Where to find major donors

A major gift is a financial donation that has the potential to make a real difference in the development, planning, and success of your organization. A major gift is an investment in you and your organization’s vision. It could be $500 or $1,000,000, depending on the group. It might come in first because of love of a person but is repeated out of loyalty to the group.

When determining the characteristics of a major donor for your organization, think beyond the amount of money an average member of the organization can give.

A prospective donor is someone who:
• believes in your cause,
• has money to give,
• you or someone working with you has access.

A major donor is someone with these characteristics who is giving to you!

Where are the ones I know?

Start inside organization and move out into the community:
1. Current members
2. Members who have moved away
3. Friends, neighbors and family of staff, board and members
4. Fundraising annual reports, gala programs, newsletters and ad books of other organizations
5. People with whom you do business
6. Small or local business people who work with your constituencies
   • Sneaker/shoe stores
   • Clothing stores
   • Restaurants
   • Funeral parlors
   • Florists
   • Real Estate companies
   • Landscapers
• Hair Salons/Barbershops

7. Big business contacts

8. Professionals you know – lawyers, doctors, accountants, builders, architects, etc.

9. Your Donors

10. Donors who gave to sympathetic politicians

11. Giving speeches to sympathetic or influential audiences with a sign-up sheet

- Chamber of commerce
- Churches, synagogues, mosques
- University classes
- Rotary clubs

12. Appeals to smaller donors to become big donors

13. Publications
10 Attitude Adjustments You Need for Raising Money

1. Money has no value. It just sits there. We give it value.
2. Raising money is powerful. It gives you the ability to do things. Don’t confuse raising money for your group with being critical of our economic system and how unfair it is to poor people.
3. Money is not manna from heaven. We just finished Passover where the Jews, after being liberated from the Pharaoh, wandered in the desert and the bible says God sent manna from heaven. But money isn’t like that. We must actively go after it.
4. As you do organizing and have to raise money you may get frustrated. Be mad at funders if you want. Rail against the system if you want. Find safe trusted people and vent about all your frustrations and all that is unfair about raising money.
5. And then???? Get over it. Move on. There is work to be done and justice to be had.
6. Learn to like it. Fundraising can be very satisfying. Demonstrating that you like fundraising—it’s contagious in a good way to other staff, board, leaders and members.
7. Money is the root of all evil? The actual quote is the love of money is the root of all evil. It is a quote from St. Paul addressing the Philippians. The goal is to be in the right relationship with money.
8. Practice deep listening with your community, leaders, and donors. I know you learned about 1-1’s which is all about listening. Invoke the power of sharing good, illustrative and effective stories. Such as competitive communities, good for business, keeps families in the community) Be donor-centric. That is, focus on what will resonate with the donor.
9. If you have any kind of budget you must build fundraising into all your work: Program. Membership. Fundraising, Communication—all go hand in hand.
10. Four best, most effective words in fundraising: “Join me” and “thank you.”
The Face to Face meeting: 10 points to remember:

1. Not as scary as it seems!
2. They know already from letter and phone call the meeting is about money.
3. Since they are willing to meet the answer to your request is not an outright NO. You want to move them from “I am considering to give” to “I am delighted to give.”
4. The purpose of the meeting is to get a commitment to give. Everything revolves around this. The conversation can go off on a tangent but you must bring it back to the financial needs of the organization and the possible role of the prospect in meeting those needs.
5. You must be poised, enthusiastic and confident. Smile! Be well prepared and this won’t be difficult. Board members and leaders can go with a staff person to help overcome fear of not knowing enough. Going with a partner can also make you feel more relaxed but make sure the prospect does not feel ganged up on. Be clear who is doing which part. Other staff can be great on these visits.
6. Make the prospect see that giving to you is a natural extension of his or her interests or concerns. Ask questions and carry on a conversation. During the conversation listen a lot and build bridges to your work. For example: What do think about our approach? Did you see the article about us in the paper? Has Jane Friendswithus talked to you about our organization yet? What if you don’t know an answer? If you don’t know an answer admit it or say you will get back to them – and do!
7. When you finally ask for the gift, look prospect in the eye and in a clear bold voice say “Can you help us with $1,000 contribution?” Keep looking at the prospect and don’t say anything after you have asked for the gift. It is their turn to speak. It may feel like a long time but it probably isn’t. The prospect might say. “I’d like to help but that is too much.” Your response is “what would you feel comfortable giving?” Or “would it be easier to give in two payments?”
8. After your discussion of the gift and you get a yes, (yay!) discuss how they want to make the gift. Right now or when, by check, in return envelope you brought with you, online, transfer stock, etc. Once these arrangements are made, thank the donor warmly and leave soon after. Immediately after the interview, send donor a thank you note. Another thank you should be sent when the money arrives. This thank you is personal and in addition to the acknowledgment letter for tax purposes.
9. Figure out your stewardship plan for this donor-how do they want to be in touch with you, come to things, be acknowledged etc. Do not let the connection with the donor dry up!
10. Get all your information in your data bank.
10 points For Writing a Major Donor Fundraising Letter

1. Use the same tone you normally use with them. The letter rests on the amount of respect the receiver has for you. Use first name if you normally do. If closest person doesn’t write the letter, you write, “Mary in our organization urged us to write to you because”… The letter should indicate that you will be asking for money. Mention somewhere that you also give. Describe what the organization needs and what kind of gift you hope they will make.

2. People have a short attention span. Write short, interesting, evocative, sentences. Use statistics sparingly. The letter is to get people interested so they will meet with you. The letter does not have to convince fully, but rather raise people’s interest. The face to face meeting is the time to convince them to give.

3. Be donor centric. Write describing what a difference their contribution has made. How supporting you and or your group will further their values and interests.

4. If current or lapsed donor, thank them for past support and ask them to give the same amount or more and why. Be specific. Use a hook.

5. Describe some of your achievements during the past year and some of your future plans. Don’t use boring terms like programs and services- give a short and illustrative description.

6. Consider including a quick short story that illustrates a win you had-the subject of the story is more effective is you focus on the difference it made for one person.

7. Tell them you will phone in a few days and if you live in or are visiting in their area that you would like to meet with them.

8. Write thanks again and how much their continued support means.

9. Remember the ps!

10. Follow up! In a few days call them. Over time you will learn who has lost the letter, which person has already sent in the gift, who doesn’t like to be called, who just wants a reminder, etc. Record this in your notes for future reference.
Key Elements and a Sample Timeline for a Donor Campaign

1. Timeline-say 2-3 months (prep, calls, meetings, follow-up evaluation)
2. Goal
3. A hook-double our donors, double amounts of our donors, 15 new donors for our 15th anniversary etc. What hook would you use?
4. Donor Pyramid
5. People to do the asks
6. Letter and talking points
7. Calls and meetings
8. Follow-up and evaluation

Possible time line: 8 weeks

- Year round prospect meetings, data management.
- Week 1: decide on goal, develop donor pyramid, draft letter, and make sure all data is correct.
- Week2: finalize letter, divide up names, and personalize letters with notes and mail.
- Week 3 and4: call donors and make dates to meet, put info on the web that relates to fundraising.
- Weeks 3-6 continue to call and hold meetings.
- Week 7 hold meetings and prepare evaluation
- Week 8 hold evaluation, thank everyone and celebrate!
Different Ways a Board Member Can Help With Fundraising

1. Find other board members who like fundraising!
2. Build lists at all demonstrations, meetings, petition drives, worship services, work, family
3. At the Gala/House Party
   a. Staff a table. Keep conversation going
   b. Walk your friends around the auction items
   c. Be friendly-go up to people you don’t know
   d. Introduce people you know to the staff
   e. Collect cards-and write notes on them about the prospect after you speak with them/
   f. Get a list from staff of people it will be your job to get to know.
4. Keep notes on good contacts
5. Help with data
6. Tell stories that are examples of the results the organization’s work including campaigns, organizing, members stories- Speak about your personal involvement.
7. Keep development staff in the loop so when they talk with prospective and current donors they represent the program accurately well and with the same passion you feel for it.
8. Write good stories that demonstrate your work
9. Open doors to your personal and professional networks and your community. Be a connector.
10. Make the ask.
Active Listening

- Active listening means focusing on who you are listening to so you can understand what s/he is saying.

- As an active listener, you should be able to repeat back in your own words what the person you’re listening to has said to his or her satisfaction. This does not mean you agree with what was said, but rather understand, what s/he is saying.

Why Practice Active Listening?

- Active listening minimizes misunderstandings.

- Conflict in families, organizations, and other groupings often result when people feel unheard, or misunderstood. Active listening helps people to feel that their concerns are understood and acknowledged.

- If you’re working with someone, it helps to really understand what they know, what they think and how they feel. Whether you agree or disagree, you should know exactly what you are agreeing with or disagreeing with.

- Listening is contagious: People will feel more open to your suggestions and ideas if they feel that you are truly open to their ideas and suggestions and if they know that you understand their point of view and concerns.
Tips For Practicing Active Listening

- Start with an open mind and positive attitude.

- Be authentic. Being a phony listener who is really just trying to get your own point across or push your own agenda can come off worse than not listening at all.

- Listen for the deeper meaning. If someone says something you think is wrong, or disagree with, don’t respond or argue, just listen and see where they go with it. Listen for the point of their story or argument and don’t get hung up on details or delivery.

- Be patient. Don’t respond right away. You may be full of ideas or arguments after listening to someone talk, but they may also be full of feelings that have come up while talking, or they may have something else they are thinking of saying. Take a breather and let yourself and the speaker relax.

- Focus your full attention on the speaker. Stop anything else that you are doing. Turn off your cell phone, put away your knitting. It’s not only important for you to focus your full attention on the person speaking, it’s important for them to feel that you are doing so.

- Minimize distractions- Are your surroundings conducive to listening? Are you in a quiet space? A private space? Do you have enough time set aside for the conversation you want to have? Is there a TV or a window in your line of sight that could provide distracting visuals?

- Give nonverbal indications that you are listening. Make eye contact. Nod your head, smile, say um-hmm.

- Practice- Active listening is a habit, and you will get better at it with practice.

Things to be aware of:

- How do you feel about the topic that is being discussed? Strong feelings may affect your ability to listen openly and without judgment.

## Listening Habits

### Less Skilled Listeners

1. Immediately evaluate what is being said.
2. Spend time rehearsing what they will say next.
3. Try to steer the conversation in the direction they want it to go.
4. Hear everything through their own frame of reference.
5. Only ask questions when the other seems to need help.
6. Disagree with other’s point of view.
7. Try to take in and respond to everything.
8. Allow their mind to wander to other things.
10. Give little verbal and non-verbal response.

### Skilled Listeners

1. Suspend judgment and listen.
2. Focus on what the other is saying.
3. Let the other person direct the conversation.
4. Try to enter the other’s frame of reference.
5. Ask questions to satisfy their own curiosity and interests.
6. Seek to understand other’s perspective.
7. Sort for main ideas.
8. Keep focused on the other and what they are saying.
9. Reflect back the essence and feeling of what was said.
10. Actively encourage speaker through verbal and non-verbal cues.

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“Active Listening” was compiled by Jamie Schweser for *2007 Family Foundation Conference*, February 2007.
and the prospects that can or should make significant gifts to ensure the success of the campaign. A case statement needs to be drafted and adopted by the leaders and the campaign cabinet or committee. Perhaps the most essential step is to identify all top prospects—those with the ability and willingness to make leadership gifts—followed by a second and a third tier of prospects so that the organization has a rich prospect pool to draw on throughout the entire campaign. A gift chart detailing the number of gifts needed at each level and the number of prospects needed to make gifts at each level is an important and effective tool for benchmarking the progress of the campaign.

Every campaign prospect must be asked for a specific amount, with guidelines on how to fund the gift and with a proposed timeframe. The ask should be accompanied with some written material that states the background and purpose of the campaign and the reason why each prospect’s gift is important to the campaign. Even if the organization does not have a huge budget for large brochures, a simple desktop publishing packet, with pictures of the organization and a specific ask, including information about how the suggested gift can be funded within a suggested timeframe, is a must. This packet has to be tailored to each prospect so that it emphasizes the importance and prominence of each person’s participation in the campaign. Lastly, the person or team doing the ask must let the prospect know that each person’s and each family’s gift combined will have a powerful and transforming effect on the organization. It is the power of collective giving and the leveraging of present gifts to obtain future gifts that will keep the campaign on track and will make it a success.

**Looking Ahead**

Now that we have addressed how to ask for each type of gift, the next step is to learn how to anticipate and to properly address the wide range of responses prospects will have when asked for each type of gift. Through numerous sample dialogues, the next chapter will prepare the reader to respond to any reaction or lack of reaction the prospect may have to each ask. Tips and suggestions on how to be the best listener possible, how to turn potential stumbling blocks into building blocks, and how to read the prospect’s body language will be covered.

**Addressing the Prospect’s Response to the Ask**

In my business the art of listening is crucial. Without it, my clients and I aren’t effectively communicating. Likewise, when someone asks me to support a group that is near and dear to my heart, the art of listening takes the same precedence. If you’re not listening to what I’m saying, how will you know why I would want to support you, or the best way to approach me?

—David Schellenberg, President, LinguiSearch, Inc., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Each and every ask will result in a unique response to the ask. How one handles that response is crucial to keeping the gift opportunity alive and viable. Only through preparation and anticipation of the prospect’s response can any asker feel fully confident about answering the response. This chapter illustrates numerous responses to the ask, followed by suggested ways to address the prospect’s concerns. These responses and suggestions apply to any ask, whether it be for a special event or community project, an enhanced annual fund gift, a major or planned gift, or an extraordinary capital campaign gift. This chapter also suggests ways to best prepare for the prospect’s response, so that the conversation remains upbeat, the dialogue flows smoothly, and there are few surprises or unanticipated responses.
PREPARING FOR THE PROSPECT’S RESPONSE

Askers should take a series of preparation steps before and during the ask to ensure that the ask and the response remain conversational. Exhibit 9.1 outlines these steps.

By now the asker or the asking team should know the prospect inside and out and therefore should be able to anticipate the prospect’s response. For instance, if you are the asker and during cultivation the prospect has shared with you information about recent family illnesses or that his company may be moving to a new location or that his children are considering very expensive private universities, you should be alerted that this issue will come up when you ask for money. This is anticipating the prospect’s response. It should not prevent or postpone the ask you were planning, but it should guide you in the overall preparation that needs to be done. *Sit down and make a list of what you (and anyone who is participating in the ask with you) think the prospect will say to the ask.* This is not to suggest that you will correctly guess the specific response all the time, but it is a powerful exercise for not getting caught completely off guard by the prospect’s response.

Every asker must listen to the prospect’s concerns and pay strict attention to the prospect’s tone of voice and body language. *If you do not hear what the prospect’s concerns are, how will you know what to say next?* The asker should let the prospect talk as long as she wants to, because then the asker will have the total picture of what is going on in the prospect’s mind. As the asker is listening, he or she should be careful not to interrupt the prospect or to show any negative reaction through body language. The goal is to keep the prospect focused on the ask and in the moment and to keep the atmosphere as conversational, inviting, and accepting as possible. The prospect’s tone of voice and body language will also provide clues on her level of comfort. If the prospect is clearing her throat, looking down or out the window, tapping her foot, or turning red in the face, then the asker needs to address the prospect’s concerns in a calm and soothing voice that exudes confidence and compassion.

Being overly aggressive will not win over any prospect. All too often people doing the ask are so wrapped up in the mechanics and script of the ask that they oversell the gift. When the prospect is finished speaking, then the asker or asking team needs to address all aspects of her concerns with confidence, passion, and patience. Closing gifts takes time, and it is highly unlikely that the prospect’s first words after the ask will be, “All right,” “OK,” or “Where do I sign?” Remember, these are people who love the organization and have demonstrated loyalty and commitment. They deserve to have the asker or asking team be 100 percent focused on their needs in a professional, polished, and passionate manner.

RESPONDING TO THE PROSPECT’S CONCERNS

Because there are so many responses one could receive when asking for money, the best way to illustrate the most examples is to categorize them. This way the asker can anticipate the prospect’s concern, find the applicable category, and select the suggested responses that best address the prospect’s needs and concerns.

The Ask Is Too High

1. “That’s a lot of money.”
   - “We understand perfectly, and believe us, we do not ask for this every day.”
   - “You are but one of a handful of people we can turn to to ask for this very important gift.”
   - “Is it the amount or the timing that seems troubling to you now?”

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EXHIBIT 9.1. Steps for Keeping the Ask on Track.

1. Anticipate the prospect’s response.
2. Listen to every word the prospect is saying.
3. Pay close attention to the prospect’s tone of voice and body language.
4. Avoid being overly aggressive in responding to the concerns.
5. Know that confidence, passion, and patience will lead to the gift.
2. "That's too much money."
   - "As a top supporter for the group, you are one of the few people we can turn to for this extraordinary gift opportunity."
   - "We hope you take this as a compliment. Our intent was to make sure that you were among the first families to be offered this exciting and transformational opportunity."
   - "We realize that our campaign goal is very ambitious, but we are asking our closest family members to consider a 'stretch gift' at this time. We would be happy to talk about the ways you can fund your gift as well as the timing for your pledge payments."

3. "What makes you people think that I have this kind of money?"
   - "We can assure you that no one is going to determine what you will give but you and your family. We respect your honesty."
   - "No one can know with certainty how much a person will give. Based on everything we have discussed over the past few months, your ideas and past support for our group, we wanted to ask you for this amount so that we could fulfill your desire to bring our group to new heights for our beneficiaries."
   - "We would like you to consider this gift at this amount because you have expressed interest in this particular project [or program] in the past. We have no idea if you are willing to make this type of leadership gift, but as you are one of our top visionary leaders and long-standing volunteers, it was important that we come to you first."

Fear That Assets Are Insufficient to Make the Gift
1. "We don't think we can do this. Our daughter wants to go to a private school, and there is a chance that we may have to take care of my father's medical bills for quite some time."
   - "Selecting the right school is an important decision. You must be very proud of your daughter right now."
   - "We realize that taking care of the family comes first and thank you for sharing your concern over your dad's health. Just for the moment, putting those two things aside, how do you feel about the gift opportunity?"
   - "Perhaps making this type of gift could actually help you instead of interfering with future family plans. Can we share with you some planned giving ways that could provide additional income to support your daughter and your father?"

2. "As you know, I'm nearing retirement so this may not be a good time."
   - "We know how hard you have worked, and we are most certain that you will be even busier during retirement! We cannot thank you enough for all you have done and continue to do for our group. We will be here with you to celebrate your retirement and to continue to keep you active with us."
   - "There are ways, through unique and individualized gift plans, that may actually increase your retirement income. May we share them with you?"
   - "We are sure that you have a lot to consider now and for the future. Let's keep the discussion open, and we will touch base with you in a month or two. We are confident that we can help you during this transition to prospectively make a significant and meaningful gift to our organization."

3. "I'm a single person and may have to work for forty more years."
   - "Absolutely, and statistics show that we all will be living longer and working longer than our parents did. You have been an exemplary donor and tried-and-true volunteer. Please know that we had to ask you to join with others on this special occasion to make an important gift."
   - "You may be interested in gift plans that can give you income now or at a later time in life so that you will be taken care of for many years to come. Can we discuss them with you?"
Wrong Ask

1. “I’m really not interested in supporting that project.”
   - “Thank you for being so candid and honest with us today. Please know that we did think long and hard about the right gift opportunity for you. From our previous conversations we thought this gift opportunity would match your key interests.”
   - “Can you tell us where your key interest lies within the organization? We want to hear more from you.”
   - “Now that we know that you would rather make an unrestricted gift for the overall good work of our organization, we would be happy to share with you how unrestricted gifts benefit the entire organization.”

2. “We are more interested in supporting a project and having a naming opportunity than in supporting the endowment.”
   - “We understand that our donors choose to support things that interest them the most, and we are here to honor your philanthropic wishes and desires. Please know that many donors do like to support our endowment because it allows our organization to continue its good work well into the future and provides the financial backing for us to provide the very best services for our beneficiaries.”
   - “Would you consider, with the gift level we suggested, splitting your gift and having a portion of your gift go toward the endowment to secure the future of our organization?”

Disagreement with the Organization

1. “Didn’t you recently have a change in leadership? Now may not be the time to give. Let’s wait and see what your new leader does.”
   - “Yes, we do have a new president who will continue the important work of our organization. We ask you to think about the thousands of people we serve. We think you share our vision that they deserve continuous support from our loyal supporters like you.”

Poor Timing

1. “You could not have asked at a worse time. My business is down, and I may not get the big contract I was hoping to get by the end of the month.”
   - “Thank you for being honest. We are sure this was not an easy thing to share with us.”
   - “We understand perfectly, and obviously this is not a good time for this discussion. Please know how we value you and your family. You have done so much for us, and now that we have so many great projects and programs going that are fulfilling our mission and strategic plan, we needed to include you in this very special time for your organization.”
   - “Right now, if your business picked up and you were in the position to make a gift at this level, how do you feel about making this type of investment with our group?”

2. “As you know, the companies merged, and while I thought I could hang on to my job, that didn’t happen.”
   - “We are so sorry, and please know that if there is anything we can do to help we are here for you.”
   - “When things come back on an upswing we can revisit this great gift opportunity. For now, we promise to stay in good contact with you as we have in the past. If there are any services we have that you feel may help you in your job search, please let us know.”
   - “We are extremely grateful that under these circumstances you gave us the time to include you as one of our most treasured supporters. Our campaign [or fund drive] will continue for several years, and for now what is important is that at some point in time you would like to make this type of gift to our organization.”
• "We think you will be most pleased with the new director. Already she has had a tremendous impact with our beneficiaries and in our community. Here is some information on her, and we would love to have you meet with her sometime very soon."

2. "You recently received some pretty bad press. I don't think I want to make a major investment in your group now. There could be further fallout."
• "We are here to listen to your views and to share with you the facts about the organization you have so generously supported over the years."
• "We take your views very seriously and we would like to have our president [or CEO] personally contact you."
• "A few donors shared your views, and in a short span of time we regained their trust. We are here to regain your trust and respect. We know that may take some time, but you are very important to us."

Give to Numerous Organizations

1. "We support a number of worthy causes, and making a larger gift to your group would give them less money."
• "We understand perfectly. Many of our top supporters give to more than one organization."
• "There are so many great groups to support. I have felt the way you do now, but after giving it much consideration, I simply had to make giving this larger gift a priority. We hope that you will think about this a bit and make it your priority as well."
• "Our purpose here today is to introduce you to this exciting opportunity and to hear your thoughts about it. Obviously, you have interests with other groups, but right now, how do you feel about the gift opportunity we just described?"

2. "We are really overcommitted this year, so let me just give you our usual annual gift."
• "First, let me thank you for your continued generous support for your group. Your gift to the annual fund makes it possible for us to provide programs and services to so many deserving people. However, the need we just described is urgent and is a top priority for the organization."
• "This request is really for our future needs and for the community. We welcome your annual support, but let's keep talking about the campaign. Gifts at this level will ensure the success of our organization for years to come."
• "We are asking everyone to consider what their combined extraordinary support can do for your organization. Right now, if what we have described for you is exciting and you want to join with others to make this happen, then we can apply your very special annual fund gift toward your commitment for this fantastic opportunity."

Need More Time

1. "This is really a serious request, and I'm going to need a lot of time before I can decide."
• "Important decisions take time, and we are very happy to hear that you will give this gift opportunity serious consideration."
• "How can we help you while you make this important decision? Do you need any additional information from us?"
• "Right now, tell us how you feel about the gift opportunity we just described?"
• "We would like to contact you in two weeks. If you need more time that is perfectly understandable, but we would like to listen to your thoughts and answer your questions as you reflect on this important and exciting gift opportunity."

2. "You are asking for a large amount of money, more than I have thought about giving. It will take us a long time to think this one over."
• "We understand perfectly, and we are sure there are many factors you will want to consider. But right now, how do you feel about the gift opportunity we just described?"
• "We are not surprised at all that you need some time, because this may be a larger gift than you might have
anticipated at this time. As you know, this is an extraordinary time for our organization, and we need to rely on a handful of treasured families, like yours, to make this happen now.”

- “We are asking our closest friends like you to stretch their giving a bit because we feel you share the dream that together we can accomplish great things for our beneficiaries.”

Need to Discuss This with Family or Spouse or Attorney or Accountant

1. “I really should discuss this with my husband [or wife].”

- “Absolutely, we want you to discuss this with important people in your life. We would be delighted to help you and your spouse make this important decision. Would our meeting with you two together be beneficial to reaching a joint decision?”

- “Before I made my gift I felt exactly like you and that I needed to discuss this with my partner. Please take some time, and I would be delighted to be present or to answer any questions that you have in person or by telephone or e-mail.”

2. “I have a meeting in a few weeks with my accountant, so let me discuss this with her and get back to you.”

- “That’s terrific. I guess our timing is good to ask you for this special gift when you have a scheduled meeting with your accountant. We would welcome the opportunity to be a part of that meeting if you wish, or to answer any questions.”

- “You sound excited about this gift opportunity. We have found that if you share that excitement with others, such as your accountant, that she too will feel the magic of giving and will do everything to help you make it happen.”

Stock Market or Economy Dictates the Gift

1. “I have been waiting for the past two quarters for the market to bounce back and it hasn’t. I’m not in a position to make this type of financial commitment now.”

- “I know how you feel. I have been watching the market also. But what we are hoping to accomplish today is that you are excited about the gift opportunity. Putting the stock market and the economy aside, we hope that this is something you would very much like to do.”

- “What is important for now is that you intend to make the gift in the very near future. We can work with you so that you can fulfill your pledge payments when the timing is right for you. We are hoping to get our strong supporters like you on board so that we can go to others and seek their support.”

2. “My portfolio is looking worse and worse each month. I want to wait until my stocks get stronger before I even think about making a gift this size.”

- “We absolutely understand, and hopefully the economy will be on an upswing very soon. And some people might question why we are asking our good supporters like you for a gift now. That’s easy—because the needs of our beneficiaries don’t go away, regardless of the economy. We think you share our vision that this is a special time for our organization, and we have but a handful of strong leaders like you to help us make this happen.”

- “Thank you for sharing that with us today. Please know that you and you alone control the timing of your prospective gift. We would never dream of asking you to make the gift while your stocks are not where you want them to be. We are asking you to seriously consider making a pledge to make the gift, and we can discuss at a later time when and how you can fund the gift.”

More Comfortable Giving Lesser Amount

1. “You’re off by a couple zeros. I really intended giving something in the ballpark of a smaller amount.”

- “That is wonderful that you were thinking of making a great gift to our organization. The reason why we asked you for this amount is because the program we just described
requires funding at this level. We know from previous conversations that this program matches your key interest in the organization. Let's talk a bit more on how together we can make this happen."

- "Let's talk more about a variety of ways that you could make a gift this size. We have some ideas that you may or may not have considered."

- "We have heard this from a few donors, and once we spoke further about the funding needs of the project that would triple the benefits to our constituency and the community, they gave it great consideration and eventually pledged to make the gift over several years."

2. "That's really much more than I intended to give."

- "Thank you for your honesty. From what you said it sounds like you have given your next gift some thought. We really appreciate that. Let's explore how you could make this special gift over several years and in ways that are most beneficial for you."

- "You know, when I was asked to make a gift at this level I had the same reaction. But the president convinced me that this fundraising effort had such momentum and enthusiasm that it was attracting many good leadership gifts. My gift, combined with others, would serve to attract similar high-level gifts needed for the campaign."

ANALYZING THE RESPONSES TO THE PROSPECT'S CONCERNS

It is important to go over a few key concepts that are contained in these responses to the prospect's concerns. These concepts are listed in Exhibit 9.2.

First and foremost, your prospects should be thanked before, during, and after the ask. Even if you think prospects are really leaning in the direction of not making the gift because of the response, thank them. Thank them for their time, their past support, and their volunteerism and leadership, but most of all for their honesty. After all they did not have to tell you any personal details about themselves or their situations. They are volunteering this very private and personal information, so the asker needs to be compassionate, sympathetic, and grateful that the organization has such a prospect who exemplifies integrity and honesty.

Just as it is important during the ask to use we instead of I so that the asker is truly representing the strength of the organization, the response to the prospect's concern should also use all-inclusive words such as our, as in our organization. Addressing the prospect's response should not be a we versus you conversation. It should be all inclusive. The asker and prospect should use words that speak to the good of the organization as well as the needs and priorities of the organization. This also serves to keep the prospect focused on the larger picture of what the group needs in order to be fiscally sound well into the future.

EXHIBIT 9.2. Key Concepts for Responses to Any Ask.

1. At every opportunity thank the donor for his or her past support, leadership, and honesty.
2. Always use inclusive words—for example, our organization; shared vision.
3. Do not argue or try to be overly persuasive.
4. Share your insights about your own giving and the giving of donors who may have had the same reaction to the ask.
5. Tell the prospect why you are suggesting this gift, at this level, for this purpose.
6. Stay committed to the ask amount at this moment.
7. Have alternative ways the prospect can make the gift.
8. Do not be afraid to emphasize the priorities of the organization and the need for many gifts to fund these priorities.
9. If the timing is not right for the prospect to consider a gift or the prospect needs more time, suggest a definite time to meet or speak again to keep the ask alive.
10. Encourage all prospects to share the joy of giving by consulting with family members and legal or financial counsel.
If the asker tries to argue with the prospect, even with the best intentions, the prospect is going to be turned off by this behavior. The same can be said for being overly persuasive or aggressive. This is not the time to come off as the only person in authority who knows what is good for the organization. It is the time to listen to the prospect and to discuss calmly and thoughtfully the issues the prospect has presented. The asker is not going to win the case of getting the gift if the prospect feels put upon or is uncomfortable. Being dedicated to the mission of the group, the beneficiaries it serves, and the need for substantial support is fine; however, this dedication should be conveyed in a compassionate and convincing manner.

Because the asker has made her or his own gift and probably has a fair amount of experience asking for these types of gifts, it is a good idea to share both experiences. When the asker was asked to support the group, no doubt there were issues the asker needed to address before the gift was made. So this is the time for the asker to share those experiences by saying, “Yes, I know how you feel. I had similar thoughts and this is how I reached my conclusion.” Prospects are very receptive to those stories because now their problems or concerns are common and not so difficult to overcome. Likewise, if the asker has heard similar responses from other prospects, he or she might share, without using names, the stories of how those donors worked through similar concerns to the point of making the gift.

There will be times, no matter how well the asker knows the prospect, when the suggested gift is not a high funding priority or interest for the prospect. When this happens, the asker must let the prospect know why the gift opportunity was suggested. This shows that the asker thought long and hard about the right gift opportunity, the match, reflecting on past conversations during cultivation. In some instances the prospect may have suggested, inferred, or made outright statements that this was a project or program to support. Prospects are entitled to change their minds. A new and different project or program may have more appeal at this point in time. Of key importance is that the asker bring the conversation back to the gift opportunity by asking the prospect about the particular funding area the prospect would like to support. By asking the prospect questions about the key interest in the organization the asker will rejuvenate the prospect’s enthusiasm for making a gift that is right for the prospect.

The next point is so important in responding to the prospect’s concerns that it is a guiding principle.

**Guiding Principle 9**

At the initial ask, stay committed to the ask amount.

Let us place this in context. The asker or asking team has come up with a solid ask based on all previous contact and prospect research. The prospect’s initial reaction is, “No, that is too high,” or maybe even, “You folks are dreaming!” As tempting as it may be to lower the “price,” do not. It is very natural to want to ask the prospect, “What gift level did you have in mind?” That is like nails on a chalkboard to me. Instead, the asker needs to set forth the following. First, the asker needs to acknowledge that, yes indeed, this is a high-end ask, and we do not ask this every day. That sets aside the idea that the organization brings in another prospect each day and asks for what feels like an exorbitant amount of money. Second, if the project or program to be funded needs a specific amount to start and to run for several years, then accepting a lesser amount will not accomplish a thing because there would then be insufficient funds for this type of gift. It is highly unlikely that the prospect would want to make a gift to a project or program that would come to a close shortly owing to insufficient funds. Third, do not be afraid that if the asker continues to stress the reasons why this amount is asked of this prospect and the need for gifts of this size, the prospect will make no gift at all. The same principle can be applied when the prospect hands the asker a check before the ask. Although the asker must thank the donor, the asker needs to get the ask that was intended for this prospect back on track. This could well include suggesting that the initial check the prospect is offering be a partial payment or the first pledge payment of the suggested gift. The bottom line is that during the first meeting of the initial ask, the asker should stick to the ask amount and ask the prospect to think about it before giving a definitive answer. Then the asker should set a time immediately to meet to answer questions.
While sticking to the ask amount, showing creativity and flexibility in the ways the gift can be funded and the years over which it can be funded goes a long way to closing the gift. Show the prospect, with the aid of a small chart, how gifts can be made outright, through a planned gift, or through a combination of both methods, and also display a time frame of one year, three years, or five years. This has enormous impact and practicality for the prospect. It makes the gift more doable and removes hesitation surrounding the ask amount.

Many prospects welcome the opportunity to hear about the organization's priorities because it gives them a clear idea of where the organization is headed and focuses their attention on helping the group reach those goals. Especially when your group is in campaign mode, you must share these priorities by putting them in your case statement. Offer your prospects the chance to divide their gift so that it will fund one or more of the organization's priorities and also support an area that is near and dear to their hearts.

The higher the ask amount, the more time prospects will need to consider the offer. This is why it is so important (as discussed in detail in Chapter Ten) that at the close of the initial ask meeting a specific time be established to meet again or to call. The length of time chosen must serve both the needs of the prospect to reflect and the needs of the organization to gather support within a specified period. This is the only way the gift opportunity can stay in the forefront of the prospect’s mind. Otherwise months and sometimes a year or years will pass with no resolution to the ask.

Lastly, do not lose sight of the joy of the moment. When prospects say they need to share the idea with loved ones, this is truly a special moment. It means that prospects want to bring the people they are closest to in on this very important decision. The same is true when prospects wish to consult legal counsel and accountants. Many, many fundraisers feel that once the gift opportunity is in the hands of these experts they will convince the prospect not to make the gift. This does happen sometimes, but what good would it do for the asker to say, “We really suggest you make this decision on your own”? That is why it is so important for the asker to suggest that she or he come with the prospect to the meeting with these experts or at the very least be available for questions or to send backup materials. It is also recommended that each asker in this situation tell the prospect that it is important to convey to these experts the prospect’s desire to make the gift and the prospect’s passion and commitment to the organization. This way there is no doubt that the expert’s role is to lend advice and to assist the prospect in making the gift that best suits the prospect's financial situation and philanthropic dreams.

**Conclusion**

The most effective ways to prepare for the prospect’s response before and during the ask are to anticipate the response, listen carefully to what the prospect is saying, pay close attention to the prospect's tone of voice and body language, avoid being overly aggressive, and know that all good gifts come if the ask is delivered with confidence, passion, and patience. It is all about focusing carefully on the prospect with undivided attention. These people have demonstrated loyalty and commitment to the organization and deserve to have the unwavering attention of the askers or asking team.

Regardless of what the prospect has said in response to the ask, it is critically important that he be thanked for his time, and where applicable, his past support, leadership, and honesty. Whenever possible, use inclusive words during and after the ask, such as we and our. Inclusive words place the prospect in the position of being a significant person to the organization. Avoid at all costs a we versus you conversation.

The asker or asking team needs to be open and honest with the prospect. Let the prospect know about similar donors who had the same hesitations or concerns about making a large gift and how these issues were resolved. The asker must be forthright but not belligerent or overly aggressive in asking for a stated amount. It is vitally important that the asker or asking team does not back off the ask amount, especially when the prospect responds that the amount is too large or that he had a smaller gift in mind. The asker or asking team needs to stay committed to the ask amount and be creative and flexible on how and when the prospect can make the gift. Two simple steps, listen and make suggestions, will keep the dialogue open and the prospect more willing to explore alternative ways to make the gift happen.
Looking Ahead

The last chapter focuses on how to follow through with each and every ask. It closes the process that moves from the actual ask through responding to the prospect’s concerns to all the follow-up steps that need to be covered in order to secure the gift. An ask without the follow-up will result in no gift. The final chapter also recaps the importance of the ten guiding principles for any ask, so that the reader will have the total picture of the wonderful world of asking for money.

Following Through with Each Ask

There is a natural bond between individuals and their college and university. They are positive and energized about their educational experience and the impact it has made on their lives. My task is to match those interests with the needs of the institution so that a gift, regardless of amount or purpose, is a win-win for both the institution and the individual. If the donor feels positive about the impact of their gift, they are more likely to stay involved and to also consider additional gifts.

Cultivation is the key to a successful ask and relationship.

—David A. Caputo, President, Pace University, New York, New York

Important steps need to be taken after each ask to keep the ask in the forefront of the prospect’s mind and ensure that questions are answered and additional material or expertise is provided. Because each person being asked will respond in a unique way, a check-off list of what to do after each ask is essential. This chapter describes these steps. It also explores how to juggle and balance your time so that you can make several asks while following up on each and every ask. The reality is always that after one ask is made, many more asks and many important follow-ups to previous asks have to be made. Without an organized system to manage the asker’s time, things can slip through the cracks, resulting in too much time elapsing