

# THE ART OF ASKING

## Fundraising for associations



FUNDRAISING SHOULD REALLY JUST BE CALLED ASKING. IF YOU DON'T ASK, YOU DON'T GET, BUT MERELY ASKING IS NOT ENOUGH. IN THIS DECADE THE MOST IMPORTANT DONORS ARE THE MARKETING SAVVY BABY BOOMERS AND THE 'TRUST NO-ONE' GENERATION X&Y WILL BE SNAPPING AT THEIR HEELS SOON ENOUGH. IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER TO HAVE A CONVINCING CASE FOR SUPPORT. IN THIS SECOND OF A TWO-PART SERIES, TOM EELES EXPLAINS HOW TO MAKE YOUR CASE FOR SUPPORT AND THE UNIVERSE OF DONORS.

TEXT TOM EELES, KENES ASSOCIATIONS WORLDWIDE

### CHECKING YOUR HOMEWORK



Tom Eeles

For those who didn't follow up on April's top tips, or missed the article, here's a quick recap:

+ A fundraiser is a facilitator; bringing together people who want to give money and people who have a need for it

- + Your website is the front door to your association, it needs to show donors that you are active, focused and effective
- + Focus on doing one thing very well, when your website is excellent then move into social media
- + With meeting income and membership dues under pressure, now is the time to diversify your association income

### BUILDING A CASE FOR SUPPORT

Your association is wonderful. It has lots of happy members, great meetings and senior volunteers who give a lot of time to the

cause. So why do you need a case for support? 'Case for support' is fundraising jargon for some writing and images that you can use to tell people that your association is so wonderful that they should give money to it. Your case for support should inform your marketing and communication strategies; the messages should be used consistently in your website, newsletter, annual report and meetings. Think of it like a briefcase full of convincing arguments that you can pull out at any time to help you do the important thing - asking.

To build a case for support start with a big blank piece of A3 paper and ask and answer the following types of questions: What is the problem that needs fixing? Is it urgent? What's the solution? Is that solution innovative? Why is your organisation uniquely positioned to provide that solution? For example a small, cheap widget that saves lives is about to become so strictly regulated that it becomes too expensive to produce. It's an urgent crisis because without it lives will be lost. Your association has thousands

of survivors whose lives were saved by said widget and you have great experience in public campaigning and lobbying regulators. Your association has approached Facebook and got some pro bono work to build a campaign that will ultimately save lives.

Now turn the page over and focus on how it will be done. Will you use volunteers? Where and when will the solution be implemented? How do you propose to finance the budget? How will success be measured?

With both sides of the paper full of brainstorms you are ready to write up longer answers of three to four sentences. Use facts and figures from citable sources. Get images, quotes, testimonies and endorsements. Eventually you will have a document that is flexible and can be used to prompt and answer questions from prospective donors. You could distil this into some copy for a donation page on your website, have twenty seconds of dialogue ready for an elevator pitch or answer questions in a grant application for that shiny new project that needs funding.

## WHO TO ASK?

Association executives and volunteers are by nature multi-skilled multi-taskers. With competing pressures on your time and energy, your fundraising mottos should be twofold: KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) and don't ask, don't get.

## INDIVIDUALS

The first group of people to ask are those who already know and love your association. Your members. Seem counter-intuitive? It's not really. Experienced members who value your association and what it has done for them will want to give back for the next generation. If you can't convince them to donate, then it's going to be hard to convince a stranger. In your communication messages consider that you have two key audiences; your members and the lay public. Your case for support needs to have messages that talk to both audiences.

The majority of donors will be baby boomers who are marketing savvy, they don't trust marketing (because they understand what it is) and they rely on peer recommendation to make their purchasing decisions. Generation X&Y are the 'trust no-one' generation; they form their opinions even more harshly. The best way to communicate with both groups is to use lots of images and case studies that demonstrate impact. Then support these with examples that demonstrate that people like them give money to your association and enjoy seeing the impact their donation has. Once they have donated rather than 'saying' thank you, 'show' them thank you by sending case reports with photos. And don't be afraid to ask them again in the future.

There are multiple ways to raise money from individuals; writing letters, encouraging legacies or asking people to organise fundraising events. But to keep it simple I would recommend consistently asking for support in all of your current publications. Report project success in your newsletter and ask for dona-

tions, have a donate button on your website, ask your Board to lead the way and make a donation. By being consistent, but changing the messages and projects regularly, you make people aware that the association needs money and will value their donation.

## COMPANIES AND FOUNDATIONS

Companies can be split into two groups; the first are closely connected with the field your association operates in, the second with your cause e.g. if the mission of your association is to tackle obesity, then your 'donor circles'

to go fishing in could include fitness companies, low salt food manufacturers and health insurance companies. If you're working with companies it make sense to have an ethical fundraising policy that defines the types of relationships you want to have, this will also reassure members.

A couple of words of caution regarding company fundraising. Firstly they have PR budgets to make small donations seem bigger than they really are; companies are not always the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Secondly, really understand why they are doing it. There is a thin line between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and PR and that line has become even more blurred in the current financial climate. If the company has marketing objectives in relation to donating to your association (they will), make sure you know them and feel comfortable that they are mutually compatible with your ambitions. If not, walk away.

## RECOMMENDED READING

- + *The Complete Fundraising Handbook* by Nina Botting and Michael Norton
- + *The Porcupine Principle* by Jonathan Farnhill
- + *Effective Fundraising* by Luke Fitzherbert

All available for purchase at <http://www.dsc.org.uk/Publications>

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Foundations are the fundraiser's mecca. They are set up to give away money to a cause like yours. Always remember that eventually a person makes a donation decision, the money comes from a foundation but it still requires you to convince another human being. Foundation professionals see hundreds of applications like yours, so take time to properly understand them and their guidelines. Always call them first and clarify that your project meets their aims, it starts an invaluable relationship building process. Make sure you write to the individual, appeal to their emotions.

[www.uia.org](http://www.uia.org)

To learn more about fundraising for your association, drop a line with any questions to [teeles@kenes.com](mailto:teeles@kenes.com) or check out the recommended reading.