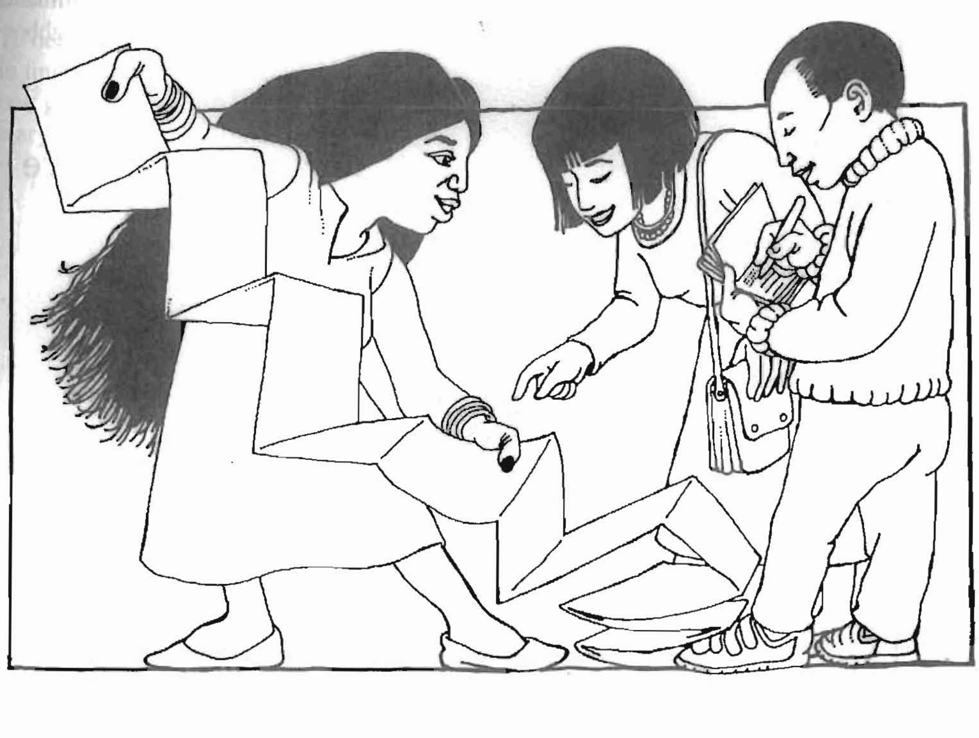
Chapter 11

Face-to-Face Solicitation

I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen. — Ernest Hemingway

Face-to-face solicitation is the best way for many nonprofit organizations to solicit support from people with the means to give it. When solicitors meet with people they know, the response rate is about 50 percent. When solicitors personally ask people they don't know, as in a canvass, the response is about 15 percent. Face-to-face solicitations of either kind yield dramatically higher response rates than when there is no personal contact. For instance, a direct mail appeal is considered successful when it generates a response rate of 1 to 3 percent.



These response rates illustrate yet again one of the cardinal rules of fundraising: people give to people. In fact, study after study has shown that some 80 percent of those surveyed said they made their most recent contribution simply because someone asked them. Only 50 percent of this group could name the organization they gave to, but 90 percent remembered the person who asked them! Even if the person was a stranger, the donor will be able to describe the person in great detail: "It was a nice young man, dressed in a suit—and so polite." The principle that people give to people—is as true for the trustee of the local museum who pays a visit to a wealthy philanthropist as it is for the public interest canvasser who knocks on all the doors in a neighborhood.

Learning how to engage others in a lively discussion of your work and endeavoring to win them over as supporters paves the way for your organization to become a potential recipient of both small and large donations. More often than not, the return for your efforts will more than compensate for the time and energy expended.

If you need to enlist the support of a large number of people (such as contributors, petition signers, volunteers, and so on), personalized approaches—setting up tables at a busy shopping center or well-traveled street intersection, perhaps, or meeting at someone's home—can be very effective. Moreover, these experiences can be very rewarding for many people, for they involve contact with others. In fact, personal solicitation is the only form of fundraising in which you get immediate feedback on your ideas and visions, and, often, excellent new ideas from the person you're soliciting.

Most nonprofit organizations, from the smallest to the largest, can learn how to successfully solicit funds from individuals by face-to-face solicitation, regardless of the type of constituents the organization serves, and whether the solicitations are carried out by canvassing a neighborhood or at scheduled appointments with long-time donors.

What Are the Advantages of Raising Money by Face-to-Face Solicitation?

1. A personal visit or meeting is generally the most effective form of solicitation an organization can undertake.
2. Pledges secured through face-to-face solicitations are usually paid quickly.
3. Face-to-face solicitations offer opportunities to build relationships that may lead to increased support from a donor in the future.
4. A gracious, well-prepared personal solicitation can enhance your organization's reputation and increase its donor base, as the person you've solicited may well share a positive experience with peers. A properly cultivated donor may even be willing to approach friends or associates—or contacts at foundations and corporations—on your organization's behalf.
5. Solicitors who find the work gratifying and feel as if they're making a difference are likely to help with soliciting again.

What Are the Disadvantages of Raising Money by Face-to-Face Solicitation?

1. Identifying and researching prospects; recruiting, training, and servicing volunteer askers; carrying out and following up on the solicitations; and keeping accurate records are all tasks that require time, effort, and money. An organization's resources must be allocated carefully, and so the rate of return in relation to effort expended must be high; this cannot be guaranteed for groups that are creating a donor base from scratch.

2. Additional resources and benefits—such as producing special events for generous contributors or arranging to have a space named for someone—will be needed to cultivate relationships with donors who have responded to personal solicitations.

3. Constancy of effort is mandatory; supporters must be kept abreast of your work with some regularity, not only when you need money.

4. Solicitors who become discouraged might decline further involvement in your organization's fundraising activities.

Deciding Whether To Try Face-to-Face Solicitation

To determine whether personal soliciting will prove worthwhile, consider the effort it will take in time and money and the results of any past experiences. Your own experience will be your best guide. Beyond that, look at some other considerations in the following list and in the summary worksheet at the end of this chapter.

1. *Can you demonstrate a real need for individual charitable dollars?* If you currently receive the bulk of your income from public sources—city, county, state, federal—you may have to overcome your constituents' impression that the government will provide ongoing support for all your needs. This should not be difficult, as most people know that government is continually cutting back its role, and many statistics are available to support this decline.

   However, some prospective donors may feel that your programs should be completely funded by the government, even if they are not presently. You will need to make clear that it is highly unlikely that government support can be generated, and that (if it is the case) part of your organization's mission is to get government funding restored to previous levels. In any event, before meeting with your potential donors you should have prepared a list of reasons why it is appropriate for the public to provide a significant portion of your funding. A clear presentation of your programs and sources of revenue will help a prospective donor understand which programs, if any, receive public underwriting and which do not.

Similarly, if you do not receive, or anticipate receiving, any significant grants or contracts from foundations, corporations, or the government, you will be able to make a stronger case for the need for individual support.

2. *Do you have a potential constituency to approach?* Check your concentric circles exercise (see Chapter 7) again to determine whether your prospective supporters are close enough to be solicited personally. If, for example, your mission is to save a species of butterfly in a remote region in Brazil from extinction, but your potential large donors live in different corners of the world, your chances of meeting them all personally are decidedly limited (see the case study later in this chapter for ways of personally soliciting a scattered donor base). If, however, your potential donors are more accessible, as for most nonprofits, you will probably have identified in your circles exercise different prospective constituents to approach, one-to-one, for support.

3. *Will the return in dollars justify the time expended?* Your own experience, as well as that of other organizations, will serve as your best guide. Keep in mind that requesting money in person is the most effective way to elicit support from individuals. As a result, most organizations should include personal solicitation in their fundraising mix.

4. *Have the prospects you've identified for personal solicitations been sufficiently cultivated?* Can you recruit solicitors to whom these prospects are likely to respond? Asking too soon, or having the wrong person make the request, can not only result in a smaller gift (or none at all), but it might alienate the prospect and ruin your chances for receiving the significant support that might have been forthcoming if you had waited for the right time and the right solicitor.

If you have planned thoughtfully, you already will have considered these questions and the preceding discussion can serve as a guide to review your plan in light of any internal and external developments since the plan was created and adopted.

How Does Face-to-Face Solicitation Work?

Remember the kids who knocked on doors at Halloween saying, "Trick or treat for UNICEF"? Or the mothers who scoured neighborhoods on a door-to-door basis on behalf of the original March of Dimes? While those kids and mothers hardly fit the stereotype of face-to-face fundraisers—the arts patron who is visited by a peer on behalf of the local museum, say—the fact is that people of all ages and walks of life will ask someone for a contribution at some point in their lives. Similarly, nonprofit organizations of all shapes and sizes engage in some form of personal solicitation at some point. An organization that has decided to undertake a face-to-face solicitation campaign should take the following steps:

Step 1. Review Your Goal for the Campaign

Project a goal for total individual contributions by setting targets for gifts at specified levels on a gift range chart. The gift range chart is based on the simple premise that a few people will give big gifts, some people will give medium-size gifts, and most people will give smaller gifts. The chart forms a triangle, and is generally calculated as follows:

1–2 gifts =
10% of the goal
2–4 gifts = 10% of the goal
5–10 gifts = 10% of the goal

Continue down the chart with more gifts at lower amounts.

SAMPLE GIFT RANGE CHART

Goal = $50,000

No. of Gifts	**Gift Amount**
2	$5,000
4	$2,500
10	$1,000
20	$500
40	$250

You can adapt this chart to your targeted constituencies. Suppose, for example, that many of your potential donors cannot afford a gift higher than $100; you might then look for 100 gifts at $100 and no gifts at $5,000. Perhaps you have a donor who will give you $10,000 on the condition that her gift is matched by gifts in the $250 to $500 range. Such a condition would help you determine the number of gifts to put in that part of your gift range chart. The chart is a tool to test the reality of your goal, and to help you figure out how many prospects you will need to meet your goal.

Because current and prospective donor profiles vary from nonprofit to nonprofit, each organization must establish for itself the minimum gift amount that justifies a personal solicitation. Large, established charities that as a matter of course receive contributions of $500 and $1,000 in response to mailings may schedule face-to-face meetings to ask for no less than $5,000. Smaller organizations, on the other hand, may solicit contributions of $250 in person. If the larger nonprofit has identified a potential major donor but feels that a request for $5,000 would be premature, it may attempt to schedule a personal solicitation for a smaller amount as part of a long-term cultivation strategy. Thorough advance work will have addressed these issues.

Step 2. Identify Your Prospects

Working with the fundraising committee, the director of development or the key staffer responsible for fundraising then designs and carries out cultivation strategies for each prospect.

Many novice fundraisers feel that they don't know anyone who "has money." They make the mistake of looking for people who are affluent rather than people who are givers; but many people who have a lot of money don't give any away. Many people who have very little money also do not contribute to charity. On the other hand, many wealthy people and many more middle class, working class, and low-income people contribute generously. In looking for people to ask, start with people you know, and note which of them believes in your cause or something similar. Then decide what to ask for.

Organizations should, therefore, begin planning their face-to-face campaign by counting the number of people listed in the first circle of the circles exercise (described in Chapter 7) while keeping in mind their human resources, i.e., how many "askers" actually can be counted on to knock on doors or make personal calls. If you identified fifty individuals in your first circle and have ten volunteers willing to ask, it's realistic to think that each of those fifty might be approached personally.

If you've rated lawyers as strong prospects in your third circle, say, you'll want to learn how many live or work in your community. If the local bar association directory lists thousands, you would need hundreds of askers to solicit all of them face-to-face; a direct mail appeal would clearly be the only way to ask for their support. Those who responded and, over time, continued giving might eventually become prospects for face-to-face solicitations.

If you have a few lawyers in your core group willing to involve some colleagues in raising money for your organization, you're likely to be able to arrange some personal solicitations without waiting for prospects to identify themselves by responding to a mail appeal. Your lawyers group would meet to review the list of attorneys and identify colleagues they'd be willing to solicit in person. This process of recruiting people to work together on fundraising projects forms the basis for many of an organization's development activities. Many steps are involved in this process, and each one is important.

1. Speak to the lawyers in your core group (personally, of course) to explain the project. Before the conversation, you might want to mail, fax, or e-mail a letter outlining the project. Include the list of lawyers and ask each recipient to choose the ones he or she would feel comfortable asking to join the group. Clearly state what you want him or her to do.

2. Be sure to let people know that you appreciate them and value their time. It's also good to avoid putting people in a position where they have to say no to you. By describing the project before you ask for a commitment, you give the other person an opportunity to decline more gracefully.

3. The easier you can make it for others to help, the more willing they will be. When you meet with one of the lawyers in your core group, bring along some background material on your organization that will help him make the calls. Offer to send any materials on his or her behalf and ask what else you can do to support his work. Identify exactly what you need the person to do, and make sure you do the rest. In this case, you want your lawyer friend to make a call to a colleague, not to check contact information, write and mail materials, and the like.

4. At the meeting, review the project and the benefits it will bring to the organization. Review the list and secure your lawyer friend's commitment to invite one or two colleagues to join the group. Come prepared with a project timeline and tell the lawyer exactly what you want and when it needs to be accomplished. Setting deadlines

is essential. Repeat these steps with all the lawyers who have agreed to recruit colleagues to join the group.

5. At the same time, poll your lawyer group for the best time and place to hold the first meeting; it's always good to get a few possibilities. It can be helpful if one of them hosts the meeting, as this tends to increase a person's commitment.
6. Follow up to see how the recruitment is going, and when the group is set write a note thanking the members in advance for their help. Enclose the same list, background materials, and time schedule.

Each one of the above steps is important to assembling the group and priming it for action. By following these steps you'll show both present and new supporters that you know how to work with volunteer leaders, which will increase their confidence in your organization and their willingness to work on its behalf.

Note that soliciting the participation of people outside the core group for special groups, as well as for board and special event committee membership, is done in the same way. What is the common factor? It's a slight variation on the first principle of fundraising: People give to people. This fundamental maxim must never be far from the consciousness of every multi-tasking nonprofit manager and board member. This is, of course, more easily said than done. The pace of nonprofit life is fast, and the pressure is considerable to focus on the logistics of program and service delivery, administration, and cash flow rather than people. But all concerned with the growth of an organization must keep this principle in mind at all times.

The lawyers that the solicitors are in contact with are solicited in person, and the rest are solicited by direct mail. An organization's lawyer also might seek opportunities to address local meetings of attorneys to lay the groundwork for a later appeal by mail (see Chapter 20 for more information on approaching associations for support).

Step 3. Research Your Prospects

Now for the next guiding principle in individual fundraising: Know your donor. Learn why each prospective donor may be interested in supporting your organization. Before anything else, make sure that you know that this person does, in fact, give away money. Many well meaning and good-hearted people do not give money to charities, and approaching people known to be "nongivers" is almost invariably a waste of time. Conducting research on each prospect for personal solicitation is, therefore, essential for the following reasons:

- Research provides the information an organization needs to design an effective cultivation strategy.
- Research reveals the interests, patterns, and, perhaps, the needs that can help an organization know how much to ask for, and for what purpose.
- Research helps identify the best person—or the best kind of person—to set up and make the solicitation.
- Research provides information that facilitates the conversation between solicitor and prospect, thus showing that the organization has done its homework.

Prospect research is so important that many large nonprofit institutions employ full-time researchers to support their development efforts. The Additional Resources section at the end of this chapter lists some of the many sources of information available in print and on the Internet about researching prospects. Conversations with friends of your organization can also yield valuable information. The basic areas your research should cover are listed on the Sample Prospect Identification Form later in this chapter.

Step 4. Recruit and Train Your Askers

Once again, it's vital to remember our first guiding principle of fundraising: The more personal the contact, the more successful a solicitation is likely to be. If, for example, you approach friends and acquaintances for contributions, it is highly likely that the responses will be favorable. This is one of the primary reasons for the success of walkathons and the like, events in which participants are sponsored by friends and family.

Our second guiding principle flows from the first: People are likelier to give to individuals they respect, or with whom they identify—or both. Social workers respond to other social workers, to counselors, and to others in the helping professions whom they admire. They also respond to individuals associated with organizations they respect. Even if most local lawyers, for example, do not know your name, your membership in the local chapter of the bar association might increase their willingness to contribute. This explains why so many organizations list on their letterheads a number of individuals together with their affiliations as sponsors, patrons, or advisors, even though a disclaimer may appear at the end of the list, saying "Organizations listed for identification purposes only." Look at yourself first and ask, "Whom do I respect and look up to in my community?" Is it a local religious leader, an elected official, an artist, a writer? Your own responses will not be considerably different from those of the people you will be approaching.

You might now recruit some of these local celebrities or influential people to join your efforts, either as askers, sponsors, or roving ambassadors. If someone does become a sponsor, inform other prospective supporters (donors) that "so-and-so" has signed on as a sponsor of your organization, and ask them to consider joining him or her as a member; even better, ask the new sponsor to make the "ask," if possible.

Undoubtedly, becoming an asker is not always easy. As with almost everything else in life, one learns best by doing. It is also imperative that the first person you ask is yourself—which means that the first time you ask you'll get the gift! If you won't give, it will be hard for you to ask others to give. When you have made a gift, you can ask people to join you in making a contribution. It might help to remember that you are not asking someone merely to give you money; you are asking for help in supporting something you believe in, and that you think they will believe in as well.

You can prepare yourself in several ways: by role playing different scenarios with your other askers; by inviting a veteran asker from another organization to hold a training session; and finally, by first asking a friend whom you can tell that you are practicing. If you choose to approach a friend, it's a good idea to use the buddy system; ask a fellow asker to come along, and work as a team. Afterward, you can discuss the solicitation. Your donor friend might even give you some valuable feedback on the meeting.

In recruiting solicitors, be precise in stating your expectations, setting deadlines, and specifying reporting and follow-up procedures. Make sure they are comfortable visiting the people assigned to them. A staff, committee, or board member involved in the personal solicitation campaign should visit each solicitor to review the research performed on their prospects, to discuss strategy, and to answer questions.

It's frequently a good idea to review your entire list of prospects with your cadre of askers, since they may identify people they already know and would like to solicit. Such a review might also reveal information about prospects known to your asker that had not previously surfaced as a result of your own research. Of course, you will want to make sure that all your askers are thoroughly familiar with your organization's vision, mission, programs, overall finances, and plans for the future.

Cultivating askers' involvement doesn't end with their agreement to undertake the solicitation; rather, it begins at that time. Tell your solicitors how the organization plans to support their efforts; arrange for them to be called regularly for encouragement and feedback; share good news with them; and, above all, be generous in expressing your appreciation for their time and efforts.

Step 5. Schedule the Appointment

For many volunteer and professional fundraisers, asking for an appointment can feel like a greater personal risk than asking for the gift itself. Perhaps they anticipate feeling more deeply rejected if prospects will not even meet with them than they would if they did meet but declined to make a gift. How to overcome this fear of personal rejection? Remembering that you are asking on behalf of the organization, not yourself, rings true intellectually but may not allay any fears. As in most matters, the only way to prevail is by forcing yourself to make the call purely by dint of will. And, as in most matters, you will find that your fears are groundless; that prospects who have been properly chosen and cultivated usually agree to meet; and that they are frequently pleased, enthusiastic—and even, on occasion, grateful—to learn how they might make a difference in the world through a contribution.

Therefore, don't hesitate to be direct when you are writing the letter or placing the phone call to set up an appointment. Explain clearly why you wish to meet with the prospect. You might say, for example, "I am involved with a new organization that is currently doing critically important work. Because I know that you share my interest in ___, I would like to get together to tell you what we are doing, and to ask for a contribution." Its also a good idea to mention how long the meeting will last, as this may be a factor in the prospect's decision to meet or not. It also communicates your respect for his or her time.

Consider carefully the best location for the meeting. If the prospect expresses interest, the solicitor should ask where he or she would prefer to meet, or perhaps gently suggest that the meeting be held at the organization's facility, or at (one of) the site(s) of its programs. In any event, the solicitor should defer to the prospect. It's generally advisable not to eat if an important solicitation is being made, unless it is the prospect who suggests a restaurant or club setting. The interruptions that occur during the course of a meal can be distracting, and tables are usually too small to accommodate any materials used for the solicitation.

Once the appointment has been made, send a hand-written note thanking the prospect for agreeing to meet, and confirming the date, time, location, and purpose of the meeting. Make sure to call the day of the meeting to re-confirm.

Step 6. Make the Solicitation

Just before the meeting, review the information your organization has provided, and the strategy and goal of the solicitation. Just as the quality of a runner's performance during a race depends on his or her training, so too will the results of your solicitation be largely determined by what has preceded the meeting. If the research and cultivation processes have been thorough and effective and have identified the prospect's capacity, inclination, and motivation for giving; if you have familiarized yourself with the organization and your prospect; and if you are committed to the campaign's success, it is highly likely that your solicitation will be effective.

Remember that you are not only asking for something; you are also offering something—the opportunity for the prospect to make a difference in the world. Your tone of voice, posture, and energy should communicate this gift that you are able to give to the prospect. Be a good listener, and pay close attention to what the prospect's body language communicates about his or her mood, quality of attention, and degree of interest.

Prospective donors will want to know how much you need to advance your organization's mission or to launch a new project or build an endowment. Tell them. You might begin by saying, "We need to raise $10,000 by December 1st so that we can rent an office and purchase the supplies we need to open our doors for work. I am giving $250. Would you consider giving a similar amount?" Remember that people are free to refuse or to ask for some time to make a decision. Be sure to wait for a response: after you ask for the gift do not say anything until the prospect has replied. If a prospective donor needs some help in arriving at a decision, you might indicate a number of options and a range of possible gifts. The prospective donor can then think within that range and come to a decision.

Step 7. Follow Up the Meeting

Immediately after the meeting, send a letter thanking the prospect for his or her pledge, if one was made, or reviewing the main points of your conversation if he or she has asked for time to consider your request. Make sure you then follow your organization's procedures for reporting on the results of the meeting.

The Door-to-Door Canvass

One of the most popular ways to raise money in person is through door-to-door canvassing. This strategy works best when the organization has something dramatic and brief to explain to the person answering the door, and when the issue directly affects the person being solicited. Canvasses work well on issues such as utility rate reform, local schools, environmental issues (especially toxic waste, smog, or landfills), domestic violence, and the like. People are often accustomed to young girls selling Girl Scout cookies, high school band members raising money to go on a trip, or a neighbor collecting money for various health-related concerns.

Case Study

The Wildlands Project

The goal of the Wildlands Project, a conservation group operating from Tucson, Arizona, is to establish a network of linked wilderness reserves across North America. The group's annual budget in 1996 was around $300,000, almost entirely from foundations. Understandably nervous about relying on such a narrow funding base, the project sought help to diversify foundation support and to build a major donor program. It contracted with noted fundraising consultant, Andy Robinson. Robinson had to work with two restricting factors:

- The Wildlands Project will never be a membership group. It works primarily with other conservation groups and does not wish to manage a large base of small donors, nor does it wish to appear to be in competition with membership-based conservation groups.
- The project could not solicit many gifts in personal meetings because it works all over North America and their donor base is very far flung.

The project decided to build a campaign around small, very personalized mailings, gifts from board members, and a handful of small benefit events. The goal was to find 200 people who would give at least $100, with a lead gift of $5,000, for a total of $50,000 in 1996.

The group found its prospects in its current donor list, which included 265 people who had given $50 or more during the previous two years, and in lists of names brought to the group by board members and others. In all, the Wildlands Project sent 700 major donor letters. Each letter was personalized to the donor, e.g., "Dear Fran." The letter was one and one-half pages long—printed on one page front and back on board letterhead—and each letter was signed by the chair and the board president, who are both well known in conservation circles. The letters were then taken to the next board meeting, where people were asked to put personal notes on the bottom of a letter of anyone they knew.

In the end, the Wildlands Project contacted 700 people, most of them through this very personal mail appeal. One hundred and seventy-seven people responded with gifts of $100 or more, for a total of $65,600. They received one big gift of $10,000 and two of $5,000; the $10,000 gift and one of the $5,000 gifts came through the mail. The gift they got most often was $100; they received 90 of these.

Thanks to Andy Robinson for this information.

Case Study

From Rags to Riches in Only Three Years

Money has always been one of the main topics at the Wisconsin Coordinating Committee on Nicaragua (WCCN). We have worked to recruit and train board members who take fundraising seriously. It's been a real learning experience and many of our best lessons have come from the school of hard knocks.

For our first major donor campaign, we set a goal of $5,000. The staff did everything they could to lighten the board's burden. They prepared personalized letters and gave each board member a list of potential donors and a phone script to use in calling them. The only thing board members had to do was sign and mail the letters and make an average of five calls apiece. The campaign raised a total of $445. As we look back, we can see that the staff made the campaign so painless that most of us didn't notice it was happening. Recently, I went through some records about that campaign and was surprised to find my name next to a list of seven donors that I had been assigned to contact. I didn't remember having seen the list previously. In fact, I only recognized two of the names on the list and I'm sure I never called those two. My non-participation was typical of the level of board involvement in that campaign. Despite the shortcomings of that campaign, it laid the groundwork for future success. The following year, we established a Development Committee, composed of active board members, and began planning a campaign that would rectify past mistakes.

This time, instead of presenting board members with lists of assigned names, members of the development committee met personally with each board member and went over our entire donor list, asking them to select the names they would be most willing to contact. We stressed the importance of contacting each donor personally, at least by telephone if not face to face.

We kicked off the campaign in October with a special weekend board training session. Subsequently members of the Development Committee periodically phoned other board members to check up on their progress. We also set a definite closing date for the campaign by scheduling a post-campaign party in November. Not all board members completed all of their calls by the closing date, but most did. The result of this campaign was a total of $33,409—a lot better than the previous year's $445! Nothing in our experience prior to that campaign would have suggested that we could expect that level of success.

The main lessons we learned were the following:

- Major donor campaigns do work.
- Participation of board members and volunteers is essential to the success of fundraising. It is much easier to persuade volunteers to participate in the work of fundraising if they've participated in the planning.[1]

1. Sheldon Rampton, "From Rags to Riches in Only Three Years!" *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* 10 (December 1991): 10–12.

The actual canvass idea seems simple enough. Trained, paid workers go door-to-door in predetermined sympathetic neighborhoods, enlisting people's support for an issue. But initial appearances belie the complexity of canvassing.

Mounting a successful canvassing operation requires proficiency in long-term planning, administration, budgeting and fiscal management, and personnel matters. For example, recruiting qualified canvassers is not simple. Candidates have to be willing to work in all kinds of weather, be adaptable, be able to deal with rejection, and believe in the goals of the organization they are representing. As many canvass directors have discovered, good candidates are hard to find.

Before canvassers go out in the field, they participate in training and strategy sessions covering such topics as how to get into apartment buildings and how "to educate not debate" someone who wants to give the canvasser a hard time. The trainees also learn about eye contact, body language, and preparing their "rap" so that the who, what, and where of the organization comes across in the first minute of conversation. To assure their personal safety, they are urged to leave any situation the minute they feel uneasy. They are also taught self-defense techniques. Before they go into any neighborhood, the canvass director gives the local police a list of their names and sends a press release to the local newspaper to let people know they're coming. Finally, they review last year's map and donor list, and discuss the targeted community's political and socioeconomic make-up.

Many groups have discovered that canvassing is a good way to introduce people to their organization, but because of the cost and planning involved, a canvass has to be done in the context of other strategies. It is not uncommon for very successful canvasses to gross $500,000 but net only $100,000 to $150,000 after all staff costs are deducted. Therefore, canvassing must be seen as an educational tool as well as a fundraising strategy.

Tips

- When preparing to make a face-to-face solicitation, think about what the prospective donor's interests are. Learn as much as you can about the person you'll be visiting with, especially what motivates and moves him or her.
- The more questions you ask, the better. In the course of answering, your prospect is likely to reveal a fair amount; and because you will be listening with full attention, it's likely that you'll find a direction to develop that will lead to the ask.
- Make sure you understand that you are asking neither for yourself nor for the organization per se. You are asking for a cause. More than asking, you are giving—giving someone the opportunity to make a difference today and tomorrow.

Summary Worksheet

for ____

(name of your organization)

Approaching Individuals for Support: Face-to-Face Solicitation

Efforts to Date

1. Are you already approaching individuals directly for support?
   _____ yes _____ no

2. If yes, which of the following approaches have you used?
   ____ Personal visits
   ____ Canvassing
   ____ Other ____________________

3. Which approaches have proven successful (i.e., revenues exceed costs, people continue to respond affirmatively to requests, etc.)?
   a. ____
   ____
   ____
   b. ____
   ____
   ____
   c. ____
   ____
   ____

4. Which approaches should be discarded or overhauled?
   a. ____
   ____
   ____
   b. ____
   ____
   ____
   c. ____
   ____
   ____

Planning New Efforts

1. List ways you can enhance the income potential of the face-to-face solicitation approaches you will continue:
   a. ______________________________
   b. ______________________________
   c. ______________________________
   d. ______________________________
   e. ______________________________
   f. ______________________________
   g. ______________________________
   h. ______________________________
   i. ______________________________

If your organization has not solicited individuals in person but plans to, which organizations in your community can share their experience and advice on face-to-face solicitations? Who can make the inquiry effectively on your behalf?

Organization	Contact Information	Person Assigned	Report Due

Rating Your Face-to-Face Solicitation Potential

On the basis of what you have learned, how would you rank your capability to elicit support from individuals through face-to-face solicitation?

__ Very Good __ Possible __ Unlikely __ Still Unknown

Sample Prospect Identification Form

Name: ____________________

Address: ____________________

Phone (home): ____________________

(work): ____________________

E-mail: ____________________

Where else does this prospect give money?

a. ____________________

b. ____________________

c. ____________________

Who knows this prospect best, and what is that person's relationship to the prospect?

Contact: ____________________

Relationship to prospect: ____________________

____

Personal information about prospect: ____________________

Occupation: ____________________

Age: ____

Length of time with current employer: ____________

Other interests, e.g., civic groups, religious groups, trade associations:

____

____

What will this prospect most like about our work? About what area will he or she will have most questions?

____

Can this prospect make a decision alone? If no, who else must be consulted?

____

____

Solicitor information:

____ I can call this prospect.
____ I cannot call this prospect but you may use my name.
____ I cannot call this prospect; do not use my name

Name of solicitor:____
Amount being requested ___________________________________

Result:____
____
____
____

Additional Resources

Publications

Ibo, Amy. "The Benefactor 100: The Most Generous Among Us: An Exclusive Ranking Based on Total Donations. *Worth* 8 (April 1999): 110–122.

Alford, Jimmie R. "Asking for Money." *Nonprofit World* 17 (May–June 1999): 13–15.
Shares insights for successful solicitation calls.

Baird, John A., Jr. "Trading Up." *Fund Raising Management* 29 (May 1998): 18–19, 25.
Describes three procedures for improving a solicitation program.

Bloom, Judy. *Being Rich Is Not a Piece of Cake*. New York. National Film Archive of Philanthropy, 1998. Video recording. 37 minutes.

Brewer, Randy W. "Getting Past First Base with Your New Donor: Three Rules for Getting a Second Date." *Fund Raising Management* 30 (April 1999): 32–33.
Discusses three strategies for sustaining a healthy donor relationship after the first gift.

Clemow, Susan B. "The Fun of Asking for Money in Twelve Easy Steps." *Fund Raising Management* 30 (April 2000): 30–33.
Provides twelve suggestions for successful fundraising.

Dahnert, Sachs Jennifer. "12 Ways to Block the Ask." *Currents* 24 (November–December 1998): 16–20.
Provides a list of common solicitations errors, and suggestions for preventing them.

Dee, Jay R., and Alan B. Henkin. "Communication and Donor Relations: A Social Skills Perspective." *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 8 (Winter 1997): 107–119.
Discusses the findings of a study entitled "Fairness and Reputation Effects in a Provision Point Contribution Process," conducted by Melanie Beth Marks and D. Eric Schansberg, which looks at how much information fundraisers should tell potential donors and the effects of disclosing certain information.

Edwards, Paul. *The Tapestry of the Uultimate Ask: The Strategy, Design and Motivation that Ensures Your Success* [video recording]. Chicago: Institute for Charitable Giving, 1999. 3 vols. 321:00 minutes.
Three separate videotapes.

Goettler, Ralph H. "The Four Ws of Major Gift Solicitation." *Nonprofit World* 16 (May–June 1998): 16–18.

Graham, Christine. *Asking: A Hands-On Learner's Guide to Gift Solicitation.* Shaftsbury, VT: CPG Enterprises, 1998. 20 p.

Graham, Christine. *Practice Makes Perfect: Short Solicitation Exercises You Can Use with Your Board and Volunteers.* Shaftsury, VT: CPG Enterprises, 1998. 32 p.
Offers exercises for the techniques outlined in the companion volume, *Asking.*

Hartsook, Robert F. *Closing that Gift: How To Be Successful 99% of the Time.* Wichita, KS: ASR Philanthropic Publishing, 1998. 160 p.
How to make the ask and get the donation.

Hartsook, Robert F. "15 Fund-Raising Opportunities with the Millionaire Next Door." *Fund Raising Management* 29 (November 1998): 16–17, 27.

Jaye, Melinda. "Guide for the Successful Campaign Solicitor." *Fund Raising Management* 30 (May 2000): 26–27.

Kirsch, Rodney P., and Martin W. Shell. "Achieving Leadership Gifts: The Investment Returns of Lasting Relationships." *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising* 21 (Fall 1998): 35-60.
Explains the various ways of defining what constitutes a leadership gift and how development staff can create an environment that encourages this type of giving. Stresses the importance of partnering with volunteers, building relationships over time with donors, and maximizing the CEO's commitment. Outlines the role played by development staff, and techniques they may successfully utilize in securing leadership gifts. Finally, discusses other considerations, such as relationship with the donor's spouse and family, recognition and publicity, and gifts of appreciated securities. Includes bibliographic references.

Klein, Kim. "Asking Current Donors for Money: Why, How and How Often." *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* 19 (February 2000): 3–6.

Lawson, David M. "Read the Writing on the Wall Street." *Currents* 25 (June 1999): 20–25.
Activities in the business markets may influence the interest and ability of donors to make tax-favored major gifts. Initial public offerings, mergers, hostile takeovers, and stock options may create donor deadlines that the wise development officer needs to understand.

Makar, Arthur. "Gays and Lesbians: An Untapped Donor Resource." *Advancing Philanthropy* (Spring 1999): 28–30.
Lists questions about inclusion, institutional policies, outreach, and institutional perception that gays and lesbians may ask before deciding whether to give to an organization.

Matheny, Richard E. *Major Gifts: Solicitation Strategies.* Washington, DC: Council for Advancement and Support of Education, 1994. v, 165 p.

Consists of three sections. Section one comprises fourteen chapters that lead a reader through the development of major gift solicitation, focusing on the face-to-face communication process with prospective donors. Section two contains eleven case studies designed to test your knowledge of solicitation strategies. Section three presents possible solutions to the questions posed by the case study situations.

Merrilees, Sue. "Donor Rating for Small Organizations." *Grassroots Fundraising Journal* 17 (June 1998): 3–4.

Explores the usefulness of donor rating systems, explains the inclination and ability component of a rating system, and concludes by detailing how to begin and maintain the system.

Nicklin, Julie L. "Turning Young Tycoons into Tomorrow's Carnegies." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 44 (17 July 1998): A47–50.

Development officers at many higher education institutions are altering their fundraising techniques in order to obtain donations from wealthy young people.

Panas, Jerold. *Shaking the Money Tree: What Motivates Donors.* Chicago: Institute for Charitable Giving (SkilFilm Series), 1995. Video recording. 53 minutes.

Phillips Communications. *Techniques of Personal Solicitation.* Los Angeles: Phillips Communications (Focus on Fundraising video series), 1994. Video recording. 21 minutes.

Roth, Stephanie. "Common Mistakes in Building Relationships with Donors (And How To Avoid Them)." *Grassroots Fundraising Journal,* 19 (June 2000): 6-8.

Seymour, Si. *Designs for Fundraising.* Detroit: The Taft Group, 1966.

A classic work on developing campaigns, understanding people and why they give, and solicitation techniques, as well as enduring insights and fundraising wisdom.

Staub, Scott C. "Is the Asian Community Different?" *Advancing Philanthropy* (Spring 1999): 10–11.

Considerations for fundraising strategies that are effective with Asian-Americans.

Sturtevant, William T. *The Successful Ask, Part I: Winning the Gift.* Chicago: Institute for Charitable Giving, 1995. Video recording. 54 minutes.

Sturtevant, William T. *The Successful Ask, Part II: Winning the Gift.* Chicago: Institute for Charitable Giving, 1995. Video recording. 86 minutes.

Wylie, Peter. "Look to Your Donor Database." *Advancing Philanthropy* 6 (Fall–Winter 1998): 36–38.
Describes the cycle of information-gathering and the relationship necessary to cultivate major donors.

Internet

Internet Prospector (www.internet-prospector.org)
Monthly newsletter focusing on information for prospect researchers.

www.leadershipdirectories.com
The Leadership Library is a unique database of personnel information that helps subscribers reach leaders in United States government, business, professional, and nonprofit organizations. A wide range of book titles is included in the library.

www.APRAhome.org/
Association addressing the changing needs and wide scope of skills required of advancement researchers and advancement service professionals working within the nonprofit community.