

9 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE DONORS

What makes donors choose you?

Know your donors because 2009 is all about relationships. Your \$50 donor who typically supports 3 or 4 other charities each year may feel the need to choose this year. How will they choose? Starting now:

1. Let donors know that provisions in wills and retirement plans are treasured by your nonprofit. To a donor who may be uncomfortable making their usual annual fund gift, a reminder that a provision in their will or retirement plan doesn't cost them anything now and is a valued investment in a cause that is worthwhile to the community- may help maintain their support.
2. Get personal with thanks. How would it feel at the end of a long day to find a phone message at home from one of your favorite nonprofits, addressing you by name and thanking you for your support? Wouldn't it just make your day – this week - that someone had noticed your \$100 gift and made an effort to show their appreciation? In addition to the standard written gift acknowledgement which has become so routine that it borders on boring, make 2009 the year that all of your donors receive a personal follow-up. Organize staff and board to make a few phone calls each month. Sound like a lot of work? Then only call the donors whose gifts you want again. With advanced planning, this is do-able, and a satisfying task, and towards the end of the year, when many donors make their charitable gift decisions, you'll be glad you did.
3. Launch a 44-cent cultivation plan. Keep note cards, stamps, and a list of donors, volunteers, or prospects with addresses in your top drawer, ready for a few minutes of the day when you need a break. Set a goal to write a few each week and mention the difference that person's gift has made that

week. As long as the notes are sincere, a sentence or 2 will do...these are memorable.

4. Ask for advice from your most loyal contributors and settle in to listen. Much of the time we visit prospects, we have our list of wants and needs and leave before learning what prospects may need. Now is the time to listen. When was the last time someone just sat with you and listened? Ask open-ended questions. Seek feedback and insights on your nonprofits' goals. Start with the donors you don't know very well.
5. Make 2009 the year that your desk stays clear(er) because you're out of the office making more visits. Offer to meet people at the local coffee shop instead of the restaurant if your budget is stressed. It's more relaxed and informal and who won't appreciate more of that these days?
6. Keep insiders (board members, donors, volunteers) involved. Ask them for introductions to people in their networks.
7. Keep it positive. Stay focused on what's possible and avoid messages such as, "we may have to close if we don't get..." This makes donors wonder if their money is headed down the drain and may lead them to make a lesser gift or even contribute some other place.
8. Talk to your donors who may be able to take advantage of the IRA rollover. 2009 is the year.
9. Ask donors (including lower-level givers) to share their own stories about why they support your organization. An expression of loyalty and inspiration is what you're after. Will it make a good quote? Donor stories are the best marketing you can have and people never get tired of reading personal stories.

Your donors look to you for meaning. With nonprofits that are mission-focused and harnessing energies of like-minded people, it is the work that makes the

most sense these days. It gives people a positive reaction to the economic news.

Shift to a new gear and if beginning with any one of the items listed above, you'll be in synch with this new world that we are forming.

And yes, we are forming a new world every time we focus on what's possible and take steps in that direction. It's what nonprofit leaders do.