view from the EDGE

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Jim Shapiro | Shannon Barnes

Fundraising Messages that Work!

In recent years, the non-profit sector has given donors every reason to doubt the financial accountability and stewards of charitable organizations. Fraud at the CEO level to front line workers stealing money from the donation call centers after hurricane Katrina – donors are weary and cautious about giving money to charity.

A recent *Harris Interactive DonorPulse Survey* found that 32% of American adults have less than positive feelings towards charities. Only 1-in-10 strongly agrees that charitable organizations are honest and ethical in their use of donated funds. (Now combine this data with a struggling economy, weak housing market, and high cost of living!)

To retain existing donors (and acquire new ones), charitable organizations need to change the way they communicate. Here are four tips to help your organization speak in "visible" terms as you seek to connect with donors during this challenging time economic time.

1. Inventory the ways (email, text, documents, fax, phone, etc.) your staff, volunteers, clients, board members, and donors communicate.
2. Develop a standard for communicating your charity's mission when communicating to internal and external stakeholders.
3. Be prepared to tell those who will listen, who you are, what you do, how you do it, and where it's being done.
4. Use the "you test." Use a red pen to circle the number of times you use some form of the word "you" in your communications. If your message is full of "you" words, you are connecting with the reader on a personal level. If not, change your language from internal focus to external donor and mission focus.

Conclusion; It's important for those representing your charity to speak in clear, visible, concise terms that are framed with mission and outcome (your charitable story) concepts. Clear "messages" will help you keep the donors you have, while attracting new ones. JS

October EDGE Events

Webinar 1:
High-Impact Leadership, part 1
October 8, 1:30 p.m.

Webinar 2:
The Power of Pledge Giving
October 22, 1:30 p.m.

Get information and register for these free webinars at www.theEDGEgroup.org/events

The 3-Minute EDGE
Straight to your computer or mp3 player, this weekly podcast is packed with tips to help you lead and fund your organization. Sign-up at today at www.theEDGEgroup.org.

Website information
Our website has resources for your benefit. Check it out at *www.theEDGEgroup.org.*

Book Recommendation
The Invisible Touch: Four Keys to Modern Marketing by Harry Beckwith. Beckwith discusses the fallacies of marketing and delivers sound principles for determining price factors, developing a brand, creating packaging that works and building client relationships.

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The Power of a Pledge

Charities are always looking for ways to increase donor income, especially from major donors. There are several ways to increase income from donors, including but not limited to, increasing individual donor gift size and/or frequency.

A simple way to encourage donors to give more to your organization throughout the year is to leverage the power of pledge commitments. Consider this example. Donor John Sample has given your charity $1000 every year for the last 3 years. If you ask him for a 3-year pledge of $1,500 each year and he agrees – you not only have an “agreement” for three years of donations, but you also will have increased his annual giving by $500 and his long-term donor value to your charity by $1,500!

Pledge programs are a simple, yet powerful way to increase current giving, create long-term pledge receivables (great for budgeting purposes!) and increase the life value of the donor to your charity.

All you need to do ask your donors to make a greater individual commitment over a longer period of time. JS

Plan for the Plan – A Guide for Executive Leaders

Don’t kid yourself – strategic planning and execution is hard work. Over 90% of well-conceived strategies are never implemented. In most organizations, strategic execution is the responsibility of the executive leader. But how can you work on the organization while manage all the day-to-day details at the same time? Here are a couple ideas to keep you sane, and your plan moving forward.

Set up performance metrics that are tied to relatively short time periods. Don’t make annual targets – it’s too easy to drift over the course of the year. Design your objectives so that your progress is quickly evident and advises you on how to adjust longer term strategies.

Every month at a fixed day and time, make an appointment with yourself to evaluate progress and adjust your plan. Make this appointment in your calendar, well in advance, and keep it! This is your time to work on managing your organization and it deserves priority.

Set up this appointment just as you would a client meeting, with an agenda, collection of relevant data, invited guests (maybe your board chair or advisor?) and a list of expected outcomes. Leave the appointment with a list of action items for your next check-in meeting with yourself.

Make your strategy a regular priority. You won’t regret it! SDB

the EDGE group
Finding a better way to do more good

Charity

Charity is a supreme virtue, and the great channel through which the mercy of God is passed on to mankind. It is the virtue that unites men and inspires their noblest efforts.

Conrad Hilton