

# Top 10 Fundraising Tips for Nonprofits

## Ways to Encourage Financial Support in a Down Economy

**1. Personalize your fund raising approach.** Don't treat donations as a business transaction. Remember that donations are gifts, not payment of invoices. In a tough economy, people will jettison unnecessary "bills" so they can pay the "real" costs of living. Don't make your solicitation into an obligation. Serve all donors as you would a family or friend, including your corporate supporters.

**2. Pursue meaningful contact with donors.** Make sure you thank donors for their gifts, but just as important, tell donors how their contribution has made a difference to your organization. If donors see "their dollars at work," they are more likely to keep your nonprofit in mind when it comes time to make donations.

**3. Offer matching grants.** Ask a loyal donor or funder to provide a match as a challenge to your donors. Works even better when you have a "physical object" to receive the benefit of your campaign (new roof, publishing project, new program start-up funds).

**4. Look for ways to save money on fund raising.** Trim special event expenses or eliminate programs that aren't serving you well. Look for ways to move your communications online. Freeze salaries. Ask vendors and consultants for "recession-pricing," or a short-term pricing cut.

**5. Seek alternatives to soliciting private donations.** Can you rent some of your space to another organization? Start a social enterprise? Develop a cause-marketing partnership with a corporation?

**6. Collaborate to raise money.** Work with like-minded or geographically-similar organization for a joint project. You can hold a larger, better event and get more attention. Local sponsors are more likely to support a joint event (under the theory that they will only be solicited once for sponsorship).

**7. Scale back ambitious campaigns,** but don't give up on them. Reduce fund raising goal, increase time between larger projects, but continue to celebrate and promote your big projects.

**8. Avoid emergency solicitations.** Don't present yourself in "panic-mode" to funders. Instead, tell people how the economy is affecting your mission and the people you serve, and show how you are changing your operations to account for the change in the economy – but emphasize how you still need public support.

**9. Shore up relations with grant makers.** Foundations and larger funders are scaling back or temporarily eliminating grant programs. Continue good relationships with them, so you can be the first to know when the grant dollars will be renewed.

**10. Look for ways donors can give value other than money.** Donations of goods and services (things and time) instead of money can help a nonprofit continue operations with less cash flow. Consider letting your donors know that you can accept cashed-out airline miles, coupons or certificates for office supplies or other "value-enhanced" purchasing incentives.

**BONUS: Always say THANK YOU!** A big reason that donors stop giving is because they feel unappreciated. Appreciated donors are repeat donors.

Some material excerpted from The Chronicle of Philanthropy, "Recession Strategies," February 24, 2009.