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In This Issue:  
Candle Burning  
at Both Ends

Essential Ingredients  
for Fundraising  
Planning:  
Part I

Getting Small  
Donors to Renew  
Year In  
and Year Out

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# Candle Burning at Both Ends

*Fundraising staff:  
How hard should you be working?*

## *Three Vignettes*

*J*ane leaves her office at 9 p.m. on a Friday night. She has finally finished writing her organization's year end appeal and is feeling good: the year end appeal is on time so far. As she reaches her car, she hears laughter. Two women, about her age, are walking by laughing about a movie they just saw. Suddenly Jane feels depressed, but isn't sure why.

*M*ichael is on his way to his office early on Saturday. He has to get a proposal out by Monday, and Sunday he's working with the fundraising committee to get the special event invitations stuffed into envelopes and ready for bulk mailing. Absently, Michael notes that the tennis courts are full. He used to play tennis and he reflects that he can't even remember where he put his racquet. Suddenly he feels depressed but he doesn't know why.

*M*arsha decides to leave work at 5:30 on a Thursday. She invites a friend for dinner and they spend the evening talking about their jobs. Her friend complains that his work takes up about 45 hours a week. He is incredulous to hear that Marsha thinks a 45 hour work week is short. He goes home. Marsha does the dishes and then decides to watch television. By 11 p.m. she can't stand it anymore, and allows herself to make a to-do list for tomorrow. Finally, as she falls asleep she thinks that her friend makes her depressed. She can't figure out why.

If none of these stories sound familiar to you, go on to the next article. However, if they ring true, or if all you'd have to do to have them be your story is add children you are trying to raise, Board members nagging you, or a feeling that your work could never be finished, then you are probably the person in your organization whose primary job is fundraising.

### ***Fundraising can be a thankless job***

There are many wonderful rewards to being in fulltime fundraising, but it is time to face facts and admit that there are also many ways in which fundraising as a job is really depressing. In this article, we will list the ways in which fundraising can be unsatisfying and some of the things you can do about it.

For many full time development professionals in small non-profits, fundraising presents three almost insurmountable challenges. 1) The more successful your fundraising program, the harder your job gets. As you are more creative in fundraising design and implementation, the Board and other staff rely on you more, and they create ever bigger budgets and more programs. 2) As Hank Rosso, Director of the Fund Raising School, points out development is a job with little authority and wide responsibility. This leads to a lot of frustration, as you are ultimately responsible for one of the most needed elements in running your group—money—but have little say in what that money should be raised for. 3) Your job performance is usually measured by dollars in, even though a great deal of the work involved in getting this money is out of your hands. All the other parts of your work that lead to money, such as good materials, adequate records, research, etc. will not be factored into your evaluation if the cash is not present.

To top the whole thing off, if you are really doing your job, you will increasingly rely on prodding your Board of Directors and other volunteers to actually raise the money from the community. This means when they do a good job (which they couldn't have done without you), *they* get the credit.

Some of this experience changes if you are the director or the only staffperson. You have more authority, and you are given credit and support for more than just money raised. Of course, you also have even more work.

The overriding experience of people in fundraising (whether as development directors, executive directors, or in some other capacity) is that the work never ends. They take it home—even if just in their thoughts and what they talk about. They lose sight of the rest of their lives. In our vignettes (all based on real people), Jane, Michael and Marsha don't know why they are depressed. Each is working when they should be relaxing. Marsha makes an effort to leave work early, only to spend her evening discussing her job. Michael must work on Saturday because

he is working on Sunday. Jane thinks everything is on time but doesn't stop to realize that's because she is working overtime.

An alltime low of fundraising dilemmas was reached by the director (and only staff) of a small peace group when she learned that her Board planned to surprise her with a raise. She immediately developed a migraine. Far from being pleased, all she could think of was that it was even more money to raise.

The tensions inherent in being responsible for fundraising manifest in a number of ways: high job turnover, people leaving the non-profit sector altogether because they can't stand doing any more fundraising, burnout, ruined relationships, resentful children, various physical ailments diagnosed as "stress related" and an endemic workaholism throughout the profession.

### ***Self-help for fundraisers***

What can be done? The following are some suggestions that each person will have to adapt to his/her circumstances. Some will seem to make the problem worse, but paradoxically, are the solution (similar to a vaccination which gives you a little dose of the virus to ward off the full blown disease).

1. Admit that it's your problem. No matter how the circumstances conspire to have you believe that you must work 70 hours and worry yourself to death, ultimately, you must see that this behavior is your doing. If you are to have any control over changing it, you must admit that it is your problem. Victims are innocent because they have no power over what happens to them. You are not a victim of your job.

2. Having admitted that this is your problem, now admit that you don't know the solution. If you are like most people in this profession, you have read countless time management books, taken at least three stress reduction courses (or wish you had), and made hundreds of resolutions about not working on Saturday, not taking work home, not working past 6 p.m., and probably joined health clubs or signed up for exercise classes or reading clubs to force yourself away from work. Like diets, none of these strategies work permanently. Most of the time, they don't work at all, and breaking these promises to yourself (or your partner or children or cat) just makes you feel worse. As a result you work harder so you have something you can feel good about.

### ***Now try this***

Having seen that this constant cycle of overwork is your own behavior, and realizing that none of the strategies you have tried have been permanently successful, here's a process you might try to get a better handle on breaking the pattern.



Get a group of really close trusted friends together (not more than three) or hire a therapist if you prefer. Lay before this group all your tasks, air all your complaints. Tell them to listen without comment until you are through. Then ask them to feed back to you what they hear the problem is. They are not to propose any solutions at this time.

It is interesting what happens at this point. Many times people think the problem is that they have too much work. However, a friend, listening only for the problem may discover that the person is doing too much that is not related to the job, or the person has deadlines that are not necessary in order for the job to be done adequately, or the person will not delegate, or the person is working inefficiently because the office is too noisy, or the record keeping system is inadequate, etc. When your friends have finished naming what they hear are the problems (you should write these down on a big piece of paper), then you mark those you agree with, those you are not sure about, and those you absolutely reject as being inaccurate.

Write down each of the problems you accept on a separate piece of paper, one per page, and hand the papers out to your friends until each person has some problems. Take a break, which may be a couple of hours or a few days. Your friends will go off with what are now their problems; you will come up with solutions to their problems. "Giving away" your problems in this way will help you get the little bit of distance you need to get some perspective. Looking at your problems as though they belong to someone else, you may be able to come up with solutions that might not have occurred to you about your own problems.

Present your solutions to their problems. What would you do if a friend had these problems? *You* must be part of the solution creating process in order for the solutions to make sense, and in order for you to feel control.

Each friend now takes your solutions and accepts the ones that will work and rejects those that will not. She or he accepts them as if for him or herself, not you. This way you can get feedback on how realistic your proposed solutions are.

Now, working with just one friend, or even by yourself, take the lists of problems and solutions and make up your own plan with a timeline for implementation.

This method is an adaptation of a lot of problem solving techniques; however it recognizes and uses certain key aspects of being in fundraising. One key aspect is that fundraisers are generally very creative. Our job is to help people want to give away one of their most precious resources to our group on an ongoing basis. This requires constant attention, a great deal of thought and originality. We also solve dozens of problems every day easily and well: the printer is late with the Annual Report, Mrs. Big Donor is offended because her name is spelled wrong, the

volunteer backed up our donor disk onto a disk that already had other donor back up information, the keynote speaker for today's luncheon called to cancel, and so on. So knowing how to solve problems is not our problem.

The second key aspect of this problem-solving methodology is that it recognizes that fundraising professionals are a little jaded and cynical. We are long off the turnip truck. We are suspicious of letting even close friends solve our problems because we know their solutions won't work. So, in this scenario, we solve the problems ourselves.

Finally, this methodology recognizes that it is our job to be big thinkers. We must believe that the money can be raised, that the appeal will work or the campaign will succeed, even though we may have little proof of such success. Further, we must inspire others to believe also, so we are people who often plan too big, and take too much on ourselves. That's why in this scenario, we solve the problems, but our friends accept or reject the solutions and we work with their judgments to create a timeline and plan.

It is also important to realize that fundraising is not a 9 to 5 job, and not to ever expect it to be such. First of all, it often involves weekend and evening meetings or events. Also, there are periods when the workload is great and requires extra time. However, most studies show that a person loses effectiveness if they work much past 55 hours a week. If you work with a staff and you work harder than everybody else, you create resentment and jealousy among the other staff, and limit your own effectiveness. If you consistently set a pattern of overwork and monumental achievement, you make yourself impossible to replace. You set your organization up for failure when you become so indispensable.

So how hard should you work? We must work hard enough that someone else can take our place, that others can feel good about their work, and that the desire for achievement doesn't outweigh all other motives. We can not work until the job is done, because that never happens. For most of us, learning to leave work behind, learning to go home and not talk about work, and learning that everything does not have to be done perfectly—it's fine if it is done adequately—will require the most work.

There is something very easy about working all the time. You never have to wonder what to do with your time, or if your phone is going to ring. Your time is accounted for. Living a life balanced between work and play and work and other priorities is ultimately the key to effectiveness in our work, as well as in our lives.

Resolve to stop creating a work situation for yourself that would appall you if you heard of it happening to someone in a corporation. The changes we want are going to take a long time, and will require people with staying power and endurance, not speedy short sprint runners. ■ KK

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# Essential Ingredients for Fundraising Planning: Part I

by *Tricia Rubacky*

Successful fundraising begins with a clear organizational mission and people committed to achieving it. These ingredients are critical; without them, your attempts to raise money will surely suffer. Assuming your organization satisfies these basic conditions, my advice is to follow these three commandments of fundraising:

- I. Thou shalt always plan, plan, and plan some more;
- II. Thou shalt always strive for a diversified fundraising plan;
- III. Thou shall tie your program and budget planning to your fundraising planning.

A frequent complaint from fundraisers is, "I sent in all these proposals and I haven't heard anything from the foundations. We're headed for a financial crisis if we don't hear something soon!" This is the classic "blame the funder" approach, which you should decide right now to abandon. It assumes it is up to the foundations to prevent your funding problems.

A plan alone cannot solve a financial crisis. However, it can help prevent one, because it incorporates the steps you must take over a prescribed period of time, the strategies you can employ to make your program attractive to a variety of funding sources, and the internal back-up systems for times when your strategies and plans fall short.

A fundraising plan is much more than a list of funders and amounts requested. A real plan reflects an income goal that is tied to your organization's program goals and incorporates the following components:

1. A list of all sources from which you are seeking funds (both grant and non-grant fundraising) organized by likelihood of support and priority of effort
2. A calendar including all deadlines and a follow-up schedule
3. An income projection based on likely funding
4. A cash flow projection

The most successful fundraising plans also demonstrate a commitment to diversified fundraising. Diversity in fundraising prevents organizational over-dependence on one source of funding (such as foundation grants or direct

mail), and provides a greater margin of safety for those inevitable times when circumstances prevent one source from continuing its support. In addition, dependence on a single type of fundraising limits your group's exposure in other arenas, exposure that is necessary to achieving the familiarity needed for attracting new support. It is true that considerable organizational resources must be used to achieve funding diversity; however, it is also true that your organization's future could be in serious jeopardy without the stability provided by diverse income streams.

A good fundraising plan also produces important management benefits. It can forestall the need for crisis-mode fundraising and keep you informed of where you stand at all times. A plan helps you identify progress and anticipate problems, and it forms the basis for informed decisions and budget adjustments as new developments occur or new information is received. A plan also helps you set and balance priorities and avoid the pitfalls of competing goals and timetables. Finally, a plan helps build the organization's confidence in its fundraising capacity.

## *Step 1. Goals and timelines*

Before making a plan, considerable preparation work is needed. First, you must have a ballpark idea of how much money you need to raise and when it is needed. This ballpark figure will help you build the plan, but it is important that the program and budget goals are informed by the fundraising plan and vice versa.

The most logical place to start is with the amount you raised during the previous year. Later, armed with a realistic estimate of what can be raised and from what sources, you may decide that no increases for new programs are feasible. Or you may determine that adding to your program and budget is feasible in light of your fundraising potential and the time and resources you have available for raising the funds. Before committing to a budget and a fundraising plan, all the people involved in your program, finance and fundraising operations, including

### **Example 1: Funder Strategy Sheet**

Name of funding source: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Known interest areas: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of past support: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person: \_\_\_\_\_

Who else knows/has connections: \_\_\_\_\_

Who can help with this source? \_\_\_\_\_

Deadlines (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Amount to request: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategy:

Step 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Other follow-up: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes from meetings, phone conversations, the grapevine, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

members of your governing board, should review the plan and agree on goals that are both realistic and achievable.

If you are starting for the first time, you should do incremental budgeting. Incremental budgeting essentially means that budget line items are added only as income allows. For example, if an organization just starting out wants to raise enough money for an office, a phone, two staff people and travel expenses for a total of over \$50,000 a year, it would be better to decide what the priorities are, and add the lower priority items only when sufficient funds are raised. Perhaps you are very sure of \$25,000, which could permit you to rent an office, buy supplies, install a phone, and hire one staff person. You would put the second staff person and travel funds as a goal, but would not hire until funds were raised. When groups decide to hire someone with only a few months' salary funds raised, they often have to lay off that person very soon.

### **Step 2. Identify potential funding sources**

The next step is to create a list of all the potential sources of income for your organization. Here are some possibilities to consider:

### **Potential Sources of Income**

#### *Non-Grant sources*

#### **Individual Solicitation**

Personal requests  
Phone-a-thons  
Telemarketing  
Mail appeals  
Mailgrams/  
electronic mail  
Radio or tv appeals  
Workplace  
(via payroll  
deduction)  
Special Events  
Canvassing  
Membership  
via % of credit  
card sales

#### *Grant sources*

Foundation  
Corporate  
Government  
Religious  
Labor  
Professional  
Associations  
United Way  
Civic Organizations/  
Kiwanis, Junior  
League  
Anonymous  
Individuals  
via philanthropic  
entities

#### **Planned Gifts**

Wills/bequests  
Donations of real  
estate, art, etc.  
Designated beneficiary  
of life insurance

#### **Earned Income**

Sales of products  
Fees for services  
Interest income



**Grant fundraising:** Sources of grants include corporations, foundations, government programs, religious organizations, and individuals who make grants through philanthropic institutions, labor unions, or professional associations, United Ways, and civic organizations.

**Non-grant fundraising:** This fundraising can be grouped in two categories: 1) individual solicitation, including personal requests (wills, bequests, donations of art and property, etc.), phone-a-thons, telemarketing, mail appeals, fundraising via the media (radio or telethons), workplace and payroll deduction, special events, canvassing, and membership drives; and 2) earned income, including sales of products, fees for services, and interest income.

While you may already be raising funds through a variety of means, as part of the planning process you must determine whether to try to raise more from current sources or to explore new avenues. Some combination of tested and untested sources is a positive goal for any organization, if the resources are available to undertake new ventures. Before deciding, you need to do some research and learn as much as you can about both grant and non-grant fundraising. Armed with this information you are in a position to determine what the potential is for your group.

There are many excellent reference works available to help you formulate and diversify your fundraising program. Among the best are *Fundraising for Social Change* by Kim Klein, *The Grassroots Fundraising Book* by Joan Flanagan, and *Securing Your Organization's Future* by Michael Selzer.

### Step 3. Record-keeping

Once you have decided which avenues of support you will pursue, you need a system for managing the information you compile about these sources. Essential facts (such as contact person, address, phone number, deadlines, and board meeting dates) and strategy should be compiled for every source you are planning to approach. This information should be kept within easy reach at all times, either in a notebook or on computer (see example 1: a sample Funder Strategy Sheet format).

Basic information on individual contributors, whether major donors or members, should also be well organized in a profile book, a card file or a computer data base (see example 2: a model Donor Profile Sheet).

The information system you devise should be easy to update regularly, since fundraising requires you to handle many important details at once, and you cannot afford to allow any to fall through the cracks. Indeed, the system itself is critical to developing and refining your strategy in approaching funders and should be considered among the most priceless tools of your plan. In addition, you need to establish a filing system on funders to provide new staff and

### Example 2: Individual Donor Profile Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (      ) \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (      ) \_\_\_\_\_

Title/occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred place for correspondence and calls:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Personal financial information: \_\_\_\_\_

General philanthropic/political interests: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Any foundation connections? \_\_\_\_\_

Who knows? \_\_\_\_\_

Who has connections? \_\_\_\_\_

History of contributions

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

In response to: \_\_\_\_\_

Other notes/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

board members with a sense of the organization's history with its funders, and with those from whom it has tried unsuccessfully to raise funds. This information is critical to the future relationship of organizations to their funding and holds many clues to understanding problems a group may be having raising funds from particular sources.

### ***Step 4. The calendar***

The next component in organizing your fundraising is a calendar. Since much of fundraising requires advance planning that you normally need to begin at least three months before your fiscal year even starts, develop a calendar that spans a 15-month time period (see example 3).

As you lay out your plan, keep the calendar nearby and fill in as many deadlines or dates for your fundraising activities as possible. You will add to the calendar and change it frequently throughout the year. The calendar will also help you decide whether new program activities can be added or must be deferred because they compete with each other or with other organizational activities. You may want to set aside a copy of your original calendar and go back to it at the end of the year to see how realistic it was as a planning tool.

Deadlines mean nothing unless they are accompanied by a work plan. Your next step, therefore, is to take the deadlines calendar and create another calendar for all the activities listed. Every aspect of your fundraising, including preparation of proposals, letters, printing newsletters, travel, board and committee meetings, individual meetings, events, and all follow-up should be mapped out on the workplan calendar. If the workplan is mapped out using the same 15-month format, then, when you are ready, the fundraising and workplan calendars can be integrated and converted to whatever calendar system works best for you—six month, three month, one month, or weekly.

Keep in mind that in order to be effective planning tools, the calendars must be developed in conjunction with your overall program and fundraising plans, incorporating enough of your organization's activity to know what will affect or drive your fundraising. ■

<b><i>Example 3: Deadlines</i></b>		
<b><i>October</i></b>	<b><i>November</i></b>	<b><i>December</i></b>
<b><i>January</i></b>	<b><i>February</i></b>	<b><i>March</i></b>
<b><i>April</i></b>	<b><i>May</i></b>	<b><i>June</i></b>
<b><i>July</i></b>	<b><i>August</i></b>	<b><i>September</i></b>
<b><i>October</i></b>	<b><i>November</i></b>	<b><i>December</i></b>

*This article describes the first steps in developing a fundraising plan: setting goals and timelines, identifying potential funding sources, and developing a fundraising management calendar. In the next issue of the Journal, Part II will cover the essential steps of developing income projections and income cash flow projections.*

*Tricia Rubacky, fundraising consultant and trainer, was formerly director of development at the Youth Project.*



# Getting Small Donors to Renew Year In and Year Out

In our last issue, we discussed how to get major donors to renew every year. Now we must turn our attention to those donors who we communicate with almost entirely by mail. These people give between \$10-35 every year. In most cases they decide to donate the first time through a direct mail appeal, and we keep up with them through newsletters and more direct mail appeals. Even in a very small organization, most of these people are not known personally by any Board or staff person. In organizations serving a wide region or working nationally, this will be even more true.

For many organizations, these people represent about 70 percent of their donors, although the total giving of this group is generally only about 20 to 30 percent of the organization's income. These faceless people are a critical group: two-thirds of the donors; one-fifth to one third of the income, and of course, the source of new names of donors and of new major donors.

Many staff people and Board members find it difficult to write exciting renewal letters to these people. What are they interested in? What is new to say? Particularly in the Reagan years, where every social gain has been set back and some have been wiped out altogether, organizations do well simply to still exist. This does not make for an exciting renewal appeal, however.

Also, we are acutely aware that many of our donors are feeling the pinch along with us. They may have been laid off of work, they have watched the cost of college tuition soar, their daycare disappear, they may be fighting their own personal battles with environmentally caused cancer, drug and alcohol addiction or AIDS, and they hear news about the economy that does not jibe with their personal experience. This

makes them nervous, and so their tendency is to hold on to their money.

In spite of all these problems, we can keep our donors renewing every year. First, however, it is important to recall just how many of them would renew in any year, so that we can set realistic goals, and measure our renewal rates against a norm and not against our ideal fantasies of 100 percent renewal.

The average renewal rate for donors giving less than \$50 is 66 percent. One-third of your donors will drop out every year through no fault of yours. These donors move, they die, they fall on hard times, they develop other interests, they get divorced, they lose the renewal notice, etc. Most people who give to nonprofits give to at least five nonprofits, and those groups are usually related in some way. Every year, most donors drop one group and pick up another. Many organizations experience almost an 85 percent turnover rate in their donors within four years.

The percentage of donors you lose every year is called your "attrition rate." Clearly, you need to be able to acquire at least as many donors as you lose every year just to have the same number of donors. Many organizations do not know what their attrition rate is, even though this is a critical piece of information for planning purposes. Some small groups have said that their attrition rate is only 15 percent. They feel proud to keep so many donors. However, this is probably not indicative of their skill as much as of the fact that they have a small number of donors—albeit loyal ones. The more donors you have, the nearer to that one-third drop-out rate you will be. If you are losing much more than one-third of your donors, you are not doing enough to keep them. A healthy group will have a 25 to 50 percent rate of renewal. Anything below or above that is a sign of a problem.

Once you have determined your attrition rate and set reasonable goals for your group about renewals, the question still remains: how do I get the most people possible to renew?

First, remember a basic rule of fundraising: people pay you to do work they cannot or will not do by themselves. So, think carefully about what your group does that an individual could not do alone. This will be the basis of all your appeals, on the assumption that your donors' values have not changed, and they still believe the work must be done.

Staff people often express frustration with writing appeals, saying that not only are we not making any progress on our issues, in fact, we keep suffering setbacks. In many areas of social change, things are significantly worse than they were in 1981. From a fundraising point of view, this doesn't matter. Sometimes it even helps. Americans have traditionally taken the side of the underdog, the "little guy" who gets beaten down, but keeps on fighting. Culturally, we have a strong belief that good will eventually triumph, but we don't demand instant triumph. This cultural norm works well when translated into direct mail appeals.

In your direct mail appeals, keep focusing on the individuals you work with, or serve, or who benefit from your work. These individuals make progress by what they learn from your group and their work in it, even if the issues you are working on don't win. For example, take the following two openings to renewal appeals:

*Hello. You don't know me, but we both belong to CEDP. I worked for 10 years at the electronics plant. Then, last March, I got a notice they were closing the plant. Just like that, I am out of work. With two kids and no savings, you can't go anywhere. I was so scared that the day I got*

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— Michelle A. Green  
Wildlife Rescue, Inc.

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*my notice, I stayed sitting up in a chair all night, staring out the window. I couldn't eat anything. I could barely swallow. I tried not to let the kids know anything was wrong.*

*The next day, I met this woman from CEDP. She told me there is a nonprofit group that is going to organize everybody to buy the electronics plant, and have all the workers own it. I said, "Where do I sign up?" She helped me get unemployment insurance, and got my youngest kid into free daycare.*

*I am the secretary for CEDP now. It's going to be a long time before we can buy this plant, but all of us laid-off workers are determined to do it. We have to learn so much first, and raise a lot of money. I'll work as hard as it takes to make this happen.—from Charlesburg Economic Development Project*

The letter goes on to describe other economic development plans for Charlesburg and how the support of donors makes all this work possible. The message of the letter is that people are working together and determined to succeed. The fact that it may be years before this plant can be purchased and functioning again is beside the point.

*Dear Friend,*

*I work the night shift at New Day. Last week, at 2 a.m., the phone rang. "You've got to help. My daughter is drinking every day. She says she doesn't even want to live. Can I bring her to your place?" The voice was choked and hard to understand. I presumed it was the girl's father. I felt almost as bad as he sounded when I explained that we couldn't take any more teenagers. We already had a hundred on the waiting list. "Is there somewhere else?" he cried. No, there is no where else. We are the only service for teenagers in this part of the state. And the other teen programs in the state are full too. Of course, she can go into an adult program, but the success rate is so low.*

*You have supported New Day for several years now. You know we serve teenagers with alcohol and drug problems. But did you know that without you, and people like you, we couldn't exist?*

*We need your help now more than ever.—from New Day Recovery Program*

The letter goes on to describe the need, and the role of individual donors in meeting that need.

Notice that these two letters actually paint a bleak picture. In the first one, unemployed people with no money and no business knowledge are trying to buy a factory. In the second, at least 100 teenagers are not getting the help they need, including the suicidal girl

mentioned in the first paragraph. These openings would be completely wrong in letters to new prospects. But they can work for current donors. Current donors want to know that you still need their money, that there really is a serious problem out there. In addition, they need some reassurance that your organization is working on the problem effectively, but they already believe that you are doing a good job. If they didn't, they wouldn't have given in the first place, and wouldn't continue to give.

When you turn a prospect into a donor, you convince that person that there is a need, and that your group effectively addresses that need. To keep that donor, you keep reminding them of those two things. Your newsletter stresses that you are an effective group; your other appeals during the year discuss all your programs. Articles in the paper further prove that you do good work. But once a year, at renewal time, the question uppermost in the donor's mind is "Does this effective group still need to exist? Does anyone else address this

need? Can they get money from somewhere else?"

The second basic rule of fundraising is "Don't project your emotions onto the donor." You may feel that your renewal letters are boring and basically say the same things year in and year out, but that is because you are only comparing them with each other. Your donors get renewal letters from a number of groups, and they don't remember from year to year what yours say. Your donors have a lot on their minds besides the health and well being of your group.

If you are discouraged, frustrated or bored by the work of your group, or the progress you are not able to make, take care of yourself. Your donors are not close enough to your work to know all that doesn't happen, all the battles lost, all the people not helped.

Finally, remember that the letter, by itself, is not the key to whether or not someone will renew. It is a catalyst; as such it should be as well done as possible, but it doesn't work in a vacuum.

The newsletter, other letters, press coverage, and special events are all factored into the donor's decision. In addition, things entirely out of your control weigh heavily in that decision: the donor's mood, headache, cash flow, other priorities, etc. Your letter is at most ten percent of the decision. It is critical because it calls for a decision to be made: to give again or not? Obviously, if the donor is torn, and feels half like giving and half like not, your letter could be the deciding factor. But, if the donor is very inclined to give, your letter cannot damage their enthusiasm, and may increase it.

Write from your heart. Why do you stay doing this work? Why do your Board members stay, or the rest of your staff? You, as well, are asked to renew your commitment almost every day. Those of us who work in nonprofits are all renewing donors. When we ask people we only know through the mail to renew their donation, we ask them to join us. Ask them with the knowledge it matters and you'll get your gift. ■ KK

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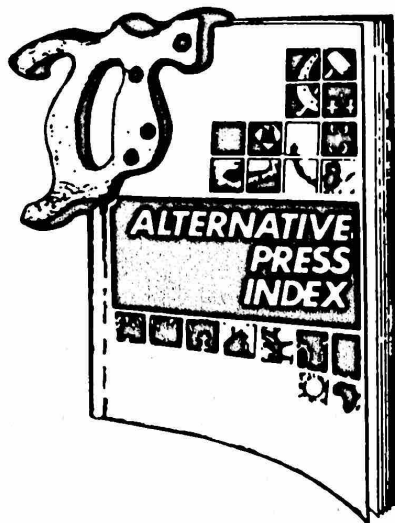
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Dear Friends,  
We have really benefited from subscribing to the *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*. Our appeals to large and small supporters are much more organized and focused, and we're starting to see the results in increased contributions. You've also inspired us to come up with a motto for appealing to donors: Schmooze It or Lose It.

Thanks again for your good work.

--Peter Cole

### **Resource Guide to Church Funding Sources**

Information on 1988 application guidelines and deadlines and copies of the forms required by many of the 37 religious funding sources catalogued are included in this resource packet compiled by the Women's Technical Assistance Project of the Center for Community Change. Projects have found previous editions a great help in identifying Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish and ecumenical funding sources for projects of community based organizations, especially those promoting social justice and the development of minorities and women. The latest edition (fifth) with information on more funders, a calendar of application deadlines, and a strategy discussion on how best to use the packet to fundraise from churches promises to be even more useful. \$35 prepaid. Order from WTAP, Center for Community Change, 1000 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20007. (202) 342-2081.

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