

## **What I've Learned . . .**

### ***. . . from nonprofits hoping for more money to do more work***

By Frances Cone Caldwell, Principal, GoTap Consulting

I'm a seasoned, well accomplished "fundraiser" who believes that word tells us nothing about the work of successfully funding great causes.

#### **Two critical tips for successfully funding your organization**

1. **Relationships:** keep them personal in every way possible. The better you know your donors and their interest in your organization, the higher their gifts will be.
2. **Communication:** it is critical to tirelessly communicate how your organization is changing the world. We used to say thank a donor seven times for a gift but you should say "thank you" once and tell each donor six times what you are doing with their money. Effective use of personal interaction, social media, your website, and appropriate mailings are necessary.

#### **The Does and Don'ts**

##### **1. Do:**

- Meet your donor face to face after you've learned as much as possible about the donor's interests, family, hobbies, age, etc.
- A phone call is fine for setting up the appointment, it is absolutely **not** the time to ask for money.
- Special Events are great to reach people. The best are thank you events with dynamite testimonials about how your organization has made a difference in the world. If the event isn't going to inspire pride and giving, then you should go back to the drawing board.
- On generational giving – for decades people have looked at generations as a quick way to appeal to "like" people. I am here to tell you, not all millennials are alike, not all baby boomers are alike, not all GenXs are alike. Generational appeals are busy work that are expensive. Your funds are better used to host events that show off your work to a diverse crowd.
- With everything you send to donors, always communicate how their money is making a difference – use pictures and simple facts - cut the words.
- Stay on top of three types of gifts: annual, capital, planned end-of-life gifts.

##### **2. Don't:**

- Assume everyone knows about your organization.

- Think people give to a sinking ship. Forget appeals of desperation.
- Send out an appeal without compelling and recent information about your organization.
- Write a lot of words – we are living in a sound bite world and if your appeal has a lot of words, it will hit the trash can before it's read.
- Forget to ask established donors for end of life gifts.
- **Try to raise money without a budget and a successful, experienced professional who understands and cares about your work.**

**Always Remember:**

- It takes money to raise money.
- Your reputation is at stake, be transparent, compelling, and personal.
- **It takes strong relationships and extraordinary communication to transform the world.**

**What should we call Fundraising?** Development, Advancement, Stewardship? They are all code words to help us avoid talking about money. Be creative, develop an acronym that suits your organization's mission, use more pictures than words – most importantly, build and maintain relationships and communicate your successes so all understand the importance of your organization. Then the money will roll to you. Success comes with few words and compelling pictures representing life changing work. Tell your story well and personally.

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**Frances Cone Caldwell** has exemplified success in growing budgets, capital campaigns, and end of life planned giving. Her company is called **GoTaP Consulting**, an acronym for **Gifts of Thanks and Praise**. She rarely uses the word fundraiser – rather her success comes from “**Tapping into: Relationships – Communication – Capacity**”. For more information please visit her website at [www.GotapConsulting.com](http://www.GotapConsulting.com)