"Never let the fear of striking out get in your way."
— George Herman "Babe" Ruth

SUCCESSFUL Fund Raising

A MONTHLY REPORT OF SUCCESSFUL FUND-RAISING IDEAS, STRATEGIES AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

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Some of What's Inside....

Flaunt Volunteer Programs

If volunteers are key to your organization, let persons in your service region — as well as your staff, funders and clients — know the positive difference volunteers make. Venues for doing so include:

- **Press Releases** — Send detailed press releases to news organization in your community, including neighborhood weekly newspapers and other smaller entities. Watch for national news stories that you can link to your cause for local story angles.
- **Public Speaking** — Pick audiences that want to hear your message and give you a reason for being there. A press club is a great way to network.
- **Community Events** — Connect to already scheduled community events, health fairs, outdoor events, etc. Make materials fit the event theme.
- **Annual Report** — Print the report, or excerpts from it, in in-house publications. Emphasize important/relevant information in the publications.
- **Write Articles** — Write your own articles about your volunteer program and submit them to local media outlets or websites. Some papers may have a community sections; others, if small, will welcome the extra material.

Source: Susan J. Ellis, President, Energize, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. Phone (215) 438-8342. E-mail: susan@energizeinc.com. Website: www.energizeinc.com

EXPAND YOUR DONOR BASE

Make the Most of Cold Calls

Cold calls can be intimidating to all levels of development professionals. But sometimes, cold calls are the only means of making contact with new prospects.

To improve your cold-call success rate, follow these three practices:

1. **View your initial call as "friend raising."** Use that first-time meeting to get to know each other rather than feeling pressured to secure a gift. Find out more about the prospect and convey key messages about your organization and its mission.
2. **Look for connections from which you can build.** What common interests exist between the prospect and your organization? Has he/she benefitted from its services? Is he/she close to board members or employees? Is it simply the fact that your organization and his/her business both reside in the same community?
3. **Incorporate "next steps" into the conversation.** Look for any opportunities to involve the prospect in any aspect of your organization: attending an event, completing a perception survey, drafting a testimonial to be featured in a giving brochure, speaking to a group of individuals served by your organization, etc. Any involvement options will allow you to reconnect with the prospect.

End the conversation by agreeing to reconnect, i.e.: "After you have had time to complete this brief survey, I'll schedule another appointment to get your feedback."

MEET WITH PEERS

Brainstorm for New Fund-raising Opportunities

If you're planning a major overhaul of your fund-raising program, consider meeting with development directors of other nonprofits that are similar in size, scope and structure, but don't compete directly with you. Orchestrate a brainstorming meeting to identify new fund-raising strategies or procedures all agencies involved can put to good use.

CALL PROCEDURES

How to React When a Prospect Says 'No'

You made the request for a specific amount and sat back and patiently waited for the prospect to reply. She responded with a plain-and-simple "no." What now? Do you:

A. Politely thank the prospect for her time and leave?

B. Ask again, only for a lesser amount?

C. Attempt to find out the rationale behind the "no?"

D. All of the above?

In most cases, you might attempt all of the above (D), but not necessarily in that order. Experience is the best teacher for determining if a refusal to give might be based on timing, nature of the request, amount of the request or a combination of factors. Always thank the prospect for having considered a gift, and attempt to understand the rationale for declining your request. Equally important, do what is possible to "keep the door open" for a future invitation to invest in your mission.

Give Past Auction Winners Preview of Offerings

Does your nonprofit agency host an annual auction? Then you already know how important regular and repeat bidders are to your cause. But do you take steps to make sure these loyal supporters know what will be up for grabs in your next such auction?

Taking the time to do so can pay off by allowing potential bidders the chance to check out and budget for items they may wish to bid on, come auction time.

For the Annual Media and Silent Auction for the Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce (Sebastian, FL), organizers take extra steps to make sure both for-profit and nonprofit businesses that were top bidders in prior years know what's coming up for the current year's event, says Beth Mitchell, executive director for the chamber.

"We have over 300 people on our mailing list who have been actual buyers of media packages over the auction's 12-year history," says Mitchell. "So a week before the auction, we send these people a draft of the packages that are going to be available."

With detailed information about media packages being offered at the auction, she says, "they can look at their budget and plan ahead of time which packages they wish to bid on. Then when they get to the event, they know if they're coming just for business and pleasure, to take part in the silent auction, or bid on a media package in the live auction."

Winning bidders range from major organizations to "mom and pop shops" that wouldn't otherwise be able to afford such advertising or media services, Mitchell says. The media packages, all of which are donated, include traditional venues such as local newspaper, TV and radio spots, as well as more innovative ways for winning bidders to get the word out about their business or cause, including using a marquee at the local high school and through promotional CDs and website design.

The annual event is a fund raiser for the chamber, with the most recent auction, held in October 2005, netting $23,000.

Source: Beth L. Mitchell, Executive Director, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce, Sebastian, FL. Phone (772) 589-5969. E-mail: bmitchell@sebastianchamber.com

Change in Script Wording Increases Phonathon Gifts

Taking the time to fine-tune your phonathon script should pay off in added gifts.

For the annual phonathon for US Lacrosse (Baltimore, MD) — the national governing body of lacrosse — Valerie Lambert, associate director of financial development, incorporated two changes into the organization's calling script that she says resulted in their callers have a great deal more success.

"Instead of asking, 'Would you be able to contribute?,' callers asked, 'HOW MUCH would you be able to contribute?'" explains Lambert. "And once someone was willing to donate, rather than asking, 'Would you like to put this on a credit card?,' callers asked, 'WHICH credit card would you like to put this on?'"

The first year they incorporated these changes, says Lambert, 12 percent of donations were put on credit cards. The second year, she says, 20 percent of donations were put on credit cards. The average gift increased each year as well.

"I saw the greatest success with the college student callers who paid attention during the orientation and followed the script," she says. "We had one evening with 48 percent of the gifts put on credit cards. This means cash in hand the very next day."

Source: Valerie Lambert, Associate Director of Financial Development, US Lacrosse, Baltimore, MD. Phone (410) 235-6882 ext. 127. E-mail: vlambert@uslacrosse.org. Website: www.uslacrosse.org

Other Changes Lead to Additional Phonathon Success

Valerie Lambert, associate director of financial development for US Lacrosse (Baltimore, MD), shares additional strategies she has implemented for the organization's phonathon program that have resulted in an increase in gifts:

- ✓ **Personalizing the Script** — incorporated a personalized, mail-merged script onto every donor sheet (Previously, callers had a script on one sheet of paper and donor card on another sheet).
- ✓ **Keeping Time Zones in Mind** — sorted state folders by time zone, adding this field to data and call sheet. Each caller's information packet included a map of the country with time zones noted so when callers came back to a sheet later in the evening, they knew local time for the constituent simply by looking at the sheet and their time zone map.
- ✓ **Determining Ask Amount for Each Donor** — personalized ask amounts according to the largest amount given, rather than all donor forms having the same suggested amounts.
- ✓ **Asking Donors to Increase Gifts** — incorporated into the script the largest giving amount and an ask that reflected a 50-percent increase.
- ✓ **Doublechecking Contact Info** — for verification purposes, printed on all call sheets all known contact information (address, phone numbers, and e-mails) as well as spouse name. The back of the sheet had a designated area for updating contact information.
- ✓ **Adding Documentation** — included an area on the back of the buckslip for tribute gift information, matching gift information, etc.
- ✓ **Adding Tracking Mechanisms, Too** — coded both the buckslip and enclosed return envelope as *Phonathon 2005* so that the appeal could be easily tracked.
- ✓ **Spotlighting Online Giving** — encouraged donors with a text box near the stamp area on the return envelope to "save time and money" by going to an area on the organization's website (www.uslacrosse.org/contribute) to make a gift. This hyperlink directly correlated to a phonathon appeal code.