

The Donor-Centric Pledge

We, [fill in the name of your nonprofit organization here], believe...

1. That donors are essential to the success of our mission.
2. That gifts are not "cash transactions." Donors are not merely a bunch of interchangeable, easily replaceable credit cards, checkbooks and wallets.
3. That no one "owes" us a gift just because our mission is worthy.
4. That any person who chooses to become our donor has enormous potential to assist the mission.
5. That having a program for developing a relationship with that donor is how organizations tap that enormous potential.
6. That we waste that potential when donors are not promptly thanked.
7. That "lifetime value of a donor" is the best (though often overlooked) way to evaluate "return on investment" in fundraising.
8. That donors are more important than donations. Those who currently make small gifts are just as interesting to us as those who currently make large gifts.
9. That acquiring first-time donors is easy but keeping those donors is hard.
10. That many first-time gifts are no more than "impulse purchases" or "first dates."
11. That we'll have to work harder for the second gift than we did for the first.
12. That a prerequisite for above-average donor retention is a well-planned donor-centric communications program that begins with a welcome.
13. That donors want to have faith in us, and that it's our fault if they don't.
14. That donors want to make a difference in the world -- and that our mission is one of many means to that end.
15. That donors are investors. They invest in doing good. They expect their investment to prosper, or they'll invest somewhere else.
16. That we earn the donor's trust by reporting on our accomplishments and efficiency.
17. That individual donors respond to our appeals for personal reasons we can only guess at.
18. That asking a donor why she or he gave a first gift to us will likely lead to an amazingly revealing conversation.
19. That fundraising serves the donors' emotional needs as much as it serves the organization's financial needs.
20. That we are in the "feel good" business. Donors feel good when they help make the world a better place.
21. That a prime goal of fundraising communications is to satisfy basic human needs such as the donor's need to feel important and worthwhile.
22. That the donor's perspective defines what is a "major" gift.¹
23. That every first gift can open a door to an entirely new world for the donor, through participation in our cause.

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¹ A repeat donor of \$25 annual gifts who suddenly increases her gift ten-fold to \$250, for instance, is making a major commitment that deserves special acknowledgement.