to your shared interest in the organization. Reference your common ties-be it a past contributor, a shared friend or board member. You would like to meet with them to share what your organization is up to, explore your shared concerns, and to brief them on the exciting/innovative work of the organization. Give them 3 potential meeting dates. Don't give it all away in the email-leave them with the feeling that they want to learn more. Attach backup materials. If you don't hear back in a week-call or email again. If you have an on going relationship and this is a direct ask for a contribution, tell them so they can be prepared.

Secret #5. Know what it is your want out of the meeting before you walk in to it. Sometimes it is just a conversation if they are new, sometimes it is a major contribution to a capital campaign, and sometimes it is to ask the individual to co-chair a special event. Be prepared with a laundry list of ideas on how the person can help. Ideas could include:

- ◆ share with them the overall objective/mission of the organization, and capture their interest
- ◆ get their input on what you are up to and if they have any advice on approach
- ◆ make a major financial contribution
- ◆ co-chair a special event
- ◆ commit to finding additional co-chairs and sponsors
- ◆ share their lists of potential donors, sign letters to prospective donors, use their name publicly
- ◆ everything above

Secret #6. The meeting. Two people should go to the meeting. Think about who the prospect would respond to best. Whoever has the tightest, most favorable relationship should attend - usually a board member and a staff person. One person should be the substance/content person and the other is the “get things done/financial” person. If the meeting is an hour, spend at least 30 minutes on substance. Ask a lot of questions in an effort to find shared interests and approaches. Really listen to their answers and incorporate their concerns into the conversation. When talking about the fundraising campaign, be honest. Thanks to your research you will know the level of giving the person is capable of.

Secret #7. The Ask. Know what it is you are asking for. When the time is right, make The Ask and then be quiet. This is the hardest part. It is human nature to want to fill up the quiet space. Don't. Trust that the person will tell you what they feel comfortable doing/giving.

Secret #8. The response....

YES!

Thank them, reiterate what the money will accomplish.

If they said yes too quickly, you may have asked for too little. If you have the nerve, ask them to give more.

NO!

Be prepared for no, this is common. It may be a maybe. Try to find out why it is a no.

If a real no, don't feel hurt, the person may not have the capacity to give at that time.

Ask if you can return in 6 months or a year. Thank them. Write a heart felt thank you note for their time.

Secret #9. Sometimes NO is really MAYBE

Find out their concerns and respond, or have a staff person respond if you do not know the answer.

Find out when you can come back and talk - do they want someone else there? a spouse?

Tell them you respect their process for making a decision and ask how you can help.

Emphasize that you need their support and soon.

Secret #10. Then what....

- ◆ Thank them no matter what the outcome and leave.
- ◆ Write a (hand-written) thank you ASAP.
- ◆ Follow up quickly with whatever information needed to make a decision.
- ◆ Stay in touch.

Secret #11. Why people say no...

- ◆ Bad timing - something you don't know about happened to them (got fired, had a fight with a family member, just gave away all their money for the month, etc.) SO - go back to them at a better time.
- ◆ Not familiar enough with your group. SO - BUILD a relationship, then you can go back and ask.
- ◆ You were too nervous to ask directly and clearly for a specific gift and/or you were too nervous to listen and talked too much. SO - PRACTICE, stay in touch and return to ask.
- ◆ You were too nervous to ask questions and get them involved in the conversation. SO - PRACTICE, stay in touch and return to ask.
- ◆ Maybe you talked too much about the numbers and not enough about the specific people and benefits to them. SO - PRACTICE, stay in touch and return to ask.
- ◆ Maybe you were so upset when they said no, you were not able to be flexible and bargain with them. (what could you give?) SO - PRACTICE, stay in touch and return to ask.
- ◆ Maybe you asked too soon. SO - BUILD a relationship, practice, stay in touch and return to ask.
- ◆ You were so nervous you spoke, rather than remained silent, after asking for a specific gift. SO - PRACTICE, stay in touch and return to ask.

Secret #12. Major errors in personal solicitations....

- ◆ Not asking for a specific gift.
- ◆ Not asking for a large enough gift.
- ◆ Not listening.
- ◆ Not asking questions.
- ◆ Not talking about benefits to people.
- ◆ Not being flexible about alternative ways to give (quarterly pledges, etc.)
- ◆ Not knowing about the prospect before the visit.
- ◆ Asking too soon.
- ◆ Settling for the first offer, even though it is lower than you expect.
- ◆ Not being quiet after the ASK.
- ◆ Not being prepared - practicing - for the solicitation.

Secret #13. These aren't secrets

It is all common sense. But if you call something a secret it sounds a lot more interesting.

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