



MULTIPLY 417

Passion: The Bridge between People and Purpose

Major Donors - Ideas and Tips Part 1

Dear Ministry Leader,

Asking Partners for higher impact gifts (major donor level)

As a function of helping others to develop a deeper passion for the Kingdom work of your ministry, there are those who may invest substantially in the sustainability and growth of your work. Those individuals (or companies) are typically referred to as major donors, or major givers. But in truth, they are even more likely substantial or major partners.

While not eliminating or subduing our efforts with other partners giving through other means and with smaller gifts, the need to cultivate and grow our major partners is imperative.

As you think about this process here are some questions for you to ask yourself as you think about various individuals (new potential partners, or partners not giving at a major level, yet!)

Be aware, some of the answers you will have to these questions may be merely your best guess. Be cautious to not overly assume you are correct and when possible, find out, ask, inquire in appropriate (if an appropriate way exists) ways to solidify your assumptions.

1. Ask: Are they the Right Fit?

The first step in major donor cultivation is understanding who the right fit for the role is, and who isn't.

Let's say you're on a major donor cultivation call, and you feel the need to start the conversation from ground zero by explaining your organization's mission and impact. That's a red flag indicating that this person isn't necessarily major donor material—yet.

What qualifies as a good major donor? For starters, it's someone who (99% of the time) is already giving to you. This shows that they believe in what you're doing and think it's worth their money. Another good major donor qualification is that they're willing to sit down and discuss going above and beyond their current gift level. Again, if they're giving you their time and attention, you mean something to them.

It's good to remember that most prospects know that when you call for a meeting, that it's likely about money. If it's on your radar, it may be on theirs as well.

Other ways to qualify a major donor include: (Remember the FRM principle) Understanding how long they've been associated with your cause, and in what capacity they've shown support.

Looking at a wealth screening that touches on real estate, job position, family composition, and other philanthropic efforts.

The length of time since they made a gift.

The amount of their last gift.

Whatever you do, don't assume that someone who gives to other organizations or who has the financial capacity is automatically going to throw you \$10,000. Major donor cultivation requires a relationship built over time.

2. Create Organization Wide Buy-In

It's virtually impossible to create a stellar major giving program without the buy-in of key players, including:

Your CEO/Directors
Board Members
Other staff

If your major donor prospects notice a disconnect between what you're saying as a development professional, and what your organization is doing, then you're back at square one.

To increase buy-in from your staff, board, and nonprofit leadership, explain your plan. Map out how you plan to reach out to major donor prospects, how you expect to qualify individuals who may be good candidates and your end goal. This is exactly the place your Faithful Activity Strategy comes into play (see Point #4 below). Using it and programming it into your CRM are critical components that lead to success.

From there, suggest ways they can help. For example, you can set a standard for referrals and information sharing with the planned giving team.

Then, invite them to participate in the process, such as making a call to a prospect. Everyone on your organization's team plays a large role, so ask them to share their perspective with the prospective major donor.

At the end of the day, fundraising is everyone's responsibility. You may be doing the legwork, but it's your staff, board, and leadership team that fill in the missing pieces.

3. Learn their Generosity Passions

I believe that a part of adhering to a Phil 4:17 means taking the time to learn their passions and especially so their passions for giving. Have you ever asked a major donor or potential major donor this question? "Would you please share with me one of the times you experienced real joy through giving a gift?"

One great way to bring a mid-level donor to major donor status is to know what makes them tick and where their passions lie. The best way to do this is through conversations, either over the phone or in-person, but you can also use targeted surveys and email if your donor prefers these communication methods. (see me if you'd like some ideas around satisfaction surveys or commitment surveys)

When you're prospecting major donors, match their philanthropic interests with a program or impact you provide.

Consider an organization that assists survivors of domestic and sexual violence and assault. Let's say they have a mid-level donor with the capacity for major giving. This donor gives monthly gifts of \$50, and the money goes into the general fund. But they learn through conversations that this donor is passionate about children. The organization could create a specific initiative that this donor could fund, such as funding an expanded playroom for the Safe House or purchasing school supplies for these youngest survivors. Learn about the passions of your mid-level donors and create a custom product for them to stand behind.

Passionately,

Rick

P.S.

Check out next week's tip for Part 2 of Major Donor Ideas and Tips.
