

SEVEN STEPS TO STRONGER, MORE SUSTAINABLE FUNDRAISING

1. *Focus on Your Mission*

Every decision, communication, and forward movement should be based on how it will best serve your mission. Clarify and communicate to your supporters exactly what you do and what is at risk *if you are unable to continue doing it*. For many organizations, it takes a crisis to figure this out. Do it now, before you hit times of crisis and forced change.

2. *Invest in Stewardship*

Stewardship is your best use of time and resources. It ensures that donors know how much you appreciate their gifts and informed them how you have used their generosity. The institution must invest time, energy, and heart to ensure a reciprocal donor investment for the long-term. Let your donors know how their actions have made our community a better place to live.

Stewardship Suggestions:

- Send email updates to donors from your CEO and Board chair on a regular basis
- Plan board/donor meetings between solicitations and campaigns to garner feedback
- Send short, focused newsletter-format “briefs” frequently
- Enlist different voices to tell your story: have teachers, artists, doctors convey, in their own words, the difference philanthropic investments have made to them

3. *Consider Your Case Statement a Call to Action*

Every nonprofit organization needs a current “Philanthropic Case for Support” that defines the difference philanthropy will make towards its vision before, during, and after a major capital campaign. Keeping donors informed about your purpose and goals, and the need for their involvement, should be an annual exercise.

Most importantly, make sure your board participates in defining and internalizing this case statement. The board is key in communicating the need for investment in your organization. Two key components of your annual case:

- External relevance. What's going on in the community that you are responding to?
- Targeted, focused fundraising goals. Clarify how a donation will meet the donors’ needs to create a stronger community (see our website for a case statement outline).

4. *Build Community within Your Supporters*

Your donors need to know they belong to an important, positive cause like yours. Find ways to foster community, honor their individual heroism, clarify the impact they can collectively achieve, and use their voices to comment on the importance of the work you are doing. Your donors have something at stake in your success. As one donor said, “Our chances of being ‘heroes’ are few and far between in life—it feels good to be needed here.”

5. *Expand Your Donor Base: Today's Small Gifts = Tomorrow's Major Investments*

The more people who support your organization, the greater your future flexibility. Organizations that invest in expanding their donor bases will be well prepared for future economic changes. There is strength in numbers; major foundations and corporations often determine their support by the broad base of support an organization commands.

Case Study: Turning Small Donors into Investors

A social service agency received a three-year pledge totaling \$5,000 from a small private foundation. When the agency sent an invoice for the second payment, they included a note that provided details on a youth program the new facility was making possible. The donor requested additional information and eventually made a gift of \$50,000 to support the program's continuation.

6. *Continue Your Cycle of Fundraising*

Donors tell organizations when they are ready to make gifts. If it's a bad time, they will communicate their reluctance. If you are not talking with donors, telling them how your organization is strengthening the community, you are depriving them of the opportunity to make a difference—something many donors crave.

Simply stated, if you ignore your supporters, they will assume that you have nothing to offer. They are hearing from others who are improving schools, increasing the ability of hospitals to respond to crises, or easing the suffering of society's most unfortunate. Your silence will communicate inactivity and lack of need.

7. *Embrace Donor-Directed Giving*

Your donors want to collaborate with you to define the magnitude and impact of their gift on your organization and the community. Talk about what you hope to achieve and listen to your donors' suggestions. You will establish invigorating partnerships that ensure your work is relevant to the community. Donor visions can often be greater than yours – and many are willing to make a significant investment if given the chance.