

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 sees 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 if 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.