

Ask Your Employees for Money? You Bet!

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Executive Summary

Donors and prospects want to give to organizations whose employees and volunteers are also donors. As a matter-of-fact, some corporations and foundations will only give to organizations whose employees and volunteers are asked to make an annual contribution, and only as long as a set percentage of those employees and volunteers make an annual gift. Employee donor engagement is just as important as volunteer donor engagement because employees are often your organization's best ambassadors — and their enthusiastic support helps foster the support of prospects and donors.

Sources for Donations

Individuals give 75% of all philanthropic support in the United States. An organization's own employees are giving to other nonprofits, such as their churches, synagogues, or other places of worship; their alma maters; groups like the United Way; and sometimes even your competitors. And while your employees might not be major donors, they are an integral part of your annual giving mix.

Why Employees Give

Like most donors, employees often do not give the first time they are asked. Convincing an employee to give to your organization often requires that you make several repeated "asks" until they finally commit to invest financially in your mission. They might feel as though they are already giving to your organization simply by means of their employment, since they are often paid less than they would make in a comparable position in the for-profit world. And certainly, you appreciate this investment and recognize your "people power" as a key asset. But you also want to foster the same sense of affinity among employees that you do among other donors — the kind of affinity that can only come from opening one's checkbook in support of your cause.

Like other constituents, employees give because they are asked many times. Too often, a nonprofit organization fails to even ask its employees for contributions, or the organization might ask its employees to give in a very soft, indirect manner. Employees then miss your ask and give to other organizations that are more direct.

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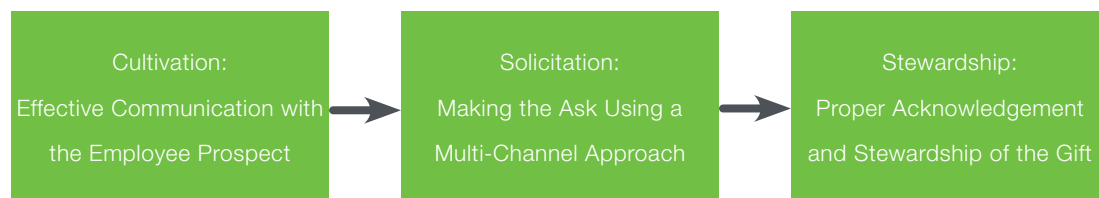
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Employees give when there is a trigger to give, such as an employee giving campaign that has been carefully crafted for this important audience. Employees also give because they feel a personal connection and compassion toward your organization. They also might give because they have feel compassion towards your mission, and they might renew or increase their giving because their previous actions have been reinforced through proper stewardship. Good stewardship is the best way to increase the frequency and lifespan of an employee's giving.

Ways Employees Give

Your organization must make it convenient for an employee to become a donor. Convenience is a major motivator for an employee to make the leap to becoming a donor. Rightfully so, they also expect to be treated as well as donors from outside your organization. Direct mail is typically the main way organizations solicit employees for donations. Additionally, telemarketing, electronic communications (email, newsletter or online giving via your organization's website), and personal solicitations are extremely effective ways to make the ask. Many organizations are also building multi-channel solicitations into their strategies, such as combining a direct mail appeal with a followup telephone call, or an email notification followed by a direct mail appeal.

The Employee Giving Process



Cultivation: It's More Than the Ask

Communication with your employees is crucial to building and maintaining an employee donor program. Communication with the employee should always be a year-round process, not just when making the ask. Be sure to communicate with your employees before you make an ask, during the ask, and after the gift has been made. Communication is imperative during the cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship phases, and it ought to occur using mixed media, including print, electronic, and audio/video. Sample effective communication vehicles include:

- Employee print newsletters
- Magazines
- Electronic newsletters
- Annual reports
- Carousels in the employee lounges (captive audience)
- Paychecks
- Staff meetings
- Coffees with the CEO
- Signage and displays throughout your facility

About the Author

Stephen Mally has more than 20 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. Before becoming a principal consultant for Blackbaud's Direct Marketing team, he worked in a variety of healthcare- and disability-related nonprofit organizations, including the Alzheimer's Association, Joslin Diabetes Center, Chicago House, AIDS Action Committee, Lahey Clinic, and the Association for Retarded Citizens, in annual giving, major gifts, corporate and foundation relations, operations, and management roles. Stephen received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin, where he majored in communication arts and political science.

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Fundraising Ambassadors

Each of your organization's employees is a fundraising ambassador, but oftentimes, employees do not see fundraising as part of the job. While all of these ambassadors might not make an ask or be part of the effort to capture the first gift or a major gift, each person who comes into contact with your employee prospect plays a crucial role in building the relationship that will lead up to the gift. The best way to think about this is that we should treat every employee as customers within the workplace. Practice teamwork, collegiality, cooperation, and other forms of collaboration at the workplace to cultivate strong relationships among employees and external customers. Every interaction one has at the workplace matters and can ultimately lead to employees who feel more engaged and likely to give back monetarily.

Solicitation: Making the Ask

All solicitations begin with a plan. Effective strategizing and planning can lead to a successful solicitation. Create a strategy that fits into your workplace environment and that will resonate with the staff. Consider creating a multi-channel strategy that will allow for you to engage the greatest number of employees, and make certain 100% of the employees are asked.

Encourage 100% participation — not participation at a set gift amount. This will make staff feel more comfortable and less threatened with this new ask.

Engage Senior Management First!

Senior management is higher paid than most employees and they have access to more information than the average employee, as well. As members of senior management, they ought to know more about the organization, and this should make them, by nature, more engaged and likely to give. Senior management should be asked in person, and 100% of the senior management should make a gift before you ask employees to make gifts. Consider this the silent phase of your employee giving campaign.

Launch the Campaign

Build excitement for the launch for your campaign. Launch it with a splash so there is no one on your staff who does not know that it is employee campaign season.

Test Packages

Try both non-premium and premium packaging.

Direct Mail/Phone/Email Follow-up

Send a direct mail appeal, and follow it up with a telephone call a week later. Five to six weeks thereafter, offer an email reminder to anyone who has not yet given. Be sure to exclude anyone in the follow-up communications who has already given. You do not want to upset the newly acquired employee donor.

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Utilization Segmentation

Direct mail is segmented by audiences for measurement and analysis. For employees, create a two dimensional model based on years of service (or date of hire) and department of employment. You might even consider adding a third dimension, if applicable. For example, if you have three time shifts, you might want to segment by shift.

Stewardship**Proper Acknowledgement and Stewardship of the Gift**

It is crucial to acknowledge a gift and thank the individual or organization quickly and accurately as soon as it is booked and received. Your employees expect the same treatment you would offer any other donor — nothing less, and nothing more.

Thank the employee donor immediately — no later than 48 hours after the gift arrives. Remember, you are developing a relationship with the new employee donor, and you want to ensure a positive experience. It also helps to impress them, so that many good experiences translate into a greater percentage of employees giving within their departments and throughout your organization. Promote campaign progress on your Intranet and Internet sites, as well as through giving barometers or other signage across your organization. Be proud, and make your employee giving figures public.

Evaluate & Analyze

Finally, it is important to evaluate and analyze each component at every stage of your program. Put tools in place that enable you to watch over your program with frequency. Tweak the program based on your evaluation and analysis weekly, monthly, quarterly, and, of course, annually. And always be sure to discuss your programming with colleagues within the development department, within the healthcare organization, and outside the organization.

Make certain to guarantee each employee's confidentiality by sharing results by department when creating campaign reports. Never share giving by individual, and never share results with managers except to report a manager's departmental total. When publicizing giving, be sure to receive permission from each employee on any public listings and be sensitive to how employees want their names published.

About Blackbaud

Blackbaud is the leading global provider of software and services designed specifically for nonprofit organizations, enabling them to improve operational efficiency, build strong relationships, and raise more money to support their missions. Approximately 24,000 organizations — including The American Red Cross, Cancer Research UK, Earthjustice, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Lincoln Center, The Salvation Army, The Taft School, Tulsa Community Foundation, Ursinus College, the WGBH Educational Foundation, and Yale University — use one or more Blackbaud products and services for fundraising, constituent relationship management, financial management, website management, direct marketing, education administration, ticketing, business intelligence, prospect research, consulting, and analytics. Since 1981, Blackbaud's sole focus and expertise has been partnering with nonprofits and providing them the solutions they need to make a difference in their local communities and worldwide. Headquartered in the United States, Blackbaud also has operations in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. For more information, visit www.blackbaud.com.

It is important to evaluate and analyze each component at every stage of your program.

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