

the
MIND
of the
PARENT
and
ALUMNI
DONOR



Generis

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O GIVE MONEY AWAY IS AN EASY MATTER
AND IN ANY MAN'S POWER. BUT TO
DECIDE TO WHOM TO GIVE IT AND HOW
LARGE AND WHEN, AND FOR WHAT PUR-
POSE AND HOW, IS NEITHER IN EVERY
MAN'S POWER NOR AN EASY MATTER.

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NOT ALL GIVERS

A R E T H E S A M E

You have carefully crafted the financial appeal in email form. It is informative and, if you do say so yourself, inspiring. It does not focus on need but opportunity. You offer specific examples of how this program is cost-effective, unique, and clearly meeting a need that closely aligns with your organization's mission. You are bold and clear in asking for a gift, and yet you appropriately express empathy for the recipient of the letter and reliance upon God

to enable this particular program to go forward. The graphics are professional and compelling, but not excessive. You wait expectantly. Three weeks later, it is time to review the responses. Your IT department verifies that of the one thousand emails sent, only 38 percent of the emails were even opened! Ugh! But what about the gifts? How many came in and what do they total? How did people respond to the appeal?

H E R E ' S A N E M A I L R E S P O N S E

It says, in part, “Thanks for your informative email. I’ve thought for a long time you should be doing something like this. Hope this gift of \$250 helps.” Not bad, you think, spirits lifted. In fact, this is great.

THEN YOU LOOK AT RESPONSE NUMBER TWO:

“Why do you keep sending me emails begging for money? Don’t I give you enough already? I’ve received six appeals for funds from you in the past two months. How much are all these appeals costing you, anyway?” Yikes, you say to yourself, I’d better figure out what’s going on there!

RESPONSE

NUMBER THREE:

“Please call me. I have a few questions regarding how this program works. I’d like to consider an investment over the next couple of years.” Sweet!

THEN, RESPONSE NUMBER FOUR:

“I wish I could give, but I’m on a fixed income and I just cannot this year. Please know that I care about your work and pray for you regularly.”

RESPONSE

NUMBER FIVE:

“That’s it. Take me off your list. You are always asking for money, but when I wrote your CEO with a complaint last year, I didn’t even get a response. Why should I care about an organization that is unresponsive to me?”



IN TOTAL:



620

people didn't even bother
to open the email, but

157


responded with gifts, totaling

\$18,780

dollars

NOT BAD!

But, over half who read the appeal gave nothing, and three people were offended by the contact and asked never to be contacted again. How can this be? The truth is, not all givers are the same. There are at least four kinds of givers, and the more we understand about their attitudes and habits of giving, the better we can anticipate and appropriately address the mind of the donor.



T H E R E A R E A T L E A S T FOUR KINDS OF GIVERS

Count on it: your givers and potential givers are not all alike. In fact, they break down into four kinds of givers: gifted, thoughtful, casual, and reluctant. If you treat every constituent as part of a homogeneous group, it might be easier, but it is a big mistake that can cost you wasted time, money and opportunity. The more we recognize the different kinds of donors, and meet them at their level

of need and expectation, the more worthy we will become of their support. We will have also transcended mere fundraising and helped to grow givers in God's kingdom.

Let's look at the four kinds of givers in your universe of donors, and discover how to engage them appropriately— for their own good, and for the good of your organization.

T H E GIFTED GIVER

It was at the dedication of a new building at the Christian college. The delight of the students and faculty was palpable. Over a hundred donors and friends had joined the joyful celebration. The building would serve many generations of students, and there was an appropriate sense of thanksgiving to God for what had been accomplished through His people. One of the attending guests was the largest donor to the building. In fact, the building would still be a dream if not for the large and sacrificial gift he and his wife made. We would have joyfully named the facility in thanksgiving for their stewardship, but they would have none of it. Based on the way they carried themselves that day,

no one would have suspected they were the primary donors to the project. But halfway through the reception, the husband called me into one of the brand-new conference rooms. I remember thinking, *This is odd — I hope we have not done something to disappoint this remarkable couple.* Imagine my surprise when the first words out of his mouth were, “What’s next?” It was immediately clear to me what he was suggesting. This project was complete. But even before the celebration was over, he wanted to know what was on the horizon for the organization that their future stewardship could influence. That is a gifted giver!

THE GIFTED GIVER IS RARE, INDEED.

It is very likely that you could name the gifted givers to your organization on one or two hands, even though the gifted giver aligns most closely with the biblical examples of true givers. They may comprise only 2 to 5 percent of your givers. The gifted giver seldom needs to be asked. As in the illustration above, the gifted giver does not need to be reminded of the obligation and joy of giving. He or she has already settled the question of joyful and abundant giving. The only remaining decision is, “To whom should I give from the resources God has entrusted to me?” For the gifted giver, giving itself is a joy and a blessing that cannot be measured. The deep satisfaction of “storing up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Matthew 6:20) far outstrips any fear of loss of temporal security. That deep, full joy is easily discernible by the ease with which the funds are released, and the peace that is evident in the act of giving. And giving is not out of income alone. Gifted givers often reach into their asset base—their net worth—to invest in the causes they care about. Their primary calculation is this: “how much of God’s money should I keep?” This kind of giving is rare, indeed, but it is what true giving should be, and you have gifted givers who love your ministry!

ENGAGING THE GIFTED GIVER.

First, identify who the gifted givers are. By and large, they will not be hard to find. That is because there are so few of them and because gifted givers tend to make themselves known by their giving and their genuine interest in building Christ's kingdom through your ministry. Once identified, they are cause for thanksgiving to God. He has placed a handful of men and women in the orbit of your organization who can make a huge difference in the pursuit of your mission.

Also, mature givers tend to be people of great wisdom and spiritual depth. Spending time with them will strengthen and encourage you as a faithful follower of Christ. They will also lend wisdom and direction to your organization. In short, know who they are, stay close to them, and be willing to learn from them. Consult them often. You will have uncovered a deep resource of wisdom and resources for the fulfillment of your mission.

T H E THOUGHTFUL GIVER

Then there is the thoughtful giver. This category is much larger than your gifted givers. They may comprise 15 to 25 percent of givers to your organization. The thoughtful giver is profoundly aware of God's call on all of their life, possessions included. What differentiates the gifted giver from the thoughtful one is the ease with which they give of their resources. For the thoughtful giver, the pleasure of giving is tinged with a sense of obligation upon the follower of Christ. While they willingly put themselves in situations where they can be exposed to giving opportunities in the kingdom, it is often the nature of the appeal and their

current circumstances that dictate whether and how much they choose to give. Giving is calibrated to current income, and rarely involves lowering their net worth to fund what they care about. They have joy in giving, to be sure, but often lack unbridled delight in investing resources for kingdom purposes. The difference from the gifted giver is a matter of degree, and it can be described as the difference between a totally open hand (the gifted giver) and the occasionally open hand of the thoughtful donor. Their calculation is, "How much of God's money should I give back to Him?"

ENGAGING THE THOUGHTFUL GIVER

Of course, the thoughtful givers in your orbit must be identified. But, they will not be as obvious to you as the gifted givers. While they may seek opportunities to invest in the Kingdom, they almost certainly are investing in many other organizations: their church, human needs, and education, among others. But if the thoughtful donor does look for opportunities to invest and takes joy in their giving, it is important for those charged with raising funds for ministry to identify who they are, provide opportunities for them to hear your story, and winsomely challenge them to invest in your cause. It is with the thoughtful givers that those responsible for getting can have the most influence—and will wisely spend the most amount of time. It is of utmost importance to identify this significant group among those who care for your cause. They are, by and large, the ones who have already given. They also tend to reach out with questions or suggestions. The thoughtful giver will be responsive to opportunities to hear the vision of your organization. But that, of course, requires that you have a coherent story to tell and an accessible venue in which to tell that story. It also requires willingness to call the thoughtful giver to action on behalf of your cause. By and large, thoughtful givers need to be asked. There is genuine opportunity to move them to become gifted givers as you engage with them and call them to the joy of giving.

THE CASUAL GIVER

There is an even larger group of givers, those we will call casual givers. This group likely comprises your largest group of givers, perhaps 35 to 50 percent of them. They possess a vague understanding of their obligation to be faithful and generous stewards of their resources, but rarely seek out opportunities to give. Instead they usually give in response to a specific request. They most commonly respond to your direct mail appeals. Their giving tends to be more out of obligation than joy. They are less likely to have had gifted giving modeled to them by family or close

friends. They are more captivated by possessions and financial security than the gifted or thoughtful giver. The ask is more important to their decision than it is for more mature givers, and they often have a tendency to be wary of the solicitor and less trusting of the organization they are giving to. Their joy in giving is often tempered by the possible consequences of parting with personal possessions. Their giving calculation is, “How much of my money should I give to Kingdom priorities?”

ENGAGING THE CASUAL GIVER

The casual givers to your organization are, like the thoughtful giver, identifiable. They have likely given a gift to you in the past, or may even be current donors, although most likely at a modest level. The great opportunity with the casual giver is growing them into thoughtful or gifted givers. Any gift to your organization, whether current or the distant past, indicates a level of awareness and involvement that can be built upon.

The casual giver, by definition, has at least a vague notion of their stewardship responsibility and has acted upon that at least once on behalf of your organization. That should be a great encouragement and opportunity for growth. How can a casual giver be nurtured toward becoming a thoughtful or even gifted giver? Perhaps the greatest opportunity is dialogue. Does the casual giver truly know why you exist and what ultimate value would be missing if you did not? Do they know how their gift matters to your mission? Do they remember why they gave to you in the first place? Does the reason for their lapsed or casual giving have more to do with how the organization stewarded their gift than the giver's heart toward the kingdom? Does the essence of your mission even come close to the animating passion of their stewardship? What are their own convictions about stewardship in the kingdom?

THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS

Might come from some sort of survey instrument but, frankly, probably require a conversation. That, of course, is painstaking work. But it is an important responsibility of those of us who are called to gather funds for the sake of the kingdom.

There is another way a casual giver can grow into a more mature giver, and that is by more fully understanding the stewardship dimensions of being a follower of Christ. The day is long past when we can assume that all who have the capacity and potential will to give to kingdom causes were taught well in their homes and in their churches. Many adults who are followers of Christ were not raised in homes with Christian values. Sadder still, many who were raised in Christian homes had poor mentoring from their parents. And many would say that the church has largely abdicated its responsibility to teach “the whole counsel of God,” particularly in the area of financial stewardship.

This offers at least two opportunities for the Christian organization. Individual visits can be an important opportunity to share principles of the joy and responsibility to give to the kingdom. Interacting with casual donors about giving is a perfect opportunity to encourage donors to be “rich toward God.”

Generis exists to educate and inspire Christians in radical and generous giving to the kingdom. We can help you create opportunities to grow Christians from reluctant or casual givers to thoughtful or gifted ones. Linking donors and potential donors to such resources takes the motive for encouraging generous giving away from a singular goal of meeting one organization’s needs to the much more important goal of growing stewards to Christ’s kingdom.

THE RELUCTANT GIVER

There is, alas, a fourth kind of giver, one we will call the reluctant giver. This may be an overly generous description, because many in this category give very little of their resources for any charitable purpose. Their approach to giving mirrors that of our culture in general: “my money is my business.”

Unfortunately, this category of giver may represent as much as a third of any congregation or constituency of a Christian organization. The reasons are multiple and complex. It could be the result of poor modeling by parents or other significant mentors. It might be the result of poor financial management in general (one whose expenses exceed resources is not in the frame of mind or of the capacity to give). It could be a result of the poisonous (and sub-Christian) attitude that “my resources are mine, and nobody else has a claim on them.” It is this group of people who are often the first to be offended by being asked for a gift, even to a very worthy cause.

ENGAGING THE RELUCTANT GIVER

Reluctant givers are a tough group to reach, and we may be tempted to write them off as immature givers who “just don’t get it.” It is often this group that expresses disgust with fundraising “tactics.” A veteran fundraiser I know well used to say, “Some people would simply rather be mad than give.” I must confess, I’ve discovered that most of the people who declare, “I’m never giving another gift to your organization,” have actually yet to give their first gift! While organizations must be careful of the time and other resources given to growing people in their understanding of stewardship, it is worth the effort to grow reluctant givers.

Beyond the measures described in the previous section on winning the casual giver, the reluctant giver must be seen as one who is just as precious in the sight of God as the gifted giver—they simply have not grown to a level of maturity incumbent upon the follower of Christ. Seize every opportunity to demonstrate patience and grace, maybe not for the financial advancement of your organization, but for the sake of the growth and maturity of a fellow traveler in the kingdom. It is often only through the act of giving that growth in the joy of generosity can happen.

CONCLUSION

Your ministry has gifted, thoughtful, casual, and reluctant givers or potential givers. Treating all constituents as a homogeneous group might be easier, but we do so at our own peril. We will likely be wasting our time and effort if we do not take the time to differentiate the kind of giver we are working with. The more we recognize the different kinds of donors, and meet them at their level of need and expectation, the more effective we will be. We will have also transcended mere fundraising and helped to grow givers in God's kingdom.

HOW GENERIS CAN HELP

We at Generis exist to Accelerate Generosity toward God-Inspired Vision in Churches, Christian Education and Non-Profit Organizations. We have a proven track record of results and have been blessed to help faith-based organizations raise over \$6.1 billion for kingdom expansion. If you would like more information on how we can help you succeed, please click [HERE](#) to let us know how we can help!



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