

THE FIRST MONDAY REPORT

Thoughts on Fundraising for Campus Ministry

January, 2007

A NEW YEAR'S POTPOURRI

Once again the New Year brings an opportunity to share with you a variety of information that I have collected in my files over the past months. These sound bytes may be useful as they suggest wider reading in particular areas. If you are interested in more information or resources on a specific subject that you would like to see covered in future First Monday Reports, please let me know. As for January, read on, as my file becomes lighter.

Leadership Styles

In an article in the *Harvard Business Review*, "Leadership Run Amok: The Destructive Potential of Overachievers" (June, 2006), Scott Speir, Mary Fontaine, and Ruth Malloy share six styles of leadership that managers and executives use:

1. Directive, which involves strong, sometimes coercive behavior,
2. Visionary, which focuses on clarity and communication,
3. Affiliative, which emphasizes harmony and relations,
4. Participative, which is collaborative and democratic,
5. Pacesetter, which is characterized by personal heroics,
6. Coaching, which looks at long-term development and mentoring.

Board Member Burnout

This is a concern for many of us in campus ministry. We value good, active board or committee members. Yet, often just at the high point of effectiveness, they seem to tire or lose interest in "taking on one more project." Attrition ascribed to burnout can be headed off, according to Lawrence Peers, an Alban Institute consultant.¹ In the retreats for boards that he leads, he stops partway through the process and asks participants to list "implications for our ongoing practice." At the end of the event they review the list and members are asked to commit to practices that will enhance their work together. He tells them that for a new practice to be sustained, it must be continued, no matter what, until it is mastered. His short list of practices includes:

1. Begin the meeting with a time of prayer, meditation, or reflection on Scripture to remind the board that its work is sacred.
2. Provide time for a board member to share briefly some highlights of her own faith journey and what this (congregation) means to her.
3. Recognize that some significant decisions require time for theological reflection and interpretation in the context of the (congregation's) mission.
4. Take a meta-view of some decisions. Ask "who are we," "what are we here for," and "who is our neighbor."

¹ Alban Weekly, October 7, 2005.

5. Advocate for your ideas—but also be willing to be influenced.
6. Pause for reflection or prayer before or after a decision.

The overall goal of this process is to transform the board into a “community of spiritual leaders” who can affect the wider context of the church in that place.

Philanthropy’s New Face

In 2005, corporations and individuals donated more than \$260 billion to charitable concerns, up 6% from the previous year.² Of this amount \$199 billion came from individuals. This documents the word on the street that giving has been on the rise in recent years, not falling off as some naysayers suggest. The gifts are larger and they are often made with greater care and specificity than in years past. In recent months some of the increase can be attributed to disaster relief, suggesting that people search for meaning in their own lives by giving to others.³

In her work with clients of the Goff Investment Group of Merrill Lynch, Janel Goff encourages people to develop mission statements for their own family’s giving, instead of just responding to phone calls and solicitation letters. She suggests that “The first thing that people have to do is ask themselves what matters most: what experiences have impacted their lives; what do they value most?” She notes the trend that donors today seek to become more involved in the causes they fund. This means invitations to be actively involved and receive updates of progress on a regular basis.

Even corporations that are philanthropic understand the need to focus on employee engagement. Ameriprise Financial states clearly, “We contribute to our employees’ efforts by supporting the nonprofits they care about and commit their time to. Last year 2,500 out of 5,500 Ameriprise employees participated in volunteer work. Intellectual capital is also important, so companies often contribute brain power and managerial expertise to a worthy project. Brad Hewitt of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans describes participatory giving as “the difference between a welfare program and an investment program,” such as the community savings center they developed along with Lutheran Social Services in the Phillips neighborhood in Minneapolis.

Leadership Competencies

In Canada a group of nonprofit leaders has developed a set of core competencies that outline skills needed by volunteers (including board members) to be effective leaders.⁴

1. Vision and alliances. Leaders are involved in creative public action, help resolve issues, collaborate with other groups, and inspire others to act.
2. Strategies and resource management. Sound financial stewardship, inspirational public relations, effective use of technology, and fund raising in diverse and effective ways are listed as significant responsibilities.

² Giving Institute study.

³ *Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine*, December, 2006

⁴ www.nonprofitscan.ca Cited in *Modern Donor*, January, 2007

3. Relationships. The ability to foster interpersonal connections between people and groups, relate to staff, handle conflicts, and serve as the public persona are skills needed in this area.
4. Complexity. Leaders must be creative and flexible and be able to make ethical decisions.

The report notes that leadership is first and foremost about producing results—not a unique set of personal traits or a specialized job. Community leadership occurs when anyone, regardless of their official position or lack of it, works to develop and sustain the health of their community.

Newsletter Flaws

An article by Tom Ahern⁵ in a GuideStar online publication⁶ lifts up seven common flaws of newsletters, nearly every newsletter containing at least one of them.

1. The newsletter fails the “you test.” A good donor newsletter is friendly, even intimate in tone. An institutional voice distances you from your reader.
2. The newsletter skimps on emotional triggers. Charity starts when a heart is moved.
3. You claim it’s a newsletter, but it’s really just an excuse to say “hi.” The giveaway is the ponderous front page letter “from the desk of” the chief executive. There’s nothing newsy about that.
4. The newsletter is not donor-centered. It does not make the donor feel needed or wanted. Remember that people don’t give *to* your organization; they give *through* your organization. People want to change the world, or at least a small part of it. Give the donor credit, as well as thanks.
5. The newsletter is not set up for rapid skimming and browsing. Don’t assume that people will read long articles (or look at tiny, out of focus pictures). If you have important information to share, do it boldly and quickly. If readers give your newsletter the “30 second glance,” will they see what you need them to see?
6. Weak or dysfunctional headlines are the most common flaw. Headlines summarize the content to follow and encourage readers to dig deeper.
7. There is too much emphasis on statistics and not enough on anecdotes and stories.

Direct Mail Problems

As long as we’re working from the negative side of things, let’s look at some sage advice from Stephen Hitchcock, long-time expert on direct mail fund raising.⁷ What was true a couple of years ago, when this article was written, is probably truer today. Think again if you are currently doing any of the following:

1. Using nonprofit stamps on the outer envelope. They almost always indicate junk mail. Metered mail works better, and is less expensive.

⁵ Tom Ahern, *Raising More Money with Newsletters Than You Even Thought Possible* (Emerson & Church Publishers) 2005.

⁶ www.guidestar.org

⁷ Stephen Hitchcock was instrumental as a consultant in developing campus ministry’s We Care for the Future endowment in 1985. These remarks are from *Contributions*, March-April, 2002

2. Using first class stamps on the outer envelopes. Metered first-class mail is usually cheaper because you can pre-sort it. First-class can be printed on the envelope just below the imprint.
3. Using “lift notes.” Years ago these little tucked in messages were popular, often written by someone other than the signer of the letter. While it has increased costs, research hasn’t proved it very helpful.
4. Green or red signatures. Signatures need to be bold and legible, so that they don’t look like a stamp or copier signature. Using dark blue ink with the name and title typed below is best.
5. Teasers on outer envelopes actually lower the importance factor. People hear you shouting at them before they even open the envelope.
6. Blank outer envelopes (no return address) are suspicious. People want to know who is sending them mail, so if possible print the sender’s name along with the organizations address.
7. Business reply envelopes, research shows, do not increase response. Donors are happy to contribute the stamp. Avoid the extra cost and inconvenience.
8. Credit card option. While there is definitely an increase in online giving using credit cards, asking donors to include this sensitive information in a direct mail response may not garner more income. Plus, there is the credit card discount you will have to pay.
9. Reply cards with gift options that range from \$1,000 to \$10. This practice, if it ever worked, is becoming ever more obsolete. If you are tailoring your request to each donor, give them at most three choices based on their giving history—their highest gift ever and two that are even higher. In the long run you will be best served by naming one “goal” amount for everyone if you are sending a blanket request letter.
10. Dark, muddy, hard to see photos are often worse than no photos at all. New printing technology makes color photos almost as inexpensive as black and white. If photos help to tell the story, include them.

Prospective Board Members

As you and your current board members consider recruiting new members to fill upcoming vacancies, here are ten questions you should ask in the invitation process.⁸

1. How passionate are you about our cause?
2. How much time can you give to us?
3. What motivates you as a volunteer?
4. What expectations do you have from the management of the organization on whose boards you serve?
5. What are your personal dreams or aspirations that could be enhanced by service on our board?
6. What professional or personal constraints on your time or service might you anticipate?
7. Are you willing to make a financial commitment that is a stretch for you?

⁸ Kay Sprinkel Grace, *Contributions*, November-December, 2004, p. 9f.

8. Of what importance to you is social interaction with other board members?
This is not a positive or negative, but a person with little extra time may find it hard to integrate into a board culture that socializes a lot.
9. How do you feel about performance evaluations of individual board members and boards as a group?
10. As you think about the three primary board roles—ambassador, advocate and asker—in which role(s) do you think you will want to be most active?

The author suggests that in recruiting new members the board get beyond the obvious information and treat them like potential candidates for hire. Then, once they have joined us, the task is to remember these motivations as we assign, coach, engage, and reward them in their board service.

Principles of Conversation

Finally, since it is the New Year, I want to leave you with some interesting “principles of conversation” that may help you in all of the communication work that you do. These are principles that we all know and use, but it helps to be reminded of them from time to time.

Listen

- with respect for all the voices
- without fixing, problem-solving, or advice-giving.

Suspend certainty

- live with the questions and the inquiry
- be open to being surprised

Hold the space for difference

- let go of assumptions, or at least listen to them
- be aware of your judgment

Slow down the conversation

- let there be pauses between the speakers
- let the space in the conversation emerge

Speak from your own awareness

- what is on your mind/heart?
- speak your truth, speak from the “I”

.....and remember, you can always take back anything you’ve said!⁹

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⁹ *Circle of Fire*, Youth Frontiers, Inc.

