

FUNDRAISING FUNDAMENTALS

TOP TEN TIPS
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1. **Ask.** Your job is to ask. The person you ask – their job is to decide. People will not give if they are not asked.
2. **Thank.** The most important words in fundraising are “Thank you.” Thank them immediately in person when they give. Write a personalized thank-you note immediately after you meet with them. Thanking donors affirms their gift.
3. **Build relationships.** So much about fundraising is relationships. People give to people. People will want to support your cause because they want to support you. These include family, friends, neighbors, coworkers and many more.
4. **It’s an ongoing process.** Once people have supported your cause, continue to steward that relationship by sending them updates, inviting them to events, meeting with them, sending newspaper clippings and asking for their feedback. The folks who are most likely to give large gifts to your organizations are folks who already give.
5. **Nine “no”s before a yes.** Don’t be afraid if someone you ask says no. Respect their response and ask if you can keep them informed of your organization and ask at a future date.
6. **Develop your case first.** Before you start asking for money, it’s important that you have a strong case for your organization that includes getting your organization’s leadership to agree on the following: your mission, goals, objectives, history, structure, fundraising plan and budget. Donors will want to know this information.
7. **Research, network & cultivate.** Every year, you’ll likely lose some of your donors. That’s why it’s important to constantly work to develop potential new donors. Much of this is done when you and your organizations staff and board meet folks at various events around town. Anyone that expresses some interest in your cause is a potential donor.
8. **Diversify your funding base.** Be careful about having more than 30% of your income from one funding source, or more than half of your organization’s income coming from one sector like the government or foundations. Sudden changes to their giving could potentially rock your nonprofit’s world.
9. **Diversify your fundraisers.** Fundraising generates the strongest results when lots of people in the organization are involved in the process – the Executive Director, Development Staff (if there are any), every member of the Board of Directors in some way and volunteers.
10. **It’s a learning process.** We learn fundraising by doing it. We get more comfortable asking for money by asking for it. We get better at it by reflecting on how we did and constantly learning new ways to do it better.

FUNDRAISER’S TO-DO LIST

- Write down a list of everyone you know who might believe in your cause and has the capacity to make a gift.
- Have your organization’s Board and staff create similar lists (fun to do this together!).
- Send these folks a letter, follow up with a phone call, and ask to meet them in person to ask for a gift.
- Practice asking for money before you do it for real.
- Whatever organization you are trying to raise money for, be sure to make a gift to them yourself.
- Think about ways you can involve donors in your organization—any good volunteer opportunities?
- When asking for money, be confident, look the person in the eye, ask for a specific amount and then be silent until they respond.
- Remember the first three letters of FUNdraising!

Ron Milam has over 14 years of experience facilitating meetings and developing leadership for over 50 organizations.

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