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**Don't Let the Big Ones Get Away
by Keith Curtis, President**

A June article about philanthropy on Slate.com, a website published by Newsweek, reported, "The most effective fundraising efforts aren't parties but efforts in which people appeal to their friends and colleagues face-to-face."

If the idea of asking a colleague for a major gift sends you screaming from the room, keep in mind that 88 percent of all U.S. giving comes from individuals, and 10 percent of those people give 51 percent of the individual dollars. The point is that people will give, if they've been educated about your cause and are asked properly.

Second, asking them properly takes planning. Major gift fundraising is a targeted process that requires building and cultivating relationships. Not only can the process take months or even years, each prospect requires a plan and a specific ask for a specific purpose. With appropriate planning and cultivation, by the time you're ready to ask, the donor is ready to be asked.

Third, one word: people. A maxim that's often bandied about in fundraising is that people give to people. In reality, though, people give money to great causes and appointments to the right people. So the questions become, are the right people on your board? And are they willing to ask their friends and colleagues for major gifts?

When in doubt, just remember the five I's of major gift fundraising:

- Identify: Target the most logical major-gift prospects
- Inform: Educate them about your organization
- Interest: Show them the ways you help people
- Involve: Get them excited about your results
- Invite: Ask them to give a specific amount

There's no question that major gifts will go to great causes. Why not yours?