



Greetings from Prospero Group President Doris Feinberg

January 2011

It was a busy 2010, and we look forward in 2011 to another year of helping organizations reach the next level in their development efforts, always based on respectful relationships with donors.

In this edition of our e-newsletter, we explore another side of that relationship: donor-centric communications. As a professional fundraiser, lay leader and donor, I've been on both sides of the table. My role as a lay leader and donor informs my professional work by keeping me aware of what moves donors to support organizations. I support causes I care about, and give to those organizations that keep me informed and involved.

Successful development efforts are predicated on good listening and being mindful of meeting donors' needs. That's good advice for any relationship

We're always interested in your questions and comments. Contact us at any time at dfeinberg@prosperogroup.com.

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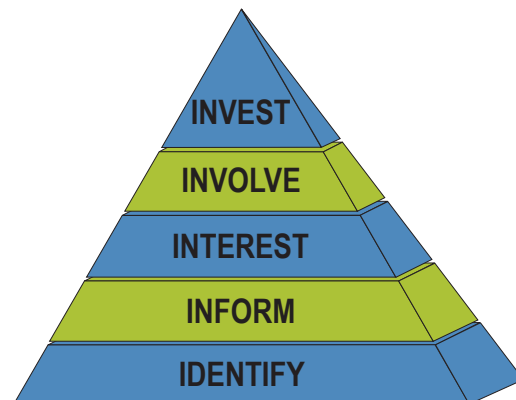
Chani Adams
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Getting Out of Your Own Head

by Susanne Shavelson

If you were a donor, would you give to your organization? If you are a donor, can you say why you give? We at The Prospero Group believe that effective fundraising comes only out of genuine relationship building between an organization and the donor. That relationship is a two-way street: It should prompt leadership to think about the donor's perspective on the organization's mission and the cause it addresses. As a professional or lay leader, you must know who your supporters are and what they care about in order to gain their support.

Every year, individuals receive appeal letters and other requests that show little or no knowledge of their interests, concerns, or past history with the organization. They fail to link their cause to the donor's passions or they assume too much based on past giving. Under those circumstances, why would anyone give? All too frequently, we fall into the trap of



thinking that a first-time or small donor is now a supporter. But this person has only taken the first little step up the famous pyramid of engagement, which describes how individuals form a relationship with a cause.

Understanding who these donors are will shape verbal and written interactions with them. They're not committed—they've just made a single small gift. How would you, as a donor, like to be treated in this case? With requests for money every few months, or with invitations to learn more and become more engaged? That's why development professionals should be segmenting their mailing lists, so that each type of supporter or potential supporter receives messages that are appropriate for their interests and their level of engagement with the cause.

Regular supporters who help sustain an organization's work do so because they want to help the cause the institution and the donor care about. They want to fight the good fight to help alleviate the problem both sides want to solve. They're not supporting the organization; they're supporting the organization's work. That's a key difference and easy to overlook. Keep your mutual passion in mind and it will guide efforts to deepen supporters' engagement and commitment.

Ongoing long-term support comes with trust. Donors will come to trust the organization if they have faith in its ability to do the work and if they are treated as partners, with honest, transparent and inspiring communication that speaks to them. They will come to see the organization as their best investment toward the cause that moves them to take action. While thanks is critical, their real reward will be the feeling that they are making a difference.

To learn more about the pyramid of engagement, download Blackbaud's free e-book, "[Cultivating Lifelong Donors: Stewardship and the Fundraising Pyramid.](#)"

For more on donor-centric fundraising, check out these [podcasts](#) from Third Sector New England

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About The Prospero Group

The Prospero Group, LLC, provides fundraising counsel that ensures lasting growth and change for non-profit organizations. We promote effective governance models and principled leadership to empower professionals and boards as the driving forces of philanthropy.

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