

Grassroots Fundraising Journal

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**Networked Fundraising
Confessions of a Capital
Campaign Chair
Raising Funds—and
People Power—Online
Tips on Being a Good
Steward
And more!**

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On Our Cover

New York Abortion Access Fund (NYAAF) bowling teams strike a pose during the 2011 National Network of Abortion Funds' multistate Bowl-a-Thon. NYAAF raised over \$70,000 to help women and girls access safe abortion services in New York State.

PUBLISHER EMERITA

Kim Klein

INTERIM EDITOR

Priscilla Hung

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Jennifer Emiko Boyden

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Chris Martin

COPY EDITOR

Merula Furtado

COVER PHOTO

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GFJ EDITORIAL BOARD

Will Cordery, Rona Fernandez, Dolores Garay, Yasmeen Perez, Megan Peterson, Randall Quan, Andy Robinson, Stephanie Roth

For subscription inquiries, to request permission to reprint *Journal* articles, and for advertising information, please contact: jennifer@grassrootsfundraising.org

GIFT STAFF

Jennifer Emiko Boyden
Communications Coordinator
Ryan Li Dahlstrom
Training & Network Coordinator
Nan Jessup
Finance & Operations Coordinator
Thonsey Keopanya
Resource & Development Coordinator

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Jennifer Dillon
Jordan T Garcia
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Judy Hatcher
Steve Lew, Chair
Adriana Rocha

GIFT: 1904 Franklin Street, Suite 705
Oakland, CA 94612

info@grassrootsfundraising.org
grassrootsfundraising.org

PHONE: 888.458.8588 (TOLL-FREE)
510.452.4520 (SF BAY AREA)
FAX: 510.452.2122

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The Dangers of Doing More with Less

Jennifer Emiko Boyden

150. THAT'S HOW MANY STUDENTS were in the schoolyard during recess with one supervising adult at my daughter's public elementary school. The district does not guarantee a particular student-to-adult ratio during recess and lunch periods—leaving staffing matters up to each school to figure out.

Recently, the principal at our school approached the parents' association to approve funding for a second lunchtime supervisor. Although the parents approved the funding for the remainder of the school year, we do not want to set a precedent of using community-raised funds for expenses that should be covered by the district, and state and federal governments. On the other hand, no one wants to compromise the safety of our kids, who would be the ultimate losers if the parents' association takes a hard line on principle.

The issue has opened up a conversation among parents and underscores the need to step up our advocacy efforts. We have to organize for equitable public education funding even as we fundraise to fill the holes in the education budget left in the wake of an economic collapse brought on by greed, fiscal irresponsibility, and regressive tax policies.

Many of us in the nonprofit world are feeling the squeeze of budget cuts while the needs of our communities are increasing. We should not have to do more with less, but like the parents' group at my daughter's school, do we really have a choice? How can we build our collective resources to make up for budget shortfalls while simultaneously advocating for our vision of a more just world? Through grassroots fundraising and organizing, of course!

When you are feeling overworked and under-resourced like many of us are, the idea of taking your organization to the "next level" may seem a bit far-fetched. But just as the July/August 2011 *Journal* encouraged us to "Work Smarter, Not Harder," this issue will help us take a more "mindful" approach to fundraising, deepen our relationships with supporters, and improve our overall effectiveness. By expanding our reach and strengthening relationships, we will raise more money to support our work while building the people power we need to create lasting social change.

We kick off this issue with a piece by Editorial Board Member Megan Peterson, who shares the success story of the National Network of Abortion Funds' multistate Bowl-a-Thon. Next, long-time fundraising consultant and *Journal* contributor Andy Robinson shares the lessons he has learned as chair of a capital campaign for his local synagogue. To help us think beyond traditional fundraising methods, Erin Barnes and Brian Dever explore new online fundraising tools for grassroots groups. Will Cordery offers some concrete ideas on how to be good stewards—with the ultimate goal of increasing trust and investment in our organizations. Beth Raps offers a step-by-step guide to practicing mindfulness to help us be more present and more effective resource mobilizers. We round out the issue with a training exercise by *Journal* Editor Priscilla Hung on making the major gift ask, to give us a "safe space" to practice something that can invoke a lot of fear and anxiety.

If you have not already signed up for the 2012 Money for Our Movements Conference, I encourage you to register today. Join us for thought-provoking and inspirational keynotes from Saru Jayaraman, co-founder of Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, and Attica Woodson Scott, former coordinator for Kentucky Jobs with Justice. We will be offering a new workshop track this year dedicated to social media and online fundraising strategies, in addition to a variety of interactive skill building and political development workshops, facilitated discussions, and one-on-one consulting sessions. You also don't want to miss our signature debate or our closing plenary with *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* founder Kim Klein.

Visit grassrootsfundraising.org/conference to learn more, register to attend, or become an organizational sponsor!

Jennifer



The Rhythm Method won the Hyde Strikers Award and raised \$2,000 for the Lilith Fund in Austin, TX. Photo courtesy National Network of Abortion Funds.

NETWORKED FUNDRAISING

Raising Money to the Third Degree

By Megan J. Peterson

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN a national organization and its network of member organizations implements a social-network-driven, collaborative, distributed fundraising event? Lots of money is raised, the movement grows, and everyone shares the costs!

Three years ago, the National Network of Abortion Funds (the Network) launched the National Abortion Access Bowl-a-Thon (see <http://bowlathon.nnaf.org>) in collaboration with its members—grassroots abortion funds that raise money to help low-income women obtain abortion care they cannot otherwise afford.

In our first year, 17 funds held Bowl-a-Thons in 19 cities and we blew past our \$150,000 goal to raise over \$175,000. Last year, 23 funds held events in 28 cities to raise \$250,000 and we ended up with over \$323,000. As of this writing, we are on track to raise more than \$400,000 this April with 26 funds organizing events in 31 cities across the country.

Bowl-a-Thon events are helping to raise much needed dollars and galvanizing support for abortion access in cities of all sizes—from Charleston, West Virginia and Fargo, North Dakota to New York City and Seattle. Most important, they are helping to significantly expand the donor and volunteer bases of these mostly volunteer-run organizations. In 2011, nearly 1,500 people signed up to participate in their community's event and went on to collect an average donation of \$38 from more than 8,000 people.

When You Find A Successful Idea, Borrow It

The Bowl-a-Thon is modeled after a very successful event held for the past 19 years by one of the Network's member organizations—Pro-Choice Resources (PCR) of Minneapolis, MN. PCR's event has grown over the years to bring in \$65,000, or almost 10 percent of the organization's entire budget. The Bowl-a-Thon is their signature annual event, eagerly anticipated by their community of donors and volunteers.

Elements of the event that help make it so successful, which the Network was especially interested in helping other funds replicate, are: (1) an online peer-to-peer fundraising website; (2) savvy use of social media and online networking like Facebook and Twitter; and (3) a no-holds-barred encouragement of creativity, corniness, and even a little bawdy attitude to ensure a fun, energizing, and unique experience for participants. When we proposed a national Bowl-a-Thon, it was with PCR's blessing.

Although we believed this model to be a good one for funds around the country, we realized that the cost of a good peer-to-peer online fundraising site can be prohibitive, especially for funds that are entirely volunteer-run on shoe-string operating budgets. We decided to remove that major obstacle by developing and paying for a custom fundraising website (built by BlueSky Digital on their SWEET fundraising platform) and making it available to member funds. The site features

We developed the following goals and shared them with our member funds to ensure understanding of the ways that a collaborative fundraising approach can help build a stronger network of abortion funding for women in need.

COLLABORATIVE FUNDRAISING AND COST-SHARING GOALS OF THE NATIONAL ABORTION ACCESS BOWL-A-THON:

BOWL-A-THON:

- 1) To help abortion funds, no matter their size and existing resources, raise money to pay for abortions for low-income women, to expand their base of donors and volunteers, to raise their profiles in their communities and nationally, and to utilize new fundraising skills and strategies.
- 2) To minimize financial risk for funds by having the Network shoulder up-front costs and on-going investment.
- 3) To leverage the benefits of being in a network to share costs of fundraising across funds and the Network.
- 4) To raise public awareness about the need for abortion funding and about the existence and good work of abortion funds and the Network. We believe that together we have a larger presence and louder voice to share our message.
- 5) To strengthen our movement and the safety net for women in need. We know that there is need for abortion funding everywhere. By sharing costs, the Network is able to provide additional assistance and support to funds joining the Bowl-a-Thon for the first time.
- 6) To share learning and experience between funds and the Network. Each participating fund has the opportunity to learn directly from the experiences of other funds and the Network about ideas, strategies, and tactics to hold a successful event.
- 7) To help the Network raise money to support our work building the capacity of member abortion funds. Yes, the Network does raise money from the Bowl-a-Thon as well and that's a good thing for everyone. It means that we are concretely invested in making sure the Bowl-a-Thon is a huge success for everyone involved. It also ensures that we have the resources to continue investing in the National Abortion Access Bowl-a-Thon.

an “umbrella” homepage that aggregates the fundraising of all the community fund events but each fund has its own event homepage. People can find and register for an event in their community at the main website and then will receive communication and encouragement from their specific event coordinator.

We also knew that there would be other benefits of coming together to hold similar fundraisers across the country, including opportunities to share successful strategies, solve problems, be inspired by each other's creativity, and foster healthy competition between cities. For example, last year, the Boston fund exploited the rivalry between the Red Sox and the Yankees to solicit gifts based on the outcome of a baseball game.

The Network: Ally, Coach, and Avid Promoter

The Network facilitates the cross-pollination of ideas by hosting weekly conference calls for event organizers between January and March. We also help coach event organizers by disseminating “hot tips” over email on everything from how to recruit team captains to sample language for bowlers' Facebook status updates. The Network's member support coordinator plays “coach,” monitoring the different events— noting creative approaches and sharing them with the others. Recently, we organized two webinars where event organizers shared their stories, best practices, and experiences so that other funds could learn from their successes and challenges. We also created a helpful Bowl-a-Thon toolkit, which includes sample language for fundraising appeals, bowler-fundraiser recruitment emails, instructions on how to negotiate with a bowling alley, and more.

Another piece that the Network brings to the collaborative arrangement is active promotion of the events to our donor and activist base of approximately 10,000 email subscribers, over 5,000 Facebook friends, and more than 3,330 Twitter followers (@abortionfunds). Social media has been especially powerful in promoting the Bowl-a-Thon. Most recently, North Carolina activists on Twitter were inspired to start a new fund in their resource-scarce area. The Carolina Abortion Fund is hosting its first Bowl-a-Thon this year with a goal of raising \$10,000, which can help approximately 80 women obtain the care they need.

The Network has also successfully engaged prominent bloggers and writers to help promote the event and do fundraising. For 2012, we are recruiting feminist bloggers to join us in discussing abortion funding and financial barriers to abortion care. We are promoting the event on April 17 (Tax Day) in a Blogger Blitz that we hope will drive more traffic to our website, resulting in a surge of donations around this

COMING TOGETHER TO HOLD SIMILAR FUNDRAISERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY CREATED OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES, SOLVE PROBLEMS, BE INSPIRED BY EACH OTHER'S CREATIVITY, AND FOSTER HEALTHY COMPETITION BETWEEN CITIES.

critical time in the middle of the month. (All local events are held in the month of April, most in the second half).

Helping Ourselves As We Help Others

When we first launched the Bowl-a-Thon, we had a staff of two who handled everything from developing the website and toolkit to providing support to participating funds. This year, in addition to the member support coordinator who spends the most time on the event, we have an online communications manager, a development officer, a tech consultant, and a deputy director (me) responsible for maximizing fundraising for participating funds and for the Network.

In launching this event to help our member funds raise more money, we made it clear that we also intended to raise money for the Network. Participating funds agree to a cost-sharing agreement where the Network keeps a percentage of the total money raised by each: 20 percent on the first \$10,000; 10 percent on the next \$10,000; and 5 percent on anything above \$20,000. Our share covers all credit card processing fees and costs associated with the website and staff support. Additionally, each online donor and participant has the option of choosing to be contacted by the Network in the future. We treat donors as prospects for future solicitations and add them to our email and newsletter list. Our cumulative conversion rate for these prospects is about 1.5 percent. We also host a Virtual Bowl-a-Thon online to enable individuals from places without a local event to participate, which raised over \$10,000 in direct support to the Network last year.

In our ongoing quest to help our funds raise more money, we added new functionality to the website this year, allowing bowler-fundraisers to earn “points” for activities, such as recruiting a friend to be a bowler-fundraiser (10 points), or posting their fundraising link to Facebook (5 points). The points system fosters another kind of competition among bowler-fundraisers and ensures that even those without access to big donors are recognized for the reach of their personal networks. Local funds are using the points system to identify and reward highly active and engaged participants—with a free event t-shirt, for example, for accumulating 1,000 points.

In turn, our member funds, which operate independently

of the Network, report that the Bowl-a-Thon is one of the best capacity-building programs ever undertaken to support them. Each year we see how the event is helping to build a bigger, stronger, more active base of donors, supporters, and volunteers for our shared goal of ensuring access to abortion for women in need. You might say, we are truly building a movement, one bowling ball, one Facebook post, one “punny” team name at a time. We project that by 2015, our band of bowling teams (“Bowl Against the Machine,” “Occupy Ballstreet,” “Multiple Scoregasms,” to name a few) will help the National Abortion Access Bowl-a-Thon hit the \$1,000,000 mark. ■

Megan J. Peterson is deputy director of the National Network of Abortion Funds. Prior to joining the Network in 2006, she worked for Pro-Choice Resources and helped bring their Bowl-a-Thon event online, nearly doubling the funds raised in one year. She never ceases to be amazed by the creativity, passion, and humor of her fellow abortion fund activists. The (relatively boring) name of her team every year is “Hyde Strikers.”

READ MORE ABOUT RAISING MAJOR FUNDS THROUGH EVENTS

Visit grassrootsfundraising.org/archive for these articles:

The Evolution of a Special Event: Fundraising at the Santa Cruz Montessori School by Kristine Albrecht and Christiane Carman

The Bowl-a-Thon Gets an Online Makeover by Yasmeen Perez

Pledge-Raising Events: Making Your Effort Count in Dollars by Moli Steinert and Donna Canali

Inspiring Stories in Challenging Times: A Fabulous, Fun and Financially Successful Gala Dinner by Elmer Roldan

Confessions of a Capital Campaign Chair

By Andy Robinson

Rabbi Michal Woll and religious school teachers lead students in the singing of Ma Tovv ("How goodly is your house") at the dedication of the synagogue. Photo by Paul Carnahan.

It's almost 8:00 pm and I am in my hotel room on day four of a ten-day trip. I have spent the last twelve hours facilitating a fundraising training, returning phone calls, checking email, and wolfing down a couple of unremarkable meals.

There's a file before me labeled Beth Jacob Synagogue Capital Campaign. I open it with a mild sense of dread. My call list. The good news: so many prospects. The bad news: so few have been contacted. I am way behind. If I start now, I could talk to a few folks—set up an ask meeting for next month, get a pledge or two over the phone. I could check a few names off the list. Wouldn't that feel good? Or, I could watch something mindless on television. Wouldn't that feel really good? God knows, I've earned it.

I groan, knowing that karma always wins. I spent the day telling people that fundraising is not as difficult as they think. It just requires passion, persistence, and patience. At the moment, I am not doing so great in the passion department, but I pick up the phone anyway. As the Hebrew sage Hillel put it: If not me, who? And if not now, when?

"Mrs. Bernstein? This is Andy Robinson from Beth Jacob—do you have a moment?"

A Capital Campaign, Ready or Not

Let me tell you about our synagogue. Beth Jacob is a small community—about 90 member households—comprised of every sort of Jew, from the very traditional to the very secular. We have four different sets of prayer books, each representing a different branch of Judaism. If you can imagine a church comprised of ten Catholics, five Baptists, some Lutherans and

Methodists, a few Evangelicals, three Unitarians, two Quakers, a Mormon, and a couple of people who don't really care about religion... well, that's our synagogue!

Founded nearly 100 years ago, Beth Jacob has survived and sometimes prospered, thanks to the work of many volunteer lay leaders and the occasional part-time, circuit-riding rabbi. (We have had a full-time rabbi for just three of the last 70 years.)

I like to think of Beth Jacob as an experiment in grassroots democracy: messy, complicated, nonhierarchical, opinionated, and at times, transcendent.

We occupy a small two-room building on a residential street in Montpelier, Vermont's capital city. It's an old house made more tenuous by poor design and deferred maintenance. When it rains, water flows through the basement undermining the foundation. We were advised by an engineer not to use the sanctuary in winter as the roof might cave in after a big snow storm. Well, this is Vermont and we get a lot of snow—so now we're in the middle of a capital campaign.

I am meeting with a prominent, well-respected member of the community whose involvement as a donor is crucial. He asks many thoughtful questions, such as: Has the entire board pledged?

EVERY GIFT IS AN ACT OF TRUST. WE BETTER DELIVER ON OUR PROMISES.

How much have you raised so far? What are other donors saying? Finally, he says to me, "You know, I gave to the building fund years ago. Nothing happened then, and I am not convinced that it will happen this time. So here's my offer: I will make an additional pledge, but I'm not writing a check until construction begins."

I accept, thinking—not for the first time—how every gift is an act of trust. We better deliver on our promises.

Nine Points of Campaign Wisdom

I have been raising money for 31 years—as a staff member at five different nonprofits and as a consultant for more than 16 years. But this is my first experience of chairing a capital campaign. It has forced me to rethink some of my assumptions about how fundraising works. Out of necessity, we have ignored several best practices and modified others—with success, because despite the current recession, we have raised more than \$495,000.

Below are some of the things we have learned on this campaign:

1. There is no perfect time to raise money, so ask for it anyway. We began the process with a total of about \$150,000 from our existing building fund, a surprise bequest, and a large anonymous pledge—all very encouraging. Less encouraging was the state of the congregation, perennially divided over a variety of issues: modes of worship, membership dues, the need (or not) for a full-time rabbi, compulsory donations for admission to High

Holiday services (unlike Beth Jacob, many congregations require them), and of course, the Israel/Palestine question, which divides Jewish communities around the world. Had the synagogue hired me as their fundraising consultant, I would have advised against launching this campaign until the community was more united and confident. Unfortunately, given the sorry state of the building, waiting for a better moment was not really an option.

2. If you don't believe you can raise all the money at once, get creative. After much research and many congregational meetings, we decided to rebuild in our present location. Not the cheapest option, as the site has drainage problems and adjacent buildings. The estimated cost was over \$600,000—a scary number for a small congregation.

We brainstormed and debated and developed a creative solution: we would structure the campaign in two phases, rebuilding each half of the synagogue as we raised the needed money. Phase 1 (about \$350,000) would focus on reconstructing the foundation, basement, and sanctuary, since those parts of the building posed the greatest risk and also the greatest opportunity. We predicted that seeing the beautiful new space with its vaulted ceiling and skylights would inspire the congregation to give again. In Phase 2 (about \$300,000), we would reconstruct the community room, kitchen and bathroom, and landscape the property.

3. The classic campaign model is great, but reality is often different. In the traditional model, a team of volunteers supported by professional staff do the asking over a predetermined period of several months; donors are allowed to fulfill their pledges over several years. This model was not applicable to us.

Beth Jacob has no staff (other than part-time program manager and bookkeeper) available to manage a capital campaign. And while we have a pool of volunteers available to do other tasks, the asking fell to myself and the board chair, a supremely organized person who began this process with no experience but has blossomed into a formidable fundraiser.

It is now four years since the campaign commenced—so much for "time limited"—and we continue raising money. As we ramp up for Phase 2, we intend to increase the number and frequency of asks.

4. If you think you know all your prospects, think again. The Beth Jacob community consists of about 90 households, yet we have over 200 donors to date. Who are these people? Friends,

family, neighbors, members of other congregations, and a number of people who identify as Jewish but choose not to join or affiliate. Several non-Jews have also contributed to honor a friend or help us meet our challenge gift goal. Furthermore, some of our largest gifts came from members who are only peripherally involved. As one \$25,000 donor told me, “Other than the High Holidays, you are unlikely to see me, but I want there to be a synagogue in this town.” To successfully complete Phase 2, we need to reach even further beyond our base.

5. Challenge gifts don’t just raise money, they motivate people. Early in our campaign, the lead donor family offered to increase their contribution by \$15,000 if we could recruit 30 new donors in 60 days. The intention was to increase participation, since gifts of any size would count toward the challenge. As a solicitor, I found the challenge very motivating because: (a) it gave us another pitch for the campaign (“Your gift gets us closer to the \$15,000...”); and (b) it gave us a deadline. Many first-time donors were recruited through this challenge, which we met successfully.

6. Be selective about the details you obsess over... and let go of the rest. In addition to prospecting and asking, I have focused on ensuring that donors are thanked and given updates, and all recognition requirements and naming opportunities are faithfully fulfilled. I have not spoken to the press or spent much time thinking about construction matters because other people are tending to those details.

7. Having a plan is important but having faith in it is even more important. Several synagogue board members—thoughtful, intelligent, and committed people—were skeptical about our campaign for a variety of reasons, most of them legitimate. Even with all the planning, they feared we would fail.

A skeptical asker, alas, is a lousy asker. Even an enthusiastic asker backed by a skeptical board is operating from a weak position. Once you make the decision to launch a campaign, everyone has to be “all in.” To the credit of the Beth Jacob board, when we jumped in, we all did it together.

8. Persistence trumps all other virtues. When you count the community meetings, campaign planning sessions, design work with the architect and contractor, the mailings, phone calls, donor meetings, and news conferences, this project has taken about five years and will likely take another three to complete. Not the ideal schedule, but you have to play the cards you are

dealt—and we are in the middle of a marathon game. As author and fundraising trainer Kim Klein notes, “If you ask enough people, eventually you’ll raise all the money you need.” We will keep asking until we reach our goal.

9. Ultimately, fundraising is more about community than money. Yes, Beth Jacob is getting a better building, but more important, we have created a more resilient network of members, friends, and allies. The process brought us together; our success has made us stronger.

It Ain’t Over Till It’s Over

It’s Rosh Hashanah, one of the holiest days of the year. I stand before the congregation trying to sum up four years of work in two minutes.

“We did it!” I say. “Phase 1 is over and the sanctuary is nearly complete. I am so proud of us. We did something very difficult, and we did it well.”

I’m feeling a bit more emotional than expected, but I push on. “We begin Phase 2 this fall. If you’ve already given, thank you. Please understand that we will approach you again. We will ask with respect and humility, but we will ask.”

“If you haven’t yet given, congratulations—you’re about to get another opportunity. And if you’re unable to give, support us with your time, your thoughts, and your prayers—we need those as well.”

“L’Shanah Tovah. Here’s wishing us all a sweet new year.” ■

Andy Robinson (andyrobinsononline.com) is a consultant, trainer, and author of several books, including *How to Raise \$500 to \$5,000 From Almost Anyone*. You can learn more about Beth Jacob Synagogue at bethjacobvt.org.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CAPITAL CAMPAIGNS

Visit grassrootsfundraising.org/archive for our four-part series by Kim Klein:

Planning a Capital Campaign (part 1)

The Phases of a Capital Campaign (part 2)

Testing the Feasibility of Your Capital Campaign (part 3)

The Public Phase of Your Capital Campaign (part 4)

Raising Funds and People Power Online

By Brian Dever and Erin Barnes



Photo courtesy ioby

OUT THERE ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB is a mass of millions poised to bring a flood of dollars to our cause with one click of the mouse—or so we like to imagine. Online voting and donation campaigns are generally full of that alluring possibility of “going viral.” But the path to how it is done is not always clear.

In this article we will break down how two nonprofit organizations of very different sizes used for-profit online campaigns to effectively raise money and awareness. In 2011, Let’s Get Ready (LGR) used Facebook to win \$500,000 in the Chase Community Giving Program, while ioby (“in our backyards”) used a week-long Groupon deal to fund a \$500 chicken farm in Brooklyn.

Both organizations used similar techniques and experienced very similar results but to different ends. Although LGR raised 100 times as much as ioby, both organizations felt that their greatest outcome was a positive engagement of close supporters—as constituents became recruiters and small donors became fundraisers for their causes—in a relatively painless way.

Let’s Get Ready Wins Chase Grant, Thanks To “Ambassadors”

LGR helps low-income and first generation college-bound students “step up” to college by providing free SAT preparation and college admissions guidance. It partners with high schools, colleges, and community organizations to run programs led by college students (who serve as tutors and role models) throughout the northeastern United States.

Though LGR has a large reach—in 2011, about 2,500 LGR high school students worked with over 1,000 college student volunteers—it operates with a relatively small staff and like many nonprofits, was not as focused as it should have been on an online presence. When JP Morgan Chase launched

the American Giving Awards for nonprofit organizations to compete for five grants ranging from \$125,000 to \$1 million—success being determined by two week-long rounds of voting via Facebook or through the Chase website—LGR felt daunted by the prospect of competing with organizations that had larger budgets and many more “followers.” So, they started by asking people why they would vote for LGR and discovered that it all hinged on relationships—personal (friends and family), organizational (constituents and supporters), and issue-based (program partners and organizations in the college access field).

Although it was wonderful of family members to join Facebook in order to cast their votes for LGR, recruiting caring friends and relatives was not enough. LGR needed more than votes, it needed ambassadors. Over the course of the campaign, LGR staff and volunteers set about recruiting around 1,400 ambassadors—using emails and phone calls—from among the people with the strongest connections to the organization, including 558 college and 513 high school students. (Some of the high school students who spent evenings and weekends at the LGR office recruiting were by far the best.) Of course, not every ambassador followed through, but the goal was to have as many people as possible excited, equipped with the necessary tools, and ready to go as soon as voting started.

LGR’s success was in large part owing to the creative efforts of the ambassadors. College students tabled in cafeterias, high school students held Facebook “voting events,” Viral Technologies in Maine created press releases, and a volunteer made a “Send Me to College” video (<http://bit.ly/z13zz1>) with LGR constituents. Volunteers totally led the way!

ioby Generates Buzz With Groupon “Free Range Farm”

ioby (rhymes with Nairobi) has a mission to bring environmental ideas to life, block by block. At the ioby website, anyone with an idea for environmental change in their

Sample of an Actual Appeal from an ioby Groupon Deal Supporter:

I want to share a great opportunity to support ioby—an awesome nyc-based organization that brings environmental projects to life block by block. Check our new ioby website if you haven't yet. I try not to bother you too often with donation appeals, but c'mon, it's for an awesome urban chicken farm and only \$10—groupon.com/deals/ioby. Plus this will make a huge difference.

Samples Actual Tweets Sent by Let's Get Ready Supporters:

Everyone deserves the opportunity to go to college, let's make it happen. Vote for #collegeaccess org to win \$1mil VoteLGR.org

Clear eyes. Full hearts. Can't lose. #inspiration Last day to vote -VoteLGR.org #FNL

Who helped YOU get to #college? Everyone needs a helping hand... pls support our students! VoteLGR.org #highered

neighborhood—such as, an urban farm in a vacant lot, a plan to make a street safer for cycling, a hike designed for seniors, or a science class project about ecosystems through composting—can get the resources he or she needs. ioby makes it easy to collect online donations, connect with local volunteers, and share ideas with a like-minded community.

Although ioby has an online fundraising platform of its own, it wanted to test the effectiveness of a Groupon G-Team campaign. Under it, about 1.5 million of Groupon's approximately 7 million subscribers in the New York metro area would receive an email about ioby's deal. Even if less than a handful actually bought the deal, the organization would still get massive exposure.

As expected, traffic to the ioby site spiked during the week of the deal. Over 60 percent of the hits were from new visitors and although groupon.com was ranked just sixth among the sources of direct traffic, it was obvious from the keyword analysis ("free range farm") that most of the traffic was generated by the Groupon deal. The average visitor spent less than 10 seconds at the ioby site and in the course of the campaign, only two direct donations were made. More significantly, every one of the 50 Groupon buyers was already connected to ioby—either as a current donor or friend of a donor.

Feels like a bummer, right? All those millions of Groupon subscribers but not a single new lead! At best, ioby received a

3-second site visit before the person went on to buy a massage elsewhere at a 70 percent discount. But it's not at all a wash when you consider the large-scale exposure it gave to current ioby supporters.

Every one of ioby's board members, email newsletter subscribers, and Facebook fans got a chance to show off their affiliation to the organization with the strange name and its cool free range chicken farm project on Groupon via Facebook, Twitter, and email. Plus, Groupon's national name recognition gave legitimacy to the work of this small nonprofit. In turn, ioby was able to take on some of the characteristics of Groupon—such as, being local, online, a group buy-in, and cool. In short, used correctly, an online fundraising campaign like this with an institution that has broad name recognition can be a fantastic way to engage close supporters and turn them into fundraisers for your cause.

The Benefits Of Engaging Without An Ask

Both LGR through Chase Community Giving on Facebook and ioby with its Groupon free range chicken farm offer discovered a means to engage with their supporters (beyond a financial ask) and their constituents in an exciting and legitimizing way.

Awareness about LGR grew exponentially and existing ties with constituents and supporters were strengthened, even more so after Chase's American Giving Awards show on NBC. Another important outcome of the campaign was that LGR was able to get back in touch with program alumni, which has enabled LGR to better support them through college and beyond. The campaign also helped LGR create more content than ever before and double the number of followers and

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friends through active recruitment, thus providing a foundation for broader communication going forward.

All of this is not to say that online campaigns are easy. Success for both ioby and LGR was rooted in relationships and hard work to spread the word. There is nothing magical about social media. As in the real world, online campaigns take staff time and resources—volunteers have to be managed, quality tools and templates have to be created, and clever tweets have to be tweeted! But it is definitely worth the effort, and not just for the immediate return. There is a long-term gain for your organization’s mission when a wider group of people become involved in and aware of your work, especially as it makes your core group more deeply committed.


Currently, ioby is planning on taking its New York City pilot nationwide, and Let’s Get Ready is embarking on an ambitious effort to serve twice as many students. Online campaigns are a big part of making it all possible. ■

Erin Barnes is the cofounder and executive director of ioby (ioby.org), loves rivers and anadromous fish, and used her first Groupon to get 50% off vegan empanadas at a local bar in Brooklyn. Brian Dever is the development director of Let’s Get Ready (letsgetready.org), just had to Google anadromous fish, and is an incredibly proud new Uncle. Erin and Brian met through the NYC Venture Philanthropy Fund, a group of member investors who give \$1 a day and collectively make a single \$10,000 grant each year to a social justice startup nonprofit.


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Asking for a Major Gift

A Team Training Exercise

By Priscilla Hung

ASKING FOR MONEY FACE-TO-FACE or over the phone can be one of the most nerve-wracking activities in fundraising—but it's also one of the most effective. If you are looking for a major gift, it's really the only way.

Get your team ready with some simple role-play exercises. Not only does practice make people feel more comfortable, it also gives them a chance to confront fears and address challenges in a safe space.

Trainings on this topic can run for several hours, but we are sharing a shortened version that you can incorporate into a team meeting.

Goal: To help your team build a relationship with major donors and make them feel more comfortable about asking for a large gift.

Participants: Anyone likely to be asking for major gifts—board, staff, and volunteers—on behalf of the organization. The exercise is easiest when facilitated for 8 to 20 participants.

Time: Approximately 40 to 60 minutes.

Preparation: Choose a facilitator for the exercise. Provide participants with a fact sheet or overview of the major donor campaign. See “Creating an Effective Volunteer Fundraising Team” (*Journal*, January/February 2012) for helpful tips.

Materials: Informational handouts on the campaign and a flipchart or board for writing instructions.

Background: The exercise assumes that you have already shared a significant amount of campaign background, including how much money you are trying to raise, an overview of the “pitch,” and a gift range chart. Participants should be informed about: (a) who the donors are; (b) the extent and nature of their relationship to the organization; (c) the length of their association as donors; and (d) any information they may have already received about the campaign. Team members should also be clearly briefed about their responsibilities and the extent of the organizational support.

Steps:

1. Review the campaign goal, pitch, and process.

2. Have participants list the questions they anticipate from donors. Choose two or three questions that seem the most likely and the most difficult and briefly brainstorm as a group on how to address them. If you are constrained for time, omit the group brainstorming. Instead, have the facilitator choose one difficult question and say, “Here’s how I recommend responding to this.”

3. Describe the following scenario—or one customized to your organization—for the role-play: There is a donor who has given \$100 each year for the past two years. She was sent a letter requesting her to increase her next donation to \$250, which is the minimum amount to be considered a “major donor” at your organization. The letter also said that you would be following up to schedule a time to discuss the request. You have since set up the time for the call over email. Your goal is to use the phone conversation to strengthen the organization’s relationship to her and persuade her to become a major donor.

4. Provide clear step-by-step instructions, customized to your organization: You have 10 minutes. (1) Open the conversation. (2) Ask the donor a key question that will help strengthen your relationship, such as inquiring after one of her special interests or her opinion on an action/program launched by the organization. (3) Make the pitch, outlining why you need a larger gift and how it will be used. (4) Ask for the gift and listen to the answer. (6) Respond appropriately. (7) Close by outlining clear next steps and expressing your appreciation.

5. Divide the group into pairs and have them self-select who will play the donor and who will play the asker. Start the role-play. Issue a one minute warning at the end of nine minutes. Stop the role-play at the end of 10 minutes. Have a one minute debriefing period during which the “donor” can provide constructive feedback to the “asker” about what they did well and what needs improvement.

6. If you have the time, let the pairs reverse roles and repeat the exercise.

7. Debrief as a group, going over what participants found most effective and/or challenging in making the ask.

Committed for the **LONG HAUL**

Tips on Successfully Stewarding Your Mid-Level Donors

By Will Cordery

STEWARDSHIP OF A DONOR'S RELATIONSHIP to an organization can be defined in several ways. It involves communicating the organization's accomplishments with the donor on a regular basis; taking judicious care in managing the donor's contribution; and not least of all, making a donor feel good about their investment.

In short, stewardship is acknowledgement + accountability.

Past articles in the Journal have emphasized the importance of researching strong prospects for major donors so you can focus your energy on building personal relationships. Your mid-level donors are the ones just below your top prospects. Your challenge is to cultivate or re-engage these mid-range donors and successfully steward continuously meaningful relationships with them so that they eventually become major donors with a long-term commitment. The following recommendations can help you get there and you will not require a large development staff to utilize any of the tools discussed here.

Organize Regular Briefing Calls

Inviting supporters to a conference call or webinar about a recent action, a new program, or even a discussion on a topic of shared interest is an effective way to re-engage and steward donors. Only 15 out of 100 invitees may actually participate but that personal voice interaction with 15 mid-level donors for an entire hour is priceless. Plus, the invitees who could not participate in the call would still get a sense of what you are doing with their contributions.

Additionally, briefing calls can help you:

- (a) identify donors who have a particular interest in a specific area of your work;
- (b) communicate about your work and its impact to many supporters in a relatively quick and efficient way;
- (c) build relationships between staff and donors and peer relationships among donors in an easy and informal forum; and
- (d) solicit additional support in the future, should you choose to communicate your organization's ongoing needs during the call.

Use What You Have In a Unique Way

Grassroots organizations generally do not have the financial or human resources needed to create program and marketing materials specifically targeted towards the different demographic groups in their membership or donor base. So, use what you have—newsletters, progress reports, photos, even a list of next steps—with a unique flare. If you hosted a special keynote speaker for an event, get them to sign some newsletters or photos that you can send to selected donors. Create and launch a widget—such as an eye-catching image or your organization's take on a popular phrase—for an online marketing campaign that showcases something relevant to your work.

When the state of Georgia executed death row inmate Troy Davis last September, tens of thousands of Facebook users turned their profile photos black. No words were needed, and

for those of us who campaigned to save his life, it was a moment of building community through our grief.

Connect Your Donors With Your Constituency

If your organization works to develop youth leadership, create a safe space where donors and members can interact with some of the young people in your program. They should be able to speak with each other and make a connection. If possible, invite your members and donors to observe the work you do on the ground and get them involved in actions, rallies, site visits, and research missions. If they are unable to attend in person, communicate your progress after the event.

Donors to Amnesty International consistently tell us that their most transformative experience of our work occurred when they actually met with human rights defenders and former prisoners of conscience and subjects of Amnesty's campaigns.

Offer a Token Of Your Appreciation

If resources permit, send donors a token of your appreciation—such as, a candle, T-shirt, key chain, or even a shot glass—with your organization's logo. You can decide whether all donors should get a keepsake or only those giving at a certain level and could potentially give more.

Project South—a movement-building organization based in the South—recently gave a branded jersey and shot glass to supporters who purchased their 25th anniversary celebration packages.

Find a WOW Factor

Fundraising expert Karen Osborne suggests that organizations come up with creative tokens of gratitude and unexpected accountability mechanisms. If a major donor is interested in art, send them a piece of artwork. If they have a strong interest in Japanese food and culture, present them with a sake set after an update/thank you meeting. Project South could send their 25th anniversary commemorative shot glasses to mid-level donors as a token of thanks and a solicitation for more. One highly effective way to communicate a program's success is to have program participants themselves get involved in the stewardship.

Are You Stewarding Or Cultivating?

Stewardship has to begin relatively soon after a donor's last gift and your acknowledgement of it. But you must demonstrate accountability and success before you solicit additional support.

In truth, the line between stewardship and cultivation is often blurred, as stewardship helps you deepen the relationship

between your organization and its donor base. In stewarding, you are (subversively) articulating the need to either raise more funds for a particular program, or demonstrating the success of a completed program/campaign that has enabled the organization to move on to another exciting program. The broader goal of proper stewardship is to instill joy in your donors and make them proud to be members and supporters of the organization.

Who Should Take Responsibility For Stewardship

As with all aspects of personalized fundraising, the development staff have to prioritize efforts based on capacity. Stewardship is best led by staff or individuals directly connected to the work, but in other matters related to donor fundraising—cultivation, solicitation, and acknowledgement—you should involve volunteers and other active donors.

Assuring a donor that their support is making a difference is important at all levels of giving for your organization. Do donors continue to give if they are not informed about your accomplishments? Perhaps. They may continue to donate the same amount of money out of habit or because of a great personal relationship. Would they increase their giving without being able to see what their support has helped accomplish? Probably not.

It takes proper cultivation and stewardship to turn mid-level donors into larger donors and to make large donors even more involved and invested in your work. ■

Will Cordery is the senior major gifts officer for Amnesty International USA, Southern Regional Office (amnestyusa.org). As a key member of the Resource Mobilization Working Group for the US Social Forum, Will designed and helped institute multiple fundraising strategies that raised nearly \$1 million.

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by Jean Van't Hul



Bringing Mindfulness to Fundraising

By Beth G. Raps

I CAME TO MINDFULNESS as an organizer and then as a fundraiser. As a young organizer, I worked myself into the ground, equating doing with being. Within a few years, I had no adrenal function and had to rebuild. Now, I practice mindfulness willingly. Now, I am emotionally and spiritually resilient and have much more to offer others. And I have so much time. I hope this article spares you the long journey I took.

Mindfulness is paying sustained attention to the flow of thoughts in your mind with the aim of observing, not fixing or changing them. It helps us quiet our minds, reconnect them with our bodies, and develop embodied awareness.

This article aims to teach you to become more mindful in one area of your life with a two-part applied mindfulness practice for what the *Journal* calls resourcing—a more inclusive term than fundraising. In her article “Resourcing: Fundraising

as Part of Supporting and Building Community” (*Grassroots Fundraising Journal*, November/December, 2011), Susan Raffo describes resourcing as “a way of thinking about getting what we need” and how it “has come to mean how the collective body, or community, takes care of itself.” Resourcing includes fundraising as a way to care for our communities and ourselves.

By learning to “pay attention with a purpose,” you will begin to “look before you leap,” or more to the point, attend before you act, so that your work becomes easier and you find more peace in it. The ripple effect of this approach will extend far beyond raising money to raising the attention of communities.

Learning To “Spend” Your Attention Wisely

We love to talk about paying attention. Some spiritual leaders go so far as to call attention a “substance.” Many state that it is precious and in limited supply, so thinking of it in

ATTENTION-RAISING MAKES US LESS REACTIVE, HELPS US NOTICE WHAT DOES NOT NEED DOING, AND MAKES US KINDER AND EASIER TO WORK WITH, THUS MAKING US MORE ATTRACTIVE TO THE VERY RESOURCES WE WANT—COMMITMENT, COOPERATION, AND MONEY.

terms of money—“paying” attention—makes sense. Whether we like the money metaphor or not, when we are obliged to raise resources, we are likely to spend them more wisely. And if you are reading this, chances are that you are among those who have to raise resources.

In many respects, attention is no different from resources. Yet, we often spend it without a thought, giving it freely to matters that really don't deserve it. In the following paragraphs, I will try to show you how you can raise attention, so that you may be inspired to spend it more wisely, just as you do your resources.

Raising Attention: Ask Not How, Ask When

About raising attention, people generally ask: How do we do this? My answer is: When can you do it? When are you alert but quiet? Each person is different. If your answer is “never,” attend to that as your starting place.

How often must we do it? I propose you do it when you start a new campaign, are faced with a decision, or are sitting down to plan. Pretty soon you will be doing it before every meeting and each time you change tasks.

Proper mental preparation can turn us into resourcing ninjas. But too often mental preparation is used to score against other people, manipulate an agenda, and control the community rather than build and support it. Using attention-raising as the core of our mental preparation gives us power from within. Attending to our own minds first empowers us to be more present to others. It makes us less reactive, helps us notice what does not need doing, and makes us kinder and easier to work with, thus making us more attractive to the very resources we want—commitment, cooperation, and money.

Five Steps to Raising Attention

- 1. Make a commitment:** Schedule with yourself to try this practice seven times for ten minutes per session. If everything that happens in your life is scheduled, only things that are scheduled will happen.
- 2. Take a position:** Sit, stand, or walk quietly. Moving slowly is good for restless minds and absolutely counts.
- 3. Observe:** Start by paying attention to the thoughts streaming through your mind. Just tune-in to this “second mind” (as Paulo Coelho calls it in *The Valkyries*) for the first couple of minutes of your 10-minute session. Learn to observe and accept the stream. It is not you, so don't jump in. If you do, notice it and climb out. Congratulations! You have now successfully used the first part of this two-part practice.
- 4. Pick a Place:** This is the part that makes this exercise “applied” or vocational mindfulness. It is a shortcut that does not come from a meditation tradition but rather from mental prep gurus as ancient as Cicero. Close your eyes and look at yourself when you are observing the stream. Where are you? At the stream bank? On a cosmic sitting cushion? In your personal hermit's cabin? On a bus or train, looking out the window? Notice and validate this as your “stream observing” place. Having a clear idea of the location allows you to get back there easily and deliberately. Some people don't see when they close their eyes. If you are one of them, chances are you can feel, smell, or hear your place. For your first session, take the time to notice the details. Feel free to write a brief description or draw a picture and place it where you can access it easily.
- 5. Act:** By the time you reach this step, you have access to wisdom that is tailored to your needs at the correct scale and level of detail. Trust it. In the place you have picked, ask one question, develop one idea, plan one meeting agenda per 10-minute session, especially if you are new to this tool. Do not go overboard, or you may end up back in the stream. Keep your word and stop when it's time, so you learn to trust your quieted mind. Encouraging self-trust encourages self-care, which helps us cooperate with ourselves and creates peace among the squabbling voices within us.

Immediately after each session, implement your new insights. Plan and structure, task and do. Acting on what you have received strengthens your ability to receive it. Try it with small stuff first so you don't scare yourself. You can always take a longer next session, or do another session soon.

Mindfulness in Action: An Example

Starting a new campaign, making a major decision, or sitting down to plan—these are all examples of when you may want to try this new practice. The following story tells how it can be used effectively in all three instances.

Zaina is a vocational mindfulness ninja. She has three kids, a full time job, and a partner; plus, she volunteers at her child's school. The flexibility of her schedule as a lead organizer for workers' rights and the key fundraiser for the organization allows

It is not a plan that Zaina would have thought of normally, but she trusts this insight and sees that it will work at several levels: (a) it gives the less-experienced staff member a challenge and a focus; (b) the campaign gets a powerful early boost; (c) loyal, larger donors get a chance to play a bigger role in the organization; (d) numerous smaller donors can feel good about having their wealthy allies step out ahead of them; and (e) the organization is able to show off the support it enjoys across all economic classes and present itself in a new light.

THE KEY TO SENSING OR SIMPLY KNOWING THE ANSWER LIES IN CENTERING YOURSELF AND STAYING CALM—NOT ENOUGH TO PUSH THE ANSWER IN ANY PARTICULAR DIRECTION BUT TO LISTEN AND TO TRUST.

her to volunteer during the day. It also allows her to overwork, try too hard to multitask, and to lose her patience if she is not careful. So, she practices mindfulness at the start of every workday, wherever she happens to be—at home, on the bus, or in the organization's large windowless office. The place she goes to observe her thought stream is a mossy black rock high above.

Zaina's organization was embarking on a capital campaign to raise a quarter million dollars. Not a large amount by capital campaign standards but the largest for her organization. As the mentor of the point-person for the campaign, Zaina was asked to review the campaign timeline. She did, and in her own words, "freaked out."

This is where her discipline in vocational mindfulness paid off and Zaina immediately pulled herself together, placed her feet firmly on the floor, and began to observe her thought stream. In a couple of minutes, she was above the tumble of her thought stream on her mossy rock, looking down on the timeline and her recent "freak out." And she was able to ask herself: "How can I reorganize this timeline in as few steps as possible so that we can raise as much money as possible from all our donors, while at the same time empowering my coworker's leadership and making my own work easier?" Finally, she sat back and allowed the answer to enter her thoughts.

The key to sensing or simply knowing the answer lies in Zaina's centering herself and staying calm—not enough to push the answer in any particular direction but to listen and to trust. If all she hears is silence, it is generally a sign that she is on to something big and needs to set aside more time for the decision, and to encourage others to do the same, too.

This time, however, the answer comes quickly: focus on donors who can give the most first, revise the timeline, and check back in a follow-up session using the mindfulness tool.

When Zaina leaves her "place," she is not only calmer, she has a workable strategy that extends beyond the timeline to share with her coworker. ■

Beth Raps, Ph.D. is founder of RAISING CLARITY and its lead consultant/coach. The abundance plans that she designs flourish in the lazy, elegant, and effective clarity groundwork that she lays with her clients. She offers this article with gratitude to the great writers on mindfulness, especially Thich Nhat Hanh. If you are new to this literature and would like to learn more, please email her at bethraps@raisingclarity.com.

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