Training your board members to personally ask for gifts

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Session description

Great! Some of your board members (maybe just one!) agreed to help solicit gifts from selected donors. Now what? You have to prepare your board members to do this work.

Join this workshop – even if you're still just hoping to find a board member (or another volunteer) to help. Together, we will review a training program. You'll learn what board members absolutely must know – and what's not so important. Discover how to pick the right board members for this task. Find out the secrets of success. You will become an agent of empowerment.

Selected resources

- *The Ask: How to Ask Anyone for Any Amount for Any Purpose,* Laura Fredricks, Jossey-Bass Publishing, 2006
- *Beyond Fundraising: New Strategies for Nonprofit Innovation and Investment,* Kay Sprinkel Grace, John Wiley & Sons, 1997.
- *Excellence in Fundraising in Canada,* Guy Mallabone, Editor, Civil Sector Press, 2011
- *Fundraising Principles and Practice,* Adrian Sargeant, Jen Shang, and Associates,
- John Wiley & Sons, 2010
- *Presenting to Win,* Jerry Weissman, FT Press, 2008.
- See more resources at:
    - www.simonejoyaux.com. Free download library, e-news, and blogs
    - www.aherncomm.com. All about donor-centered communications, including a free e-news.
    - www.sofii.org. Showcase of Fundraising Innovation and Inspiration
    - www.askingmatters.com

"Philanthropy is the act of individual citizens and local institutions contributing money or goods, along with their time and skills, to promote the well-being of others and the betterment of the community in which they live and work. Philanthropy can be expressed in informal and spontaneous ways or it can also be expressed in formal, organized ways whereby citizens give contributions to local organizations, which, in turn use the funds to support projects that improve the quality of life."
European Foundation Centre, Brussels

This workshop provides you with an overview of personal solicitation and how to engage your board members in this process.

Your job, as staff, is to build understanding and support so board members will consider doing this important work. You orient and train your volunteers. You provide ongoing support so they can be successful and proud.

Copy or modify these resource materials for your own use – and for orienting and supporting your board members and other fundraising volunteers who agree to help solicit gifts personally.

Table of contents of this handout

Questions to ask – things to talk about

1. What will you tell your board members (and other prospective volunteers) about personal solicitation?
2. How will you help them overcome their barriers and discomfort?
3. How will you partner with your volunteers to do this work?
4. What kind of ongoing support will you provide?
5. What kind of information will you provide to your volunteers?

Three starting points

1. Use personal, face-to-face solicitation for your annual operations / core program support, not just some special campaign. *(As a CDO, my agency's annual fundraising included 500 individual and corporate prospects solicited by 75 volunteers – only 10 of whom served on the board.)*
2. Without laying the right groundwork for fund development in general, you make personal face-to-face solicitation even harder for board members. *(Less-than-good fundraising and fundraisers have generated some lousy myths and practices that scare volunteers. Let's stop it now!)*
3. Can you imagine a personal face-to-face solicitation that is an extraordinary experience for the donor – and for the solicitors, too? *(Remind me to tell you this story at the end.)*

Context and background

1. The **mantra in solicitation**: The right person asking the right prospect in the right way for the right project at the right amount at the right time. And, using the right interests, the right stories, and the right emotional triggers for that prospect.
2. **Defining personal solicitation** for major gifts
   a. In North America, fundraisers and volunteers typically call this process "face-to-face solicitation." In other countries, "face-to-face" often means "street fundraising." Street fundraising is used in many countries around the world. But street fundraising isn't that common in North America, although it's growing.
   b. Personal solicitation works well with individuals/families and many corporations. Use personal solicitation to request gifts for capital, endowment, and core program/operating support. Use personal solicitation for local and long distance requests.
3. **Basic principles** to keep in mind…for staff and volunteers. [See also handout on page 7.]
   a. The mission of fund development is to **secure donors, not donations**.
   b. Volunteers can play an important role as solicitors. Why? Because **philanthropy is defined as voluntary action** for the common good.
   c. Direct mail is estimated to cost as much as 2000 times more than volunteer-led personal solicitation.
   d. **Why do most people give**? Because they're asked. But only ask those who care about your cause. And make sure that the prospect is ready to be asked!
   e. **It's not what your NGO is selling, it's what the donor/prospect is buying that counts**.
      - "You'll have more fun and success when you stop trying to get what you want, and start helping other people get what they want." (Dale Carnegie, 1930s U.S. self-help guru)
      - I'm interested in my interests, my motivations and my aspirations. Match those and then I'll give through your NGO to achieve my own aspirations.
      - People pay attention to what interests them! (Ask me about my World Cup story.)
      - Don't universalize your own passion. Not everyone is interested in your particular cause, no matter how convincing you are. Find those who share your passion.
4. **Don't trespass on personal and professional relationships**. Ask your volunteers to use their connections to identify those who might be predisposed, qualify them as prospects (or not), and build relationships between the cause and those who are qualified prospects.
5. ***You* have to give first**. You cannot ask for a gift without giving a gift first.
6. **Loyalty is the holy grail of fundraising**. Loyalty = Operating as a donor-centered organization + a comprehensive relationship-building program (donor-centered communications + extraordinary experiences).

Engaging volunteers in asking – personally soliciting for major gifts

1. **Who are the best prospects for your personal solicitation efforts**?
    a. Segment your donor/prospect pool by solicitation strategy. Often, those who are solicited personally don't receive direct mail.
    b. What criteria would you use to select those who would be personally solicited?
2. **How does volunteer engagement add value to your fundraising program**?
    a. Philanthropy is often described as "voluntary action for the common good." Use volunteers!
    b. Volunteers add their own personal and professional credibility to your NGO's fundraising.
    c. Volunteers can extend the reach of your NGO through more connections.
    d. Volunteers can increase the number of calls made by increasing the number of workers.
3. **Where do you find the volunteers**?
    a. Start with your board members…by virtue of the leadership position they hold.
    b. Reach out to some of your donors and beneficiaries. They might help, too.
4. **What makes a good solicitor**?
    a. Commitment to the cause and to your NGO
    b. Willingness to inconvenience oneself – and do things that one finds somewhat uncomfortable
    c. Comfortable with other people
    d. Good listener
    e. Good storyteller
    f. Belief in donor centrism rather than organization centrism
    g. Good listening skills – and self-confident.
5. **Coaxing volunteers to participate in asking**.
    a. Explain the value of volunteer participation – what a big difference they can make.
    b. Compliment the board members for their willingness to consider helping with solicitation.
    c. Explain the kind of support you will provide.
    d. Explain why you think a particular individual will be an effective solicitor. (See #4 above.)
6. **Supporting volunteers as they help do the work – what do you, as staff, do**?
    a. Provide the case for support/key messages.
    b. Describe who the prospects will be – and help board members choose the right prospects.
    c. Provide ongoing orientation and training and support.
    d. Share the body of knowledge and best practice – but carefully. Remember, volunteers are not staff and do not need to know everything staff knows.
    e. De-mystify the fundraising process and steps.
    f. Acknowledge – and respond to – possible discomfort and outright fears of your volunteers.
    g. Assume responsibility for removing the barriers.
    h. Repeatedly thank your volunteers for their participation and effort.
    i. Provide practice opportunities.
    j. Help them select the right prospects to solicit – and make sure their first asks produce gifts!
    k. Create teams for solicitation – board member and staff person; a couple board members.

See next page for Item #7, What does the solicitor need to know – and what isn't that important?

Engaging volunteers in asking – continued…

7. **What does the solicitor need to know – and what isn't that important**?
   a. Why donors are heroes. Why donor gifts are so important to the organization. Impact of donors on the organization. Results produced by the organization because of donor gifts.
   b. Prospect / donor relationship to the organization – along with gift history
   c. Prospect / donor interests (Provided by the staff to the solicitor. And the solicitor learns more during the solicitation conversation, and then, in turn, updates the staff.)
   d. Prospect / donor emotional triggers, motivations and aspirations that relate to the issue / cause
   e. Proposed use of proposed gift and gift request amount
   f. Gift request amount
   g. Some stories – about donors and clients – of the organization
   h. General financing / financial picture of the organization
   i. **What's not so important?** Tons of details and statistics. Actually, it's great when you cannot answer a question – it gives you a chance to get the answer and connect again!

Explaining the solicitor's job to the solicitors

1. **What's the job of the solicitor**?
   a. Perhaps help design the request and confirm gift request amount. Identify / anticipate barriers.
   b. Set up the face-to-face meeting. (Could you just as well ask over the telephone?)
   c. Engage the prospect in a conversation. Asking for a gift personally is a conversation, not a presentation.
   d. Focus on the prospect's interests, aspirations and motivations. Be donor-centered!
   e. Tell stories that resonate with the prospect. Invite stories from the prospect. Listen and watch. Ask questions to generate conversation. Answer questions. Listen more.
   f. See donor questions at www.simonejoyaux.com - and in *Keep Your Donors: The Guide to Better Communications and Stronger Relationships*.
   g. Ask for the gift (the predetermined request amount) – and then be quiet. Listen and watch.
   h. Get the answer. Don't leave behind a gift envelope, suddenly making this a mail solicitation – which is less effective. You may need to follow-up later – so make those arrangements.
   i. When you get the prospect's answer, report it immediately to the office.

2. **What the office does after the solicitor asks**
   a. Send an acknowledgement letter to the prospect once the solicitor reports that a pledge has been made. Enclose a gift envelope for the donor to complete and return payment.
   b. Guide and support solicitors well.
   c. Regularly follow-up with solicitors to check on their progress.

3. **Knowing the stories to tell – a few tips**
   a. How donor gifts impact the beneficiaries and the cause.
   b. Why does your organization matter?
   c. What bad things will happen if your organization doesn't exist?
   d. What's next…telling stories of the future

4. **The actual ask**
   a. A specific amount
   b. 3 options (or "points of purchase")
   c. Gift table – where do you see yourself

Basic Principles of Fund Development

Philanthropy means voluntary action for the common good[1]. Fund development is the essential partner of philanthropy. Fund development makes philanthropy possible by bringing together a particular cause and the prospects and donors who are willing to invest in the cause. The goal is to acquire donors of time and money who stay with the charity. This is done through the process of relationship building. With the donor at the center, fund development nurtures loyalty and lifetime value, thus facilitating philanthropy. You know if your relationship building works because your retention rates rise and the lifetime value of your donors and volunteers increases. (*Keep Your Donors: The Guide to Better Communications and Stronger Relationships.*)

So what does this mean in practical terms? Here are some basics:

1. First, understand some **basic distinctions**:
    a. Predisposed: An individual, business, or some other entity whose interests and actions suggest a possible inclination or susceptibility towards your organization's cause / mission. ("Suspect" is more common terminology. But who wants to hear anyone referred to in such a pejorative manner?)
    b. Prospect: An individual, business, or some other entity that has demonstrated an interest in your cause / organization. The individual has raised his / her hand by buying your services or asking to join the mailing list or... In some manner, in some way, the individual, business or entity has raised its hand signaling interest in your cause and your organization.
    c. Donor: An individual, business, or some other entity that has given a gift of time or money or service to your organization.
2. Nurture a **culture of philanthropy** in your organization. The right attitude matters as much as anything. Culture refers to the personality / attitude of your organization. A culture of philanthropy means that everyone accepts and celebrates the beauty of philanthropy and donors, no matter the type or size of gift.
3. Build a **donor-centered**[2] organization. Focus on the donor or prospective donor. "It's not what your organization is selling, it's what I'm buying that counts. I'm interested in my interests, my motivations and my aspirations. Match those and then I'll give to you. Otherwise, leave me alone!"
    - Don't universalize your own passion. Not everyone is interested in your cause, no matter how convincing you are. Do not try to convince them! That's offensive. Instead, find those who share your passion.
4. **Loyalty** is the holy grail of fundraising – just like loyalty is the holy grail of any business. Here's my equation: Loyalty = Donor-centered organization + Relationship-Building Program (donor-centered communications + extraordinary experiences.)
5. Giving is an **emotional act**, not a financial transaction. Your organization is the means by which donors live out their own interests and aspirations.
    a. Neuroscience and psychological research document that all human decisions are triggered emotions[3]. Then rationale steps in. "Emotion is multi-dimensional: it focuses on a person's core

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[1] Inspired by Robert L. Payton's definition of voluntary action for the public good. Payton was the first professor of philanthropics in the U.S. and former head of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University / Purdue University in Indianapolis.

[2] See Donor Centric Pledge in *Keep Your Donors* and in the Free Download Library at www.simonejoyaux.com.

[3] See research by Dr. Antoine Bechara and Dr. Antonio Damasio, described in Tom Ahern's books on donor communications. www.aherncomm.com. By the way, psychologist W. Gerrod Parrott identifies many more than 7 emotions. Read all about emotions in *Keep Your Donors: The Guide to Better Communications and Stronger Relationships,* by Joyaux and Ahern.

goals, directs attention and interest, arouses the body for action, and integrates social group and cultural factors. It is thus a central component of meaning making." (Carol Saunders, PhD, Brookfield Zoo)

   b. Research from the direct mail industry says that people give in response to one or more of 7 emotions: greed, guilt, anger, fear, flattery, exclusivity, and salvation. People move from one emotion – e.g., anger – to hope, by using your agency as the means to make change. Tom Ahern refers to this partnering of emotions as "twin sets."

6. Engage **volunteers**, including board members and others. Make sure your staff effectively enables volunteers to participate in this meaningful work of identifying, cultivating, and soliciting.

7. **Don't trespass** on personal and professional relationships. Instead, use connections to identify those who might be predisposed to your cause. If you cannot qualify them as prospects (and it's their choice!), leave them alone.

8. Effective fund development is like **permission marketing**[4]; people opt in or opt out. "Permission marketing is the privilege (not the right) of delivering anticipated, personal and relevant messages to people who actually want to get them…treating people with respect is the best way to earn their attention. Permission doesn't have to be formal but it has to be obvious." (From Seth Godin's book and blog)

9. More **visibility** does not produce more contributions. Everyone focuses on his / her own interests. Your agency can be more and more visible – but if I'm not interested, I'm not paying attention. And I sure won't send money. Just ask Simone about the NCAA basketball championship and the World Cup! (Or read about these experiences in *Keep Your Donors.*)
   a. It's okay if someone doesn't know who your agency is or what it does. Tell them, if they're interested. That's identifying the predisposed.
   b. Do <u>not</u> solicit someone unless you know for sure that the person knows about your agency.
   c. Where do you need to be visible? Among your current donors, because you want to build their loyalty. Absence does <u>not</u> make the heart grow fonder –it's out of sight and out of mind! Nurture these donor relationships.

10. *<u>You</u>* have to **give first**. (*You* means each board member, the CEO and development officers, and fundraising volunteers.) Why? Because you cannot represent an agency or cause without demonstrating your own financial and volunteer investment.

11. **Why do most people give**? Because they're asked. It's that simple. But only ask those who are interested. Ask the right prospect for the right amount at the right time for the right project in the right way with the right solicitor.

12. Build an **individual giving program**. Each year, individuals give the largest portion of philanthropic gifts in North America. What about elsewhere? And individuals are more loyal donors than foundations or corporations.

13. Fund development is a **process and a profession**. The profession is founded on ethical principles and standards[5], based on a well-researched body of knowledge[6], and protects the public through voluntary

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[4] Term introduced by Seth Godin in his 1999 book *Permission Marketing.* Godin contrasts permission marketing to interruption marketing, the traditional advertising / marketing approach. You know, the billboards and glitzy ads - and sending me a newsletter that I didn't ask for.

You identify the predisposed – those you suspect might have interests similar to your cause / organization – and introduce yourself (personally is usually best, e.g., through a cultivation gathering or one-on-one). Then, if the person (or corporation or foundation) expresses interest, that gives you permission.

Godin observes: "Rather than simply interrupting a television show with a commercial or barging into the consumer's life with an unaccounted phone call or letter [or in fundraising, the newsletter or a solicitation], tomorrow's marketer [and top notch fundraiser] will first try to gain the consumer's consent to participate in the selling process." [Bracketed comments are mine, not implied by Godin.]

[5] See the *Donor Bill of Rights* and the *AFP Code of Ethical Principles and Standards of Professional Practice* at www.afpnet.org.

[6] Visit CFRE International (www.cfre.org), the baseline certification for fundraisers worldwide. Click on the Test Content Outline, which describes the required knowledge for a fundraiser with 5 years of experience.

certification of professionals. Personal opinion – without the body of knowledge – doesn't and shouldn't count for much.

14. Most **fund development problems** are actually not fund development problems. Most problems relate to other areas of operation. Fix the real problem. (See www.simonejoyaux.com and click on Resources / Free Library / Fund development / *Choosing your road*.)

15. A **balanced funding mix** of solicitation strategies and donor sources ensures stability and credibility. Whenever possible, the best way to solicit a gift is through face-to-face solicitation.

Evaluating Interest, Readiness, and Capacity to Give and Designing the Ask

The optimum combination of interest, readiness and capacity produces the best ask. The best ask is the right project, right amount, right time, right solicitor and right manner of asking. Try using a 10-point scale with 10 being the best.

Begin with interest. Determine the point rating for the prospect. Make anecdotal remarks about why you have selected that rating. Indicate what has to be done to improve the rating.

Proceed with readiness and do the same.

Interest + readiness = 20. Great! Design the right ask and go for it.

Interest + readiness ≤ 15. You need to cultivate more.

Interest + readiness = 16-18. Talk a lot. Would more cultivation be better?

- **Interest**

Refers to the prospect's feeling of curiosity or attentiveness. Interested people are involved and concerned about your cause and your organization's response to me cause.

Interest also signifies that something is of advantage or benefit to the interested individual. (It's not what your organization is selling, it's what the prospect is buying that counts.)

Estimate level of interest and note date as this may change over time. Add remarks.

- **Readiness**

Means beings prepared for action, likely or liable to act in a particular manner. Readiness means that the prospect is prepared in his or her mind and hart and likely to act in the manner that you seek. The prospect sees how giving will benefit herself by meeting her needs and fulfilling her aspirations.

Estimate level of readiness and note date as this may change over time. Add remarks.

Total interest + readiness and date ______________________________________

Not yet ready or sufficiently interested.

If interest and readiness are not sufficiently solid, what will you do to move the prospect along the relationship continuum to be more interested and/or more ready to be asked? Add pages with your cultivation strategy.

➢ **If the prospect is ready to be solicited, then begin designing the ask:**

1. Describe the prospect's interests in some detail. Identify the prospect's feelings and aspirations.
2. Determine the intersection of prospect interests with your organization's interests.
3. Identify potential barriers for the prospect and figure out the responses.
4. Identify the stories that most resonate with the prospect.
5. Decide who is the right solicitor and why.
6. Decide what is the right project and why.
7. Decide what is the right timing and why.

➢ **Capacity**

Refers to the ability or aptitude to do something. Also means the maximum output or production, as in the prospect's wherewithal to do what you ask.

If useful, develop a gift table to help focus on potential capacity.

Consider the following:

- To what extent does the prospect have personal, family and other obligations that affect his/her giving capacity?

2. Does the prospect have sufficient cash to give and to what extent?
3. Might securities be an option?
4. Is there some other tangible property the prospect has that your organization would want?
5. Would the prospect benefit from life income? If yes, what might you want to offer to the prospect as giving strategies? Consider life insurance, pooled income fund, and various trusts.
6. Would a combination of giving strategies be helpful to the prospect? For example, a combination of life insurance and cash; or bequest and cash; or bequest and pooled income fund; etc. How would you suggest this?

➢ **Now fine-tune your thinking.**

- Bring interest, readiness, and capacity together.
- Fine-tune your responses to the questions located under "designing the ask".
- Then go for it!

See further detail in *Strategic Fund Development: Building Profitable Relationships That Last*, *3rd edition*. Scheduled for release in spring 2011. See also *Keep Your Donors: The Guide to Better Communications and Stronger Relationships,* Ahern and Joyaux.

And, see Laura Fredricks' books about asking, for example, *The Ask.*

Face-to-Face Personal Solicitation

Thank you for agreeing to be a solicitor!

- First, you are a storyteller. Your job is to tell a story about the organization that resonates with you, and will resonate with the prospect.
- Simultaneously, you are a listener and observer. Listen to and watch the prospect.
- And you are an engager. Engage the prospect in a dialogue about the organization. Remember! A solicitation is a conversation, not a presentation. Ask questions. Engage the prospect. Find out what the prospect cares about.

Your resource materials

- Your brain, heart, personal experience, and passion. That's what is most important!
- The organization's *case statement*
- The *solicitation tips* that are attached to this document (pages 3 and 4)
- Prospect sheets (You will select your own prospects. Your staff has made some preliminary recommendations and will review these with you.

Your job

1. Give your own gift before you ask others to give.
2. Get a meeting with the prospect – preferably in person. If necessary, over the telephone. The key is, a special meeting to discuss giving to the organization.
   - Tell the prospect why you want to meet with him/her/them: To tell you how we have used your prior gifts. To provide you with an update on our accomplishments. And to speak with you about another gift.
3. Tell the organization's story and engage the prospect in conversation.
4. Ask for the gift. (And ask for the specific amount suggested on the *prospect sheet!*)
5. Get the answer regarding the gift.
   - Don't settle for letting the prospect decide later and mail in the gift. You've lost the power of face-to-face solicitation. If the prospect wants to think a while, set up a time to call back.
6. Report to the organization office with your results.

Your steps

1. First, review the case statement and highlight the key points that you want to cover.
2. Identify some stories you can tell the prospect, based on the prospect's interests and aspirations.
3. Review the *prospect sheet* so you are familiar with the background. Call the office and get more information if you need more to feel comfortable.
4. Call the prospect and set up a meeting. (If absolutely necessary, solicit over the telephone when the prospect will give you 15 minutes or so. But it's best to do this face-to-face: over lunch, over a cup of coffee, at the office, etc.)

Key points for you to remember about soliciting

1. It's okay if you don't know all the answers.
    - Just smile – and say that you will get back to the prospect with the answer. Then call the office and get the answer. Call the prospect back – this is great – another chance to ask for the gift and develop the relationship!
2. Always ask for a specific amount – and that should always be an increase over prior gifts. (See specific amount on the *prospect sheet*. This amount was determined by an analysis of the prospect's gift history and what the organization knows about the prospect.)
    - Industry standards say that 15% of the time, you'll get an increase! And the rest of the time, you'll likely get the same gift as last year. Asking for an increase is the only way to get one – and is an excellent strategy to maintain the same gift level.
        - Use the phrase: "Would you please consider giving $___."
        - If the gift is "large", ask the prospect if s/he needs additional time to pay the gift. Specify by when you want the gift paid. (The organization has to decide if it wants pledge payments and over what time period.)

Key points for you to remember about the organization

- See resource materials developed for your solicitation program.

At the meeting (whether in person or on the telephone)

1. Start out by saying thank you! Thank you for the time and thank you for the prior gifts.
2. Remember: This is a conversation, not a presentation. Engage the prospect in a discussion. Listen. Watch the body language. (Or listen to the hesitations or enthusiasm.)
3. Explain your role as a volunteer. Talk about why you believe in the organization's program. Mention your own gift in the context of your commitment to the cause. (Not the amount but that you gave money and do so every year.)
4. Talk about the community desire for and response to specific services offered by the organization. Highlight a favorite story or program at the organization.
5. Talk about how the organization will use the money. (Look at the case statement – show the *case statement* to the prospect. Leave a case statement with the prospect.)
6. Ask for the specific amount noted on the *prospect sheet*.
7. Get a commitment to you, before you close the meeting. (Or arrange to call back later to get the answer.)
    - Don't leave a gift envelope with the prospect - without a specific amount pledged. It is important that the prospect make the financial commitment to you directly.

An orientation and training tool for your solicitors

Asking for gifts personally, face-to-face

The mantra: The right solicitor asking the right prospect/donor for the right project at the right amount at the right time in the right way.

Do you want to hear my story of the best solicitation I ever experienced…as a donor?

Fears that may prevent or postpone the ask[7]. Our fears, not theirs!

1. I don't know the person's views on money.
2. I don't know how the person was raised and whether she experienced money as a positive or negative factor.
3. Prospect research shows that the person has the assets to give, buy why should he give his hard-earned, invested, or inherited money to our organization?
4. I know she supports other causes; why would she support ours?
5. There are numerous groups that do similar work, so why should he support us?
6. What if she feels insulted that we asked for money?
7. What if I ask him for too much or too little?
8. I just know she is going to ask me something I don't know.
9. What if she says no and never speaks to me again?
10. In summary, the themes:
    a. Not knowing the prospect well enough before making the ask.
    b. Understanding why people would part with their money.
    c. Learning what makes one's organization so special that people would elect to support it over other groups.
    d. Knowing one's organization inside and out.
    e. Understanding the personal nature of the ask.
    f. Overcoming the fear of rejection.

[7] Laura Fredricks, *The Ask,* Jossey-Bass, 2006

General observations

1. Donors give *through* your organization, not *to* your organization.
2. Key messages must move the uninformed audience to understand, the dubious to believe, and the resistant to act in a particular way[8].
    a. To what degree are you donor-centered?
    b. Are you asking people to join a fight?
    c. To what degree do you communicate impact?
    d. How do you communicate credibility?
3. Follow this continuum of communications that you, the organization, controls: Prospects and donors need to know how / why their gift matters…its impact and the difference that the gift makes. Then that means that the gift matters. And if / because the gift matters, then the donor matters. The bottom line, the prospect / donor must feel that s/he makes a difference, matters.
4. All human decisions are triggered by emotions. Gerrod Parrott identified 133 emotions. But who can remember that many. How about the 7 top emotional triggers identified by the direct marketing industry: anger, fear, greed, guilt, flattery, exclusivity, and salvation
5. Watch and listen. See, hear, and witness: their lifestyle choices, their interests and disinterests, their values, their motivations and aspirations. All this unfolds over time.
6. Without adequate relationship building, there is no effective or successful ask.
7. When the prospect or donor is ready, delayed asking is an insult (to the them and to the cause).
8. Don't trespass on personal and professional relationships. Quid pro quo giving is offensive, a dead end, and mostly unsustainable.
9. The most significant gifts (from the prospect/donor's perspective – and that's the perspective that matters) result from the deepest alignment of values – between the prospect/donor and your organization.

Judging the prospect's readiness to be asked.

1. Treat each prospect/donor "separately and distinctly"[9].
2. Communicating urgency – yours – but what about the prospect/donor's timing?
    a. When does she feel ready to be asked, and asked for what?
    b. It's her timeframe, not yours. Are you reading her cues about her readiness? Or are you distracted by your own fear?
3. Laura Fredricks' readiness formula:
    a. Education + Involvement + Cultivation + Inclination + Assets = The right time to ask
    b. Think of Fredricks' "education" as Weissman's statement, #2, "General Observations".
4. Pre-ask conversation(s) and relationship building
5. Circling back: treat each prospect "separately and distinctly."

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[8] Jerry Weissman, *Presenting to Win,* FT Press, 2008.
[9] Ibid

Essential factors every asker needs to know about the gift proposal[10]

1. Why this gift is the perfect match for this prospect (or donor)
2. The purpose of the gift
3. The benefits of the gift
4. How the gift can be funded
5. The assets the organization will accept to fund the gift
6. The timing with which the gift can be paid
7. The maximum years over which the pledge can be paid
8. The possible income, capital gains, estate, and gift tax benefits of the gift
9. Why the gift opportunity "costs" this much
10. Other donors who have made gifts at this level
11. The number of gifts the organization has received or will ask for at this amount
12. The suggested recognition that will be given for the gift

Making the ask

1. "The goal of the major gift ask is to communicate a sense of inclusion, that the prospect is part of a successful and winning team. The asker cannot speak at the prospect; the asker must speak with the prospect."[11]
    a. Fredricks says: "Always use *we* instead of *I* in any ask. *We* connotes that the ask is being done with all the strength and backing of the organization." [And can the *we* always include the donor as part of the solution?]
    b. Use *you* a lot, referring to the prospect. [That's what Ahern and Joyaux would say.]
2. It's about the conversation, not the case statement.
3. Asking for a major gift requires a close and trusting relationship between asker and prospect.
4. <u>Solicitation steps</u>[12] *[With bracketed comments from Joyaux]*
    a. Make the appointment. *[Tell the prospect why you wish to visit – to ask for a gift.]*
    b. Plan the solicitation meeting carefully.
    c. Coach the solicitation team. *[Select the right team members for each prospect. Involve volunteers when possible – but don't use their non-participation as a reason for delay.]*
    d. Gather and go, meet and greet.
    e. Engage the prospect. *[In conversation and stories / telling meaningful to the prospect.]*
    f. Say what you came to say: state the case *[And the case is about the prospect and the impact of his/her investment. The case is <u>not</u> centered on your organization.]*
    g. Invite the investment. *[I like the phrase, "would you consider?"]*

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[10] Ibid
[11] Ibid
[12] Kay Sprinkel Grace, *Beyond Fundraising: New Strategies for Nonprofit Innovation and Investment,* John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997

h. Keep the silence. *[Bite your tongue if need be!]*

i. Work with the prospect's answer and close. *[Responding to barriers – although it's our job to anticipate and respond to barriers earlier when possible.]*

j. Follow-through.

5. Essential components of the asking script[13]
   a. Time frame for the ask
   b. Warm-up (5 minutes)
   c. Ask (6 minutes)
   d. Anticipated response (10 minutes)
   e. Close and follow-up (4 minutes)
   f. Who speaks and who listens during the ask

6. Essential components of the ask
   a. Making a compelling case for the organization and the need for support [Remember, this is about the community issue/opportunity | importance of donors and their gifts | impact of donors and their investment.
   b. Using transitional statements that specifically reference the prospect's interest, prior support, or both
   c. Asking for a specific amount and for a specific purpose [But what amount using a gift table or three gift level opportunities?]
   d. Detailing the benefits of the gift [Benefits to whom? The donor, cause, and community?]
   e. Remaining silent
      i. Remain silent after the ask. Watch and listen to the prospect. You'll "see" her concerns. He'll let you know what he thinks.
      ii. A "no" now doesn't mean "no" later or "no" forever.

Anticipating and overcoming barriers during the solicitation or in the follow-up. Listen. Hear and see the cues.

1. I would if I could.
2. That's way more than I can afford.
3. Why are you asking me?
4. Others need the money more than you.
5. My [life partner, children, accountant] don't think I should be giving.
6. I need to talk this over with my [life partner, children, accountant].
7. I'm not really interested in this issue / cause.
8. I don't agree with your approach.
9. *How would you respond to these barriers? What other barriers do you hear? What barriers worry you the most?*

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[13] Ibid

Following up – to a yes, no, or maybe

1. Formal thank-you for the meeting
2. Respond to questions raised by the prospect/donor
3. Outline next step(s) with the prospect/donor
4. Use staff and volunteer colleagues to help with next step(s)
5. The next visit(s)

Next steps for you to move forward with this work

1. Make sure you have the right tools – but don't delay by waiting for more tools. There is the old Nike phrase, "just do it."
2. Don't wait for volunteers to identify prospects and join you on relationship building and solicitation calls. You lead. You do.
3. Evaluate your current qualified prospects. Outline the steps to get them ready to be asked. Launch those steps now. Look at your current donors. Outline the steps to deepen the relationship and move them forward to another ask.
4. Identify those who might be predisposed (that nasty "suspect" word). Get out there and talk with them. Either qualify them as prospects or leave them alone and move on.
5. Make sure your relationship-building program includes cultivation and communications. Make sure you're engaging in conversations that nurture relationships. For example, read *Keep Your Donors: The Guide to Better Communications and Stronger Relationships* to move forward in this arena. Check out Chapter 17 for ideas about relationship-building conversations and questions to ask prospects and donors. Read fundraising and donor research[14].
6. Identify a couple reliable people and practice asking them. Then debrief and learn.
7. Some of my favorite resources:
    - www.futurefundraisingnow.com www.theagitator.net www.askingmatters.com
    - www.neuroscienceblog.com www.aherncomm.com www.sofii.org

[14] For example, visit the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, a major research center. Follow Adrian Sargeant's research. He is the foremost donor and fundraising researcher worldwide. Read his books *Building Donor Loyalty* and *Fundraising Principles and Practice.*