

# MAJOR GIFTS: 15 THINGS YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST KNOW ABOUT MAJOR GIFTS

## JUNE, 2013

### IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

**1. Make every major donor and prospect feel like they are center of the universe.** The more special attention you can give, the better they will feel about your organization. Strong relationships trump flashy presentation materials. Be genuinely interested in who they are, what they do, what they care about. Never take anyone for granted. You never know whom someone might know, or if a person has hidden assets.

**2. Involve them with your organization.** People support what they help to create. Engage your major donors and prospects as insiders, in the strategic thinking and aspirations of the organization. They will become more loyal to the organization and give more. Offer volunteer councils and/or expand your board committees to include non-board major donors.

**4. You will need a recognition and stewardship plan** that can be customized to the needs of specific donors. Some prefer anonymity, but most do not. What activities will inspire the next gift? Offer major donors special access to programs or projects.

**5. Focus on the quality of each relationship:** trust, mutual understanding, confidence, competence, caring, communication. Pay attention to geography. Different things are important to donors in various regions of the U.S.

**6. When cultivation ends and it is time to ask.** At what point do you ask for a gift? Match a prospect's interests with your organization's programs. Where should the ask take place? How should the meeting go? What is a good ask statement? Focus on what you can control, not what you cannot control.

**7. Choose the right partner for an ask.** Your board chair? Major gifts committee chair? CEO? Other staff member?

**8. LISTEN empathically.** Ask questions, record the answers, take action on what they want.

**9. Always have a "Plan B".** What are other possible funding opportunities for the prospect? Consider the possible responses and how do you handle each one. Find common ground: *I know how you feel, I felt the same way, but I have found...* Be aware of why and how "asks" can go wrong.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT LEADERSHIP

### **10. You can't do it alone; active engagement of the CEO and the Board of Directors is critical.**

Engage board members in cultivation events/visits and solicitation meetings. Give volunteer leaders the opportunity to show their dedication and commitment to the organization, and to provide an alternative viewpoint. Form a Major Gifts Committee. Read Rosie's Rules by John Rosenwald: <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/20/giving/when-rosie-asks-new-york-s-elite-can-t-say-no.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

**11. Know your case for support.** Know your two-minute pitch and paint the bigger picture. Present your organization's mission and programs; its revenue and expenses; its goals for the year; its vision for the next five years. Know what distinguishes your organization from others. Report on tangible results/outcomes often and with meaning.

**12. Build a strong, diverse major gifts culture in your organization.** Everyone in your organization is a fundraiser. Conduct a fundraising training not only for your board but also for every staff member in your organization. Advise on how to talk about your organization, and to think about whom they know who would be interested. Recruit a diverse staff and board to reach diverse donors.

**13. Manage your major gifts plan and yourself.** Implement your team plan and your personal plan. Know the work habits of top-performers. Have a good system. Create a funnel for donors to become major donors. Know Thy Donor. Research, research, research and show them you know them. Think birthday cards, anniversary cards, etc. Send notes of congratulations when they are in the news.

**14. Leverage your website.** Include a major donor section on your website where only they can access exclusive information, webcasts, photos, etc. Let them also create their own pages as testimonials.

**15. Have fun.** It's contagious. If for example your events are fun, your major donors will bring friends.

### FRDNY 2013 Major Gifts Track Chairs:

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