

How to Solicit a Gift

1. Be prepared. Know who you are soliciting. What are their interests? Which programs will most interest them? How much do they already know about your nonprofit?
2. **MAKE A PERSONAL VISIT.** Asking for a gift should be done in person, not over the phone.
3. Be prepared. Bring a small package of information along with a remittance envelope.
4. Be enthusiastic. Make a strong case for support.
5. Make a brief, clear, and concise presentation.
6. Be clear: Communicate how the money donated will be used.
7. Sell the unique value of your nonprofit to the community. Use emotion as well as fact. Talk about what the organization means to you and why you are involved.
8. Talk about your commitment. If your gift is similar in amount to what you would like your prospect to give, talk about your gift; state the amount.
9. If you are asking for a large gift, talk about other people who have made such gifts (only use information previous donors gave you permission to share). This encourages people to set their giving level higher than what they might have originally been considering. For example, "Ms. Evans just gave \$_____. Would you consider matching her gift?"
10. **MAKE THE ASK.** Be sure to ask the person you are talking with, "I would like for you to make a gift to our campaign. Would you be willing to contribute \$_____?"
11. Ask for a specific, reasonable, and challenging gift. If this is a new donor, ask for a gift amount you think he or she can afford. Think ahead of time about the amount you will ask for. It shouldn't be too small an amount, nor too large.
12. **Pause after you ask for the gift.** Do not rush to fill the silence. Give the person time to respond, for they will.
13. **When the person says YES,** thank them and ask how they would like to make their gift (check, credit card, online payment) and provide them with information on how to fulfill their pledge.
14. **If the person says NO to the ask amount,** ask what would be the right amount for them to give at this time.
15. If the person says this is not the right time for them to make a gift, ask what would be a good time.
16. Regardless of the outcome, thank the person you are talking with for their time.
17. After the meeting, send a thank you note regardless of whether a gift was made.
18. After the meeting, write up your notes from the meeting and send them to the fundraising office at your nonprofit.

Adapted from *The Fundraiser's Guide to Soliciting Gifts: Turning Prospects into Donors* by Melvin and Pearl Shaw.
Available at Amazon.com



FUNdraising Good Times

How to solicit a gift for a nonprofit

It's time to ask, but just exactly what do you say?

As the year comes to a close nonprofits look to board members, volunteers and donors to ask their friends, family members and colleagues to consider making a meaningful gift. You may have the internal fortitude to overcome your fear of asking (read, fear of rejection), but what exactly do you say and do?

Make your own gift first. As a volunteer fundraiser you need to make your own gift before you can ask someone else to give. If you're not willing to give, why should anyone respond to your ask? Consider sharing how much you gave and why. If you made a stretch in your giving, talk about what motivated you to do so.

Be prepared. As a solicitor you will need to "make the case" for why others should join you in giving. This means knowing the nonprofit's history, mission, successes, challenge areas and projected growth. Brush up on your facts (check out the website!). You'll want to be able to talk numbers and emotions. Depending on who you are talking with you may be asked to explain allocation of current funds, costs associated with growth, and revenue streams. At the same time you have to talk passionately from a feeling place about what the organization means to you and those served.

Don't hide behind email. If you're asked to solicit a meaningful gift, do it in person. Make an appointment, and make the reason for your meeting clear. For example, "Jane, can you join me for coffee on Friday? It will be my treat. I want to talk with you about the food bank." This allows your friend to begin thinking about how to respond. When its time for the meeting, get dressed up. This is a big deal. The money you raise makes a difference to the organization you represent. Mentally rehearse your conversation. Remember to arrive early and, after initial conversation, make the ask. Do not let too much time lapse before you bring up the subject of giving.

Prepare for objections. Your passion isn't an excuse for not knowing your facts. Make sure you are prepared to answer specific questions your colleagues may have. Put yourself in their shoes: what do you want to know before deciding whether or not to make a donation?

Ask for a specific amount. It's okay to ask. In fact, that's what fundraising is all about. Make sure you ask for a specific amount and then pause. Be quiet. Wait for the response. Don't rush to fill the silence. Your answer will come.



If you want more details, read our book *The Fundraiser's Guide to Soliciting Gifts: Turning Prospects into Donors* available through Amazon.com.



For help with your fundraising visit www.saadandshaw.com or call (901) 522-8727.