

FUNDRAISING FORUM™

The NPO regulatory framework in South Africa: choppy waters or plain sailing?

For those embarking on their maiden voyage in the non-profit sector – and for seasoned sailors – the regulatory framework for non-profit organisations can be intimidating and confusing. Take the time to consider your options and chart a proper course to steer your organisation through the storms it will face, advises Cathy Masters of Cathy Masters Development Services.

Acronyms abound in the non-profit sector. The term 'non-profit organisation' (NPO) refers to the voluntary and additional registration which organisations can apply for. This application is made to the Department of Social Development under the Non-Profit Organisations Act, 1994.

While registration under the Act is voluntary, organisations seeking funding from this department or other government departments will find that registration as an NPO is a prerequisite. Other donors, too, may require NPO registration, as they feel it provides a level of comfort and assurance about the governance and compliance of the organisation.

It is important to note that NPOs can and do exist as legal entities and can function as such even if they are not registered with the Department of Social Development in terms of the NPO Act.

Who can apply? An organisation that is already legitimately set up as a separate legal entity in one of three ways:

1. In terms of the Companies Act 71 of 2008, a Non-Profit Company (NPC) is registered at the Companies and Intellectual Properties Commission (CIPC) with a Memorandum of Incorporation as its founding document. (These were previously called Section 21 companies.)
2. In terms of the Trust Property Control Act 57 of 1988, a charitable Trust is registered with the Master of the High Court with a Trust Deed.
3. Under common law, members can form a Voluntary Association (VA) with a constitution. The VA requires no formal registration to exist as a legal entity provided that its constitution includes the necessary clauses for existence apart from its members.

Registration as an NPO under the NPO Act is open to all three types of legal entity. So, an NPO is not something that your organisation is, but it is an additional status that your organisation has.

Many believe that an organisation is either an NPO or an NPC. It is possible

and perfectly acceptable for a single entity to be a registered NPC which then also applies for and is given NPO status.

What do we need to comply with?

All organisations of whatever form are required to register as taxpayers with SARS. This applies even if they apply for and are granted exemption from tax or Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) status. All organisations need to be given a taxpayer reference number before SARS will consider their exemption applications. All organisations, whether tax-exempt or not, need to file annual tax returns with SARS.

VAs have no 'external' or ongoing registration requirements. They need to follow the rules in their constitutions each year (meetings, voting for committee members, etc.).

For charitable trusts, there are no annual reporting requirements to the Master, but any changes in trustees, trustee details or accountant/auditor details must be reported to the Master.

For an NPC, there is an annual obligation to file a 'return' with the CIPC, which amounts to a small 'registration' fee. If you do not pay this fee, your NPC will be deregistered by the CIPC. As with a trust, all changes to directors, addresses and accountants/auditors must be reported to the CIPC.

All registered NPOs (whether an NPC, trust or VA) must submit a narrative report, in the prescribed format, and annual financial statements – signed by an accounting officer or auditor – within nine months of the financial year-end to the NPO Directorate. They must also report any changes to their address, office bearers and founding document.

There are other regulatory requirements which will need to be met depending on the nature and scope of your work, particularly if you employ staff and/or work with children, the elderly, abused women or other sectors of society.

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Yes, there is proven value in bequest programmes – and direct mail fundraising

In the last issue of Fundraising Forum, we looked at the merits of bequest promotion programmes. Now, Marisol Gutierrez considers the outcome of investing in these and checks out two recent case studies.

When bequest promotion programmes are implemented attentively, as part of the broader fundraising mix, expect measurable results. Just don't expect them today – or tomorrow, for that matter.

Like other fundraising activities that seek to build sustainability within an organisation, bequest programmes ordinarily take time to bear fruit. Going the distance – through planned, sustained activity amongst your bequest prospects – does reward non-profit organisations (NPOs) in the longer term.

Sincere stewardship

This was proved again recently when DMI analysed several of its clients' databases of individual donors to track these organisations' 'bequestors' and to ascertain the lifetime value of these amazing donors.

One of these NPOs is an organisation with national reach (let's call it XYZ). Theirs is a diverse fundraising programme that includes online giving, direct mail and donor-centric newsletters.

An analysis of XYZ's bequest income – in a one-year period – revealed that every one of the 29 deceased donors who had included the NPO in their Wills had initially been acquired through the organisation's direct mail programme.



The collective value of their donations to the organisation during their lifetimes amounted to around R47 000 – but the total lifetime value of their giving, including their bequests to the NPO, cumulatively totalled R7.4m.

Another NPO's database revealed similar results. The only difference is that this organisation (let's name this one ABC) has had an international direct mail programme in place for many years, has an active, well-managed bequest promotion programme and also applies comprehensive, tailor-made donor stewardship strategies to its entire individual giving programme.

For this NPO, DMI analysed a segment of 8 000 of their donors who were acquired by direct mail in 2004 and who had given to the organisation until the end of 2015. The results were startling.

In 11 years, those 8 000 generous men and women had donated R12m through direct mail . . . and the organisation had received bequests totalling around R48m from 332 of those donors who had passed away. Even without the benefit of a favourable exchange rate, these results speak for themselves.

These examples prove beyond doubt that good donor stewardship practices are a key factor in not only retaining donors, but in building a reciprocal relationship of trust. Consistent sincere stewardship affirms for potential and confirmed bequestors that the NPOs they support are indeed worthy of inclusion in their Wills.

Additionally, the role of bequestors in enabling the NPOs to continue their work beyond their lifetimes had been frequently and sensitively highlighted in these organisations' communications and bequest promotion programmes.

Direct mail

This also answers questions around the worth of direct mail in the fundraising mix. While more expensive to implement than online programmes, results have shown – in South Africa and abroad – that direct mail fundraising is key to developing relationships with donors and continues to generate the lion's share of income for charities that invest in it and stay the course.

Marisol Gutierrez is Communications and Partnerships Manager at Downes Murray International. ■

MILESTONE THINKING

On-target observations in brief

The number of global internet users is predicted to reach 4.2 billion by 2020.

Today, it's 3.4 billion.

Nonprofit Tech for Good

I only feel angry when I see waste.
When I see people throwing away
things we could use.

Mother Theresa

Investments in effective fundraising
strategies should be made not despite
our need to fund our missions and
work, but because of it.

BoardSource

A true conservationist is a man who
knows that the world is not given by
his fathers but borrowed from
his children.

John James Audubon

Set goals that are Specific, Measurable,
Achievable, Realistic and Timebound
(SMART). This way, you're more likely
to achieve them.

Unknown

When someone clicks a donation button
or link, they should be taken immediately
to the start of that process – not an
additional page with lots of text about
different ways to give.

Top Nonprofits

Your dream doesn't have an
expiration date. Take a deep breath
and try again.

K T Witten

You cannot build relationships online
by merely broadcasting content. Social
media is most valuable when it is used
for mutually beneficial interactions.

Ruendree Govinder

Start where you are, use what you
have, do what you can.

Arthur Ashe

No-one wants a novel in their inbox,
so keep emails short and scannable.

MailChimp

PHILANTHROPY IN FOCUS



Taking eye care to people who need it most

With six million South Africans in need of basic eye care, the South African Sight Enhancement Initiative (SASEI) is on a mission to make affordable eye-care available to impoverished communities across the length and breadth of South Africa, and to preserve or restore the sight of as many people as possible.

Using custom fitted mobile units, trained personnel carry out the eye screenings. SASEI's first three mobile units are already operational and their impact is significant.

Since September 2016, 14 584 people who live on a social grant, or who survive on less than R 2 000 per month, have had their eyes screened. Of this number, 4 835 people have received reading glasses.

The organisation estimates it will take 52 SASEI units, serving 700 people per month per unit, approximately 13.7 years to reach six

million people.

Those who will benefit from SASEI's programme include pre- and school-going children; the unemployed; those employed but living on R 2 000 or less per month; and the elderly.

SASEI believes the best way to reach those most in need is to place mobile eye screenings units at the same location within a community, and to have them there on a regular basis, so that community members become familiar with the service.

In this way the mobile unit teams ensure that residents have their eyes checked regularly, and also refer others in need of this service to the units. SASEI's objective is to provide the glasses and screenings at no cost.

For every one million Rand donated to this programme, SASEI can supply 1 403 people with free reading glasses. Visit www.sasei.org or www.facebook.com/saseinpo/ ■

*** Recommend an organisation to be featured in *Philanthropy in Focus* and earn your organisation a free strategic fundraising planning consultation.**

FUNDRAISING FORUM™

Fundraising Forum™ is a regular newsletter dedicated to the enhancement of fundraising management and techniques, and the promotion of community service, welfare and non-profit organisations of all kinds.

It is published by Downes Murray International and circulated, free of charge, to anyone with an interest in the growth and improvement of the non-profit sector and those served by it. In addition to regular features written by Downes Murray International staff, there are extracts from international fundraising publications which are reprinted with acknowledgement to the publishers.

We welcome submissions for publication from all writers involved in non-profit work. Visit www.dmi.co.za for more information. ■

Are you prioritising awareness or action?

Non-profit organisations need money to perform their work. Cash, moola, bucks . . . that's what puts food into the hands of malnourished children, gives life-saving supplies to people in crisis, ensures refuge for displaced communities – and gets kittens rescued from stinky drains. Can 'awareness' do that? Marisol Gutierrez joins the debate on awareness versus fundraising campaigns.

Like you, I've 'Liked' dozens of interesting posts on Facebook, clicked on as many smiley, sad and angry face emojis, commented on issues, shared pictures, discussed the creativity and technical merit of non-profits' ad campaigns both on and offline – and so much more – and that's not even counting the stuff that I purposefully seek out.

What's telling though, from a fundraising point of view, is the actual inaction in all of the above. In other words, while I was giving the thumbs up, pulling faces and engaged on some level, I didn't donate. No cash exited my bank account to enter a charity's . . . and that's where Tom Ahern's article* *HOAX! "Raising awareness" unmasked* comes in.

Ahern, who's regarded as one of America's leading authorities on donor communications, wrote an interesting piece on the subject of awareness campaigns. According to Ahern, who quotes several experts in his article – chasing awareness is a waste of time.

In the article, Jeff Brooks, from his blog Future Fundraising Now, asserts: "Some 'marketing experts' would have you believe fundraising is a two-step process: First you must make prospective donors 'aware' of your organisation, then you can ask them to give.

"Two-step fundraising is a colossal waste of money. You basically double your cost and get nothing in return. The truth is, if you have limited resources, there's almost no way you can justify spending them on awareness campaigns. The reality is that most awareness campaigns make no measurable difference for fundraising campaigns."

Bollocks

Ahern also quotes Tobin Aldrich, who, among other achievements, led World Wildlife Fund UK to new fundraising heights. He wrote in his blog, ". . . one of those counter-intuitive things about fundraising is that people don't actually have to have heard about your charity before [they'll] respond to a fundraising ask.

"I've lost count of the times I've been told by smart, senior people with a marketing background in some famous company that the first thing that <insert name of non-profit here> must do is get their name out or raise awareness of the cause. Only then should we start asking for

money. So let's start with a big awareness raising campaign (hey, maybe we could get an ad agency to do it for free!).

"Sorry, but that's bollocks basically. The first thing any non-profit should do is fundraise. When you fundraise you tell people about your cause, you make them care about it and they give you money as a result. And do you know what; you raise money and awareness too. It's amazing, isn't it?"

As we say in Mzansi: ja well no fine . . . although Aldrich has a valid point.

Achieving a balance between raising awareness and raising money – through the same campaign – requires mastery in both fundraising and communication. It can – and should – be done and one shouldn't happen at the expense (literally and figuratively) of the other.

If executed well, these campaigns are integrated, seek to fulfil clear objectives – and are measured and monitored from start to finish. They're also adjusted along the way, if necessary, to maximise their impact.

Campaigns behaving badly

Whether you're thinking of an awareness or fundraising campaign – or both – three of the most critical questions to ask at the outset: "What do we want to achieve?" (set clear objectives), "Who do we want to reach?" (target your audiences) and "How will we know if we're achieving it?" (monitoring and evaluation). You can ask 100 questions if you like, but make sure you ask and answer those three. Please.

At the risk of stating the obvious, a campaign is not a lone billboard on the way to the airport. Neither is it an event – no matter the glitter factor of the guest list – or an SMS-to-donate ad. If that trio represent elements of the campaign, different story.

A campaign has clear objectives, is planned, sustained and speaks clearly to the organisation's mandate and its communications and fundraising strategies.

Effective campaigns start conversations around issues, generate interest in and support for the organisation's work, raise awareness (of course) – and raise money. The best of them cut through the suffocating clutter of useless and useful information that we're constantly bombarded by, and get us to do two things: give a damn and give money.

Marisol Gutierrez is Communications and Partnership Manager at DMI. Send your campaign questions – with or without pictures of kittens – to: marisol.gutierrez@dmi.co.za

** <http://bit.ly/2pkXSHk>*



Do your donors want your fundraising to be more FUN?

As non-profits, we tackle some serious issues: disease, homelessness, education, and everything in between.

Because we want donors to believe in our mission and support our work, we spend a lot of our time impressing the seriousness of that work on our donors. And rightly so. People need to understand the story behind your non-profit, and the impact of your work, if they are going to want to invest financially in your organisation.

It is important to remember that your donors are people. Like all people, they get tired of hearing a steady drumbeat of dire news and “emergency” pleas for help. If that’s all your non-profit is communicating to your donors, they will quickly stop responding to your fundraising appeals.

Of course you should be making your donors feel emotionally connected with your non-profit. Yes, you should be telling impactful, tear-jerking stories about your work. But you should also be tempering some of those serious messages with communications that are a little more “fun” and joyful.

Including some upbeat messages in your cultivation efforts will help your donors feel good about your work and ensure that they don’t get desensitized to your more serious communiqués. Here are three ways you can inject a little more fun into your donor dispatches without taking away from the seriousness of your work:

Big vision

The work your organisation does is important. You’ve got to let your donors and prospects know that you have a big vision for your programmes, and that there’s still a ton of work to do . . . work that you can only do if people donate to your non-profit.

But, it’s also important to regularly communicate with your donors about your “wins”. Your wins are also your donors’ wins. Did your organisation just meet a fundraising goal? Tell people about it. Did you open up a new wing of your hospital, or feed 10% more people at your soup kitchen last month? Let your donors know.

Take a few moments every now and then in your newsletters, e-mails, on your website and at your events to celebrate with your donors about the great work they have made possible at your organisation.

Does your non-profit spend all of its time telling the stories of your clients? Telling client stories is important . . . you want to make sure your donors and supporters understand the impact of your work on the lives of real people



in their own communities.

But, it is also important to spend some time telling the stories of your donors, staff and volunteers. Telling those stories builds a sense of belonging for your supporters, breaks up the monotony of only hearing similar stories about your client base.

Many non-profits feature a donor, board member or staff member in each newsletter, talking about their background, why they got involved with the organisation, and fun facts about their hobbies and interests.

Another great way to inject fun into your fundraising, without lessening the impact of your donor communications or taking away from your mission, is to provide opportunities for networking and community-building for your donors.

These opportunities can be as simple as holding non-ask cultivation events once per month or once per quarter, inviting donors to come and mingle with other donors and staff . . . or they can be as involved as holding a yearly “celebration dinner” for your donors that features a well-known speaker or guest host. Many larger organisations invite donors to participate in private social media events, chats or conversations, only loosely based on the non-profit’s mission area.

Whatever you choose to do, providing opportunities for your donors and prospects to network and enjoy each other’s company can provide a strong sense of belonging and “family” for donors, which in turn increases donor loyalty and happiness.

www.thefundraisingauthority.com

Joe Garecht explains why it’s important to share upbeat and fun news with your supporter base.

The fundraiser's two most important words

Sarah Scarth explains why saying 'thank you' isn't only the right thing to do, it's one of the most important things you have to do.

There are two words in fundraising more important than any others: **Thank You.** Saying thank you for a gift received is not just the polite thing to do, it's an important step in 'binding' your relationship with a donor or supporter.

There is plenty of evidence, both anecdotal and formal, to confirm that when said quickly, with sincerity and in as personal a way as possible, saying thank you is a significant factor in building long-term relationships with donors.

Why? Because saying 'thank you' makes the donor feel good about themselves – even better than when they made the gift and often leads to repeat donations.

In his book *Retention Fundraising*, fundraising guru Roger Craver identifies the key drivers of donor commitment (based on research carried out among donors of 250-plus organisations). Of the 32 drivers, the top seven are all linked to thanking with the number one driver being: "Timeliness of the organisation thanking me for my support".

He also shares the reasons why donors leave or stop donating, referencing research conducted by Bloomerang, which found that 13% of those surveyed said they left because they never got thanked. As Roger quite rightly remarks: "No act of omission more clearly signals, 'We don't care. Just send the money.'"

So how do we do a better job at thanking donors so that we can spend less time finding new ones? Let's hold onto those who have already shown us their support. Here are some suggestions:

Make it a priority with dedicated resources

If you've got more than a couple of donors, setting up proper systems and procedures to ensure donors are thanked appropriately is critical. Someone needs to take responsibility for ensuring the right thank you message is sent quickly, ideally using the channel you originally used to communicate with the donor. Recording the thank you on your customer relationship management database is also critical – tracking donor engagement and response helps you better plan donor communication.

Don't be shy to pick up the phone

I'm often surprised how hesitant organisations are to use the telephone to speak to

their donors. The Children's Hospital Trust has a policy to call and thank every new donor, regardless of the value of their donation and it's helping them keep their donors giving. I can't think of anything nicer than brightening up someone's day by telling them how much they are appreciated. And it shouldn't just fall to one person to make these lovely calls. Think how amazing a donor, who has made a small donation, would feel to receive a thank you call from the CEO. So get the whole team involved in making more donors happy!

Get creative

If your thank you letter starts with something like: "On behalf of the board and management of the..." it's time to start rewriting! Remember one size won't fit all and it's really important to keep updating your letters. Also, don't focus on what you've done, but rather on what the donor has made possible – he or she is the hero. Here's an example: "Thank you for walking alongside our Inspectors in spirit as they strive to right the wrongs suffered by so many animals that have been lost, hurt, neglected or abused. Your donation of (amount) has been safely processed and will be a huge help in keeping our Inspectors out in the field."

Be a bit old fashioned

There's nothing more personal than a handwritten letter and for many it's a bit of a novelty. A well-composed, handwritten letter can be hugely powerful but if you can't write the whole letter by hand then just add a handwritten note to personalise it a little more. Taking time shows you care.

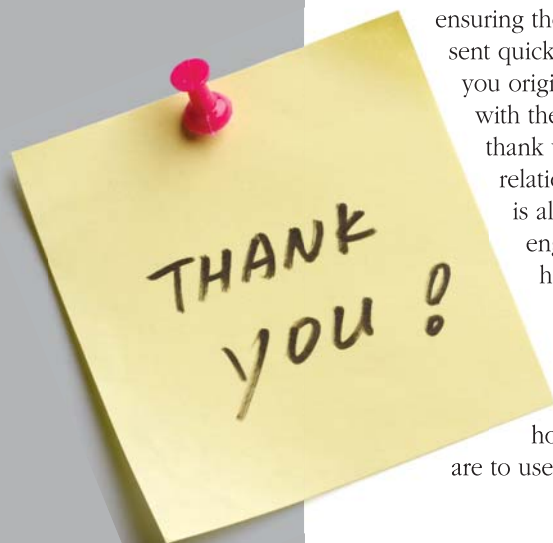
Who's doing the thanking?

It's always recommended that the thank you letter is signed by the head of the organisation, especially if that person signed the appeal letter. Also try to get your leadership team and board involved in thanking.

Learn from others

Thanks to websites like Sofii (www.sofii.org) there are lots of great examples on the Internet of how to do a better job of thanking. Plagiarism is not encouraged but replicating good practice is. Thanking doesn't need to be confined to the written message. Check out a video from Charity Water who dedicated a day to thanking their donors and then filmed it and shared it online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCSvXMTe1oY>

Sarah Scarth is a consultant at Downes Murray International, and is the Resource Alliance's Southern Africa area representative. ■



The best place to find new donor prospects

There are lots of ways to find new fundraising prospects for your organisation. In my experience the best way to find new prospects, though, is by seeking out referrals from your current donors, volunteers, board members, staff members and other supporters.

Good salespeople are constantly asking their current customers and others in their network for referrals . . . introductions to people that might also want to buy the product or service the salesman is selling. You'd be surprised at just how often current customers will refer new customers to their salesperson. In fact, in many businesses (such as real estate and insurance), referrals can make up a majority of a salesperson's new business each year.

Guess what? Referrals work well for non-profits, too. Great fundraising organisations are constantly asking current donors and supporters for introductions to new people who might be interested in supporting the organisation. When was the last time you asked your donors for referrals?

The second best place to find new donor prospects

Of course, referrals aren't the only great way to find new prospects. Another tactic that works extremely well for non-profits of all sizes is to hold "non-ask" events.

A non-ask event is an event, held by your non-profit, that targets donors and prospects, but does not include any fundraising ask or cost of admission for attendees. Non-ask events are sometimes called "Introductory Events," or "Point of Entry Events." The goal of these events is to introduce new prospects to your organisation without asking for money.

For non-ask events, the fortune is in the follow-up.

Once a prospect attends an event (your event can be as simple as a tour of your office, or as fancy as a cocktail party at a local restaurant) your staff can follow-up with them, cultivate them, and walk them down the donor funnel until they are ready for an ask.

Visit www.thefundraisingauthority.com ■

New donors are the lifeblood of any organisation. Joe Garecht shares some advice on where to find prospective supporters.

Proposals: there is no one-size-fits-all anymore

Google 'fundraising proposals' and you can expect to see 12 500 000 results. And as the saying goes: 'Ain't nobody got time for that.'

Truth is, there's as much written about proposals as there is about dieting. OK maybe not as much. But to get the real skinny on this subject, I attended Inyathelo's write shop on the role of proposals, brilliantly presented by Gillian Mitchell.

The 'Facts and Fallacies' part of the write shop highlighted some of the misguided notions that we have around proposals:

Myth 1: 'Your proposal is read from start to finish.'

If it's an unsolicited proposal, it's probably not going to be read at all. However, if it's submitted in response to a specific request, the chances of it being read are good. Hundreds, if not thousands, of proposals hit funders' desks every month. Only those that are highly relevant to their focus areas stand a chance of being looked at.

Myth 2: 'Long proposals are more successful than short ones.'

Gillian pointed out that the length of a proposal is not as important as the information

it contains. A sound plan, a need met and the impact demonstrated does not need dozens of pages. The proposal's format must align with donor requirements.

Myth 3: 'I only need one proposal that I can send to everyone.'

Just as every donor is different, every proposal should reflect a different donor worldview. Winning proposals support the donor's case for giving; they're not a 'cut and paste' exercise.

Myth 4: 'Grants are awarded to those with the greatest need.'

No. They're awarded to organisations whose work resonates with the donor – to NGOs that can deliver the services, solutions and benefits that the donor wants to achieve.

Lastly, wise words from Civicus: 'Don't start writing a funding proposal before you have done the necessary research, thinking and planning! If the donor can see that it's hastily written, without careful thought and planning, the relationship may be a very short one! Rather give the impression, based on fact, that you are thorough, careful and committed to doing a good job, right from the start.'

Visit [Inyathelo at www.inyathelo.org.za](http://www.inyathelo.org.za) ■

If you're using a cookie cutter approach to your proposals and firing off a standard version to all funders, stop. The days of a one-size-fits-all proposal are over, says DMI Communication and Partnership Manager, Marisol Gutierrez.

Dates to diarise

The Resource Alliance has partnered with top International Fundraising Congress speaker Alan Clayton to bring his world-class, two-day Great Fundraising Masterclass to South Africa.

“Great fundraising allows you to achieve audacious growth of your organisation’s mission,” says Sarah Scarth, the Resource Alliance’s Southern Africa area representative, and DMI Executive

Consultant. *“The masterclass is highly energetic and interactive, and will leave you inspired to pump up your fundraising.”*

The conference takes place on the 12 and 13 September 2017 at the University of Stellenbosch Business School in Bellville.

The cost is R1 600 for the full two days or R950 for one day (this same event normally sells for 10 times this price overseas). To book visit www.resource-alliance.org/south-africa

A five minute guide to making better fundraising asks

Lots of fundraisers get worried about making fundraising asks . . . they’re not sure of the best way to do it, they feel under-prepared for making in-person asks, and they get nervous when it comes time to “pop the question”.

Making asks in-person (and on the phone) is one of the most valuable skills any non-profit fundraiser can possess . . . and nothing moves a non-profit forward like sitting down with your donors to ask them for major gifts to your organisation.

If you’re not quite sure whether or not you are making the best asks possible . . . or you get nervous whenever you have to make an ask . . . here’s a quick, five minute guide to making better fundraising asks:

Always ask a question

If there’s one change you can make to your asking strategy that will have the most impact, this is it. Far too many fundraisers “make asks” without every really asking a question.

Have you ever found yourself making statements instead of asks? If you say things like, “I really hope you’ll consider making a gift to our organisation,” or, “please think about making a donation” then you are not making asks, you are making statements.

In order to be effective, asks need to be questions. After you make an ask, the donor should feel like he or she needs to respond with “yes” or “no.” If you’ve gotten into the habit of making statements, instead of asking a real, honest to goodness question, making this change could double the number of donations your organisation receives.

Always give a number

A second key component of making strong fundraising asks is always giving a number. This means that when you make an ask, you should be asking for a set amount.

Far too many fundraisers will ask a question like, “Would you be able to make a donation to our organisation today?” This

is good, because it is a question (not a statement) but because you aren’t asking for a set amount, chances are that when donors say yes they will end up donating far less than you had hoped.

How much should you ask for? That depends on your non-profit and what you know about the donor and his or her financial capacity.

Stop talking after your ask

Here’s a little secret from the business world: after you make your ask, stop talking. Don’t say a word. Let the donor be the next person to speak.

In fundraising, as in sales, the next person to talk after the ask usually “loses”. This means that if the donor is the next person to talk, they will usually say “yes”, even if it is to a lower amount or to making a gift over time. If the fundraiser is the next person to talk, they will usually start talking themselves out of a gift by backpedaling on the ask.

Remember – when a donor doesn’t immediately say something after an ask, it isn’t because they are mad or trying to squirm out of it. As a rule, they are almost always thinking about a way to say “yes”. They are thinking about whether they can afford the gift, whether or not they need to check with their spouse or business partner, where the money will come from, etc.

After you make your ask, stop talking, even if it seems uncomfortable, and let the donor think and answer.

Practice, practice, practice

My final tip is that if you feel nervous when making asks in-person or on the phone, the best way to get more comfortable is to practice. This means running through ask conversations in your head, practicing in front of a mirror, and holding practice conversations with your friends or other staff members.

Visit www.thefundraisingauthority.com

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FUNDRAISING THOUGHT LEADERS

Downes Murray International (DMI) are fundraising specialists, working with charities and non-government organisations of all kinds, to increase their fundraising effectiveness.

DMI offers feasibility studies, strategic planning workshops, direct mail fundraising, mail/phone, corporate and capital fundraising campaigns, online fundraising and website design, church fundraising, donor mapping, benchmarking and bequest promotion programmes.

In addition, DMI has close links with a number of fundraising consultancies across the globe, and represents DVA Navion International Consultancy in Africa, enabling DMI to keep a finger on the pulse of international trends and techniques. If interested or for more information, contact us at:

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