

How to Ask for a Gift

Asking for money is perhaps the most feared task of every board member and volunteer. However, if asks aren't made, contributions aren't given. To that end, here are a few steps to consider as you approach making the "Ask" to potential donors.

1. **Handle Potential Donors ONE at a time.** Don't worry about any other gift except the one you are soliciting at that moment.
2. **Maintain the Sequence: It Works.** Complete the appropriate cultivation steps before asking:
 - a. Contact and establish/reestablish rapport,
 - b. "Light" close: *"Are you willing to donate?"*
 - c. "Heavy" close, using: *"What donor giving level are you considering?"*
3. **Stick to the Strategy.** Do your soliciting during the designated period of time as identified per each donor prospect's strategy. It will help motivate you and keep you on a specific plan.
4. **Be Your Own Best Prospect.** Your gift in relation to your capability to give may be the measure your prospects will use to determine their gifts.
5. **Know the Project and Organization Cold.** Study the promotional materials, programs, and talking points and use them to illustrate your points. If a question is asked for which you do not have an answer, contact Pete.
6. **Believe in the Project** and talk convincingly. Assume the prospective donor knows little or nothing about the funding drive. Point out to the prospect how this drive will affect the organization, both now and in the future. Remember to communicate that the gift is essential to the overall success of the organization and, more importantly, those impacted by our programs.
7. **Go First to Those You Know Will Give.** Benjamin Franklin said: "I advise you to apply first to those you know will give; next, to those you are uncertain will give anything or not, show them the list of those who have given; and lastly, do not neglect those who you are sure will give nothing, for in some of them you may be mistaken." It's important to keep each prospect's strategy as your guide.
8. **Ask for the Right Amount.** While no one should try to dictate to another how much to donate, prospects usually appreciate a suggestion. Think of yourself as a partner in helping the prospect decide what is best, in other words, when you ask for a gift, ask for a specific amount. We ask for what a prospect is capable of, not necessarily what the prospect is willing to give. If you don't know the most appropriate amount to ask (if the number is not predetermined), contact Pete.
9. **Never Argue, Always Agree.** Affirm any objection or criticism. Back off and suggest you will find the answer to the prospect's questions or objections, or calmly elicit specific objections and ask what could be done to overcome them. Talk 10%, listen 90%.
10. **Don't Sweat the Small Stuff.** Some prospects will not give. Some will be hostile. You'll be disappointed in some. Don't worry about it - it is normal. The numbers will work out if you make the solicitations you've agreed to.
11. **Report Your Progress to Pete.** Call or email Pete for every contact, no matter how brief or seemingly insignificant. If a prospect tells you how much he/she will give, notify Pete immediately. If a donor says he/she will make an online donation, email the link to your funding page.
12. **Have Fun.** This is not supposed to be torture, or painful in any way. Enjoy the process as much as you will enjoy the result. Cut up, crack jokes, share your passion, and try not to take yourself or any of this too seriously. Have a good time!
13. **Say Thank You.** Whether the prospect donates or not, it's always good to say thank you. This will be particularly helpful for future contribution, volunteerism, and/or general participation.