

Finding Major New Donors By Michael A. Sand

If you are responsible for raising funds for a nonprofit agency, how do you deal with the “double whammy” of hard times—more clients need more services while donors contribute less money.

One way is to increase the donor pool of large gifts. The math is easy. If donors are cutting down on the size of their gifts, you need more donors.

Successful fundraising is a three step process. First, make a list of potentially large donors. Second, decide how to get potential donors interested in your program. Then, when they are interested in your program, ask them to make an “investment in the future of their community.”

Step one- Make a list of potentially large donors

- Form a Development Committee and have the members brainstorm potential donors
- Set aside some time at a board meeting to get lists of potential donors
- Review your roster of agency volunteers to see if any might be potentially large donors
- Collect lists of major donors from other nonprofits in your community e.g. cultural events, universities, hospitals, United Way
- Review lists of agency suppliers

Step two- Decide how to get potential donors interested in your program.

Donors will only make a major contribution to your agency if they are excited about your programs. There are several ways to interest potential donors in your program.

- Invite them to see how your program functions on-site
- Go to lunch with them and tell them about your program
- Put them on your board, an advisory board, or a committee
- Send them copies of your newsletter
- Hold periodic open houses to encourage potential donors to learn about your program

Step three- Ask potential donors to “make an investment in the future of their community.”

If at all possible, visit potential donors at their home. If not possible, send the donor materials about the program and follow up with a telephone call. When you visit:

- Give them materials about how clients are helped by the program
- Ask the potential donor to talk about their interest in serving their community
- Indicate to the donor how making a donation is “an investment in the future of their community”
- Follow up any oral pledge with a letter thanking the donor for their pledge

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