

FUNdraising Good Times: Mutuality: A must in fundraising

Written by Mel and Pearl Shaw
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As you prepare for your next meeting with a current or potential donor, funder or sponsor we suggest focusing on what you want to learn from the meeting. This is distinctly different from a focus on what you want to share. Of course you need to be prepared to discuss the accomplishments, challenges, and vision of the nonprofit organization or institution you represent. But that is not enough. As you prepare determine what you want to accomplish as a result of the meeting, which three pieces of information you want to share, what you would like to learn, and how you can engage the person you are meeting with.

Here's what you don't want: a one-sided meeting where you share all the wonderful things your nonprofit has accomplished followed by an ask for a gift or involvement. You definitely don't want a meeting where you talk about all the challenges that are threatening your nonprofit. Even if you were to walk away with a big check, we believe you would have neglected to secure the most valuable resource: the birth or growth of a mutually beneficial relationship.

Here's an alternative: Engage your current and prospective donors in meaningful conversation. Think about it this way: if you were going out to lunch with a friend, would you want to spend all of your time hearing about how wonderful she is? Wouldn't you want her to ask about you, your successes, your challenges? Maybe you want the opportunity to congratulate her on her successes, to connect her with likeminded men and women, or to offer guidance for how she can grow to the next level. If she does all the talking, you leave without having shared your suggestions for how she can experience even more success.

Here are a few questions you can consider including in your conversation: From your vantage point, what do you see as our strengths? Our challenges? How does our work fit with what you are seeking to achieve through your philanthropy? Do you have suggestions or guidance you could offer on how we could sustain and grow our organization? What trends are you seeing nationally? How are these manifesting in our community?

Practice having a conversation with another member of your board or a fellow volunteer. Make a video so you can review your presentation and make appropriate adjustments. Practice until you like what you see and hear. Leave room in the conversation - and in your heart – for guidance and suggestions. Know when to be quiet. Listen.

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The more people feel they can help you succeed the more successful you can be. You can accomplish more with others than you can on your own.

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Mel and Pearl Shaw help nonprofit organizations grow their fundraising. Services include coaching, campaign preparation and proposal writing. Learn more at www.saadandshaw.com.