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CULTIVATING MEANINGFUL REALTIONSHPIS TO INCREASE FUNDRAISING EFFORTS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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CULTIVATING MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS TO INCREASE FUNDRAISING
EFFORTS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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requirements for the
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Abstract

The donor cultivation process is vital to a gift officer by creating meaningful relationship built on trust and dynamic conversations. Cultivating philanthropic funds for nonprofit organization is essential in advancing a mission and accomplishing the vision. To successfully solicit donor dollars, gift officers must focus on the art of developing and retaining personal relationships. A gift officer is the hands and feet to a nonprofit organization who leads people to understand, motivate, and agree to support a better quality of life for those most in need. The utilization of properly cultivated relationships and uniquely crafted engagements provides the precise development for successful fundraising. The utilization of the donor cultivation process is changing the culture of philanthropy and provides a platform for gift officers to utilize to achieve goals. The future success of nonprofit organizations of mission advancement is dependent on the ability of a gift officers' strategic engagement with the community's people. Gift officers promote philanthropy by following donor centered principles and practicing organizational values.

Key Words: Major gift officer (MGOs), Philanthropy, Fiduciary, Cultivation, Donor relations, Organizational culture, Strategic Communication

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Introduction

Nonprofit organizations achieve an essential role in delivering services, strengthening communities, and civic engagement. Research concluded by the Foundation Group approximates 1.8 million nonprofit organizations in the United States (Reasonover, 2021). Major gift officers (MGO's) are nonprofit staff members who are exclusively responsible for cultivating relationships with donor prospects that leads to securing a gift for organizations. A gift to a nonprofit organization is a voluntary planned transaction of money to an organization solicited by a major gift officer. Major gift officers work as philanthropist; seeking to promote humanity by using their time, talent, and treasure to elevate the mission of a charitable organization. The culture of fundraising has transformed because of inflation increases, unreliable economy, environmental events, and competition amongst nonprofits. Research completed by the Urban Institute shows giving trends for nonprofits from 2015 to 2019 experienced 58% growth, 32% retained stable donations, and 10% suffered a decrease in donations. In 2020, however, giving trends decreased by 37% for a large share of nonprofit organization of all types (Faulk et al., 2021). Obsolete tactics of solicitation phone calls and mailers are not the marketing approach that successfully engages new donor or retains current donors in today's culture of giving. To be successful, the art of being a major gift officer requires an individual to build and cultivate meaningful and purposeful relationships with potential donors to elevate success and further the mission. Donors give because they have a passion to contribute to humanity, therefore, gift officer must facilitate conversation to find the "why" behind a gift and celebrate accordingly.

Board Governance

Board members bring unmatched influence and insight to support the work of a nonprofit organization (Accordant, 2020). Board members are the fiduciaries, who manage an organization to advance its mission by practicing ethical, legal, and financial policies. Each board member provides specific knowledge to the organization to support the vision. To be a productive board member, an individual must believe in the organization mission. An organizations mission statement is a declaration of an institutes core propose and the vision is an aspiration description of what an organization would like to achieve in the future (Hasa, 2016). Among the many qualities a board member inhabits, gift officers must use their leaders in the appropriate capacity of why they serve. A successful strategy for a major gift officer is to use their allies within an organization who identify as connectors to establish credibility with potential donors. Connectors are individuals who know many people within a community and want to serve in the capacity of introducing and encouraging potential donors to communicate with a gift officer. Utilizing board members who identify as connectors will influence the beginnings of trustworthy communication and generate credibility. One of the many duties of a board member is being an ambassador for a nonprofit by acting as a representative of the organization and promoting its purposes. New relationships can be fickle, therefore, a board member who endorses a gift officer's intentions will develop a strong foundation for the relationship to build upon.

Leadership is the ability of an individual or group of individuals to influence and guide others to change their behavior. Influencers are those leaders who understand how to create rapid, profound, and sustainable behavior change. To be called at leader you must have the capacity to influence others to change their behavior to achieve important results (Grenny, 2013

p. 23). Influencers create lasting change, and every human has the capacity to change the culture in which they are in with the right tools. Leaders set themselves apart from a medial environment to stand out amongst the crowd and reflect positive change and create new norms. Utilizing organizational leadership is vital to successfully advancing the mission by donor funds. Gift officers should engage with board leaders to discuss strategy in response to opportunities and obstacles. According to the Board Source (2017), a board member must role model giving behavior for other prospects and donors to follow. Discussing a pitch or researching interests of a potential donor with leadership can be a helpful tool to get to the ask. The partnership a gift officer develops with their board members will create a network of individuals waiting for the opportunity to be asked to give and provide mentorship for successful fundraising.

Power of Communication

Encouraging others to donate their money that they have earned by hard work and time to support a nonprofit organization requires proper communication. A gift officer must find the correct form of communication a potential donor prefers and is most convenient for their lifestyle. Whichever avenue of communication, a gift officer must sound appealing and give the individual a reason to reply. There are many methods to attempt to reach an individual to begin a conversation. An article by Walden University suggests text messaging is a convenient way to quickly communicate with clients about meetings (Walden University, 2021). As society is more fast paced, a text message introducing yourself and why you are trying to connect can be effective.

Text example:

Hello Mrs. Smith. My name is {insert name} and I am the gift officer for {insert organization name}. I would love to share how our mission is benefiting the community

and would love to hear your feedback and interests. Please let me know what is most convenient for your schedule. I know that you are very busy and unsure how you prefer to communicate. If I do not hear back from you, I will call next week.

In today's world, email is a part of our personal and professional lives. The subject line is the headline that previews and promises what the message contains. Since we are overloaded with multiple emails a day, opening every single one is daunting. Creating a subject line that is informative and provides curiosity is best to get your reader to open your email. Emailing potential donors is a great way to connect considering many individuals have their email on their cell phones or have their email readily accessible at their work desk. Walden University indicates email remains one of the best ways to connect with your customers because it is convenient, cheap, and swift (Walden University, 2021).

Email example:

Good morning Mr. Smith,

I hope this email finds you healthy and happy. My name is {insert name} and I am the gift officer for {insert organization name}. My role with the organization is to meet with community leaders such as yourself to share how our organization is benefitting the community. I know that you have a busy schedule, but I would love to meet with you next week. Please let me know what would best fit your schedule. If I am unable to reach you with this email, I will give you a call next week. If you don't mind, I would also like to invite {insert board member} to join us in our meeting.

Gratefully,

{insert name}

An on-the-spot phone call is never a bad idea. Cold calls can be successful if you begin the conversation as to who you are calling on behalf of. Name-dropping has been a common credibility strategy used to attract the attention of others.

Call example:

Hi Mrs. Smith

I'm calling on behalf of {insert CEO name}. My name is {insert name} and I am the gift officer for {insert organization name}. Would you have time to meet this week for coffee or lunch to talk about how the organization is impacting our community?

Dialogue and Impact Storytelling

According to Daniel Pinks' New York Times Business Bestseller, *To Sell Is Human*, communicating with irritation is challenging people to do something *we* want them to do. This concept is short lived and not effective to fully move others to commit long term. Agitation is challenging *them* to do something they want to do (Pink, 2012 p.39). Gift officers must challenge an individual in conversation by illustrating the impact of their dollars at work and understand what emotion they might feel when donating. Nonprofit charitable organizations must tell stories that persuade donors to support their mission and contribute (Lentz et al., 2021). Intimately listening to a potential donors' passions and aligning those desire with the initiatives of an organization will frame the relationship with meaningful emotions and ultimately securing a gift. People are more interested in doing what they want to do, and not what they are told (Pink, 2012 p.40). Creating a relationship that is two dimensional offers more positive results. Gift officers can persuade others to commit to a gift if the original pillar of conversation is the ideas of the donor.

Storytelling is essential for a gift officer in the beginning of cultivating a relationship. The ability to successfully articulate the mission of a charitable organization and establish its purpose will formulate how well a response from others will be. For society to recognize a gift officer's intentions, they must exhibit strong brand standards and tell compelling stories that bring out profound emotions. Lentz et al. (2021) quotes the 2016 Burk Donor survey in which 44% of 150,000 donors said they could afford to give more if they heard the right things from nonprofits. According to Lentz et al.; (2021), getting donors to believe in the organization's mission is not enough to engage an audience, nor is it enough to rely on statistical data. Instead, a compelling story must resonate with the audience personally; the audience must see how their efforts benefit the cause or people they are helping and the impact their contributions make. (p.23)

Impact stories of authentic conditions that charitable organizations have supported or want to aid in the betterment of an individual will grasp the heart strings of potential donors. Stories that capture the essence of the work within a nonprofit organization is sharing the struggle and ending with the goal to overcome. A gift officer who shares the power of changing the lives of others through donor dollars is influential to capturing an audience. For example, depending on the mission of the organization, a gift officer can share the emotions of under privileged children who received new shoes for school or how donor dollars purchase wigs for cancer patients. Many organizations focus on social impact, identifying stories as a vital marketplace tool that can provide insight into the intersectional social problems they address as well as secure audience attention, engagement, and action (Goodman 2015). Compelling stories will capture the minds and hearts of potential donors captivating them to donate to support the work of a nonprofit organization. The Center for Social Impact Communication, for example,

reports that “reading a story on social media” was the primary motivator leading donors and volunteers to offline actions such as giving and volunteering (Dixon 2013).

Storytelling is a power method that gift officer should use to cultivate connections and evoke feelings of empathy with every prospect and current donor. The powerful approach to build trust, which is the most important component in new relationships, is to make the other individual feel something meaningful by connecting your organizations mission to their life. Gift officer must listen intimately to the other individual to find cues that will link a powerful story that induces feelings of hope, joy, and the opportunity to support. “It’s the feeling from hearing a well-told story that ignites people’s actions” (Jacobwith, 2021, para 5). Organizational impact does not need to be bullet point listed for a donor to read himself or herself. An impactful story is sharing how someone’s life was positively reformed because of the organizations support and how donor dollars enable the organization to change the trajectory of one’s life.

The human nature of an individual generates emotions for other humans who must overcome obstacles to sustain a life worth living. The quality of life in a community is much better when those with unselfish concerns of other beings’ welfare come together to make an impact. Those empathic individuals will come together to benefit the mission they believe in when they hear a compelling story and how an organization plans to accomplish their vision. Meaningful stories produce powerful impact to benefit those individuals most in need (Bublitz et al., 2016, 1).

Perspective

Attunement is the ability to bring one’s actions and outlook into harmony with other people and with the context you are in (Pink, 2012 p.56). To achieve attunement, one must take the perspective of another. Taking someone else’s perspective requires that we ignore what we

know, feel, or perceive about another's situation or life goals. Gift officers cannot be "know it all's"! Those who overpower another become less likely to attune themselves to someone else's point of view. Gift officers must acquire the ability to humble oneself to understand other individuals' point of view. To successfully move others to donate, gift officers must increase their odds of success by reducing their power. Overpowering another human being causes discomfort and reduces communication. Without communication there is no movement or change to solicit a gift. Creating relationships with people and seeing the world through their eyes is purposeful and shows empathy. Effective gift officer must get inside the minds of a donor and gain knowledge of their wants and needs. It is then that a gift officer can connect on a higher level and start the discussion of solving their desire to make a difference in others' lives through a nonprofit organization. Gift officers should never coerce someone to give but focus strategies to complete long term commitments of giving.

Perspective-taking and empathy coincide. Empathy represents a fundamental ability that allows for the creation and cultivation of social bonds (Naor, 2018). Using your mind to capture the essences of other individuals is imperative but using your heart at the same time is equally as important. Exhibiting empathy helps build strong relationships. Communicating the mission and vision of an organization is much easier when the other party knows you are benevolent. It creates trust and an intentional connection for a gift officer and the other party to come together in opinions and outcomes. Trustworthiness is a vital quality in a gift officers' career. People are attracted to trustworthy individuals and credibility is essential in persuading others to give.

Trust is also developed by the act of mimicking. Humans are natural mimickers. We conform to the motions, facial expressions, and vocal patterns of other humans. It forms yet another connection to other parties that we are likewise and demonstrates a sign of trust. Pink

says, “Synching our mannerisms and vocal patterns to someone else so that we both understand and can be understood is fundamental to attunement” (Pink, 2012, p.75). To fully attune with who a gift officer is pursuing to persuade, they must be able to conform strategically to the habits of the other party. Whether it be a donor prospect or board member of an organization, gift officers must find an approach to synch in similarities and connect to form a relationship based on humility.

Personality Characteristics

To effectively communicate with other individuals and create meaningful working relationships varies by personality types. Determining the fundamental differences between extraverts, ambiverts, and introverts’ characteristics, it is crucial to understand the characteristics that form each personality trait. Extraverted individuals are assertive and exceedingly enthusiastic. These characteristic types of people are sociable, comfortable in new conditions, confident in persuading, forceful, and refuses to take NO for an answer. Society would view extraverts as being the best to solicit gift for charitable organizations however, donor prospects might mistake an extravert’s character to be coercive, neglectful of their values or beliefs, and self-centered. Introverts inhabit characteristics that reduces the production of successful and purposeful selling. Introverts are rigid, reducing the ability to persuade and communicate effectively. These patterns of individuals that exhibit introvert personalities are more reserved and less like to be enthusiastic. Despite introverts being good listeners, which is essential to successful building relationships, they lack the ability to engage in intentional conversation and become shy and silent. In the middle of the spectrum falls the most successful character, Ambiverts. Ambivert individuals hold the middle balance of characteristics from both extraverts and introverts. Ambiverts are skilled listeners and show thoughtful intention toward customers.

They are not looking to be forceful to solicit a gift but consider the perspective of a donor prospect, which brings positives options and win-win for both parties. Ambiverts do not focus on themselves but create a perfect balance between talking, listening, and servant leadership.

Adam Grant is an organizational psychologist, who explores the science of motivation, generosity, original thinking, and rethinking. Mr. Grant collected evidence to the theory of ambiverts to be more successful in sales (Pink, 2012 p.79). By asking more than three hundred sales representatives to complete multiple personality assessments to determine where they landed on the spectrum and analyzing their revenue over the next three months, Grant concluded his theory. Introverted sales representatives earned the least in sales revenue, while extraverted individuals earned more. Ambiverts however, earned the most revenue. This study shows that ambiverts are best at persuasive communicating because they are the most skilled to attune.

Attunement

Attunement is the ability to bring one's actions and outlook into harmony with other people and within the context you are in (Pink, 2012, p.66). To achieve attunement, one must take the perspective of another. Taking someone else's perspective requires an individual to ignore what they know, feel, or perceive about another's situation or life goals. Gift officers cannot be "know it all's"! Those who overpower another become less likely to attune themselves to someone else's point of view. Gift Officers must acquire the ability to humble themselves to understand other individuals' point of view and manage the relationship of a donor properly. To successfully move others, gift officers must increase their odds of success by reducing their power. Overpowering another human being causes discomfort and reduces communication. Without communication there is no movement or change. Creating relationships with people and seeing the world through their eyes is purposeful and reveals

empathy. Effective gift officers must get inside the minds of a donor prospect and gain knowledge of their wants and needs. It's then that gift officers can connect on a higher level and begin the discussion of aligning their gift with their passion. Successfully gift officers should never coerce someone to donate but focus their strategies to complete long term commitments.

Perspective-taking and empathy coincide. Using our heads to capture the essences of other individuals is imperative but using our heart at the same time is equally as important. Exhibiting empathy help build strong relationships. Ramirez-Fernandez et al. (2017) says, "human nature is intensely social and shaped by relationships. Humans need to be embedded in healthy relationships and share bonds with family members, romantic partners, friends, and fellow group members. The concept of a "relationship" represents two people whose behavior is interdependent (p. 3) Communicating intentions for a charitable donation is much easier when the other party knows you care. It creates trust and an intentional connection. Trustworthiness is a crucial quality in making a positive name for yourself in an individual's personal and professional life. People are attracted to trustworthy individuals and creditability is essential in persuading others further the mission of a nonprofit organization.

Trust is also developed by the act of mimicking. Humans are natural mimickers. Humans conform to the motions, facial expressions, and vocal patterns of other humans. It forms yet another connection to potential donors that we are likewise and demonstrates a sign of trust. Pink says, "Synching our mannerisms and vocal patterns to someone else so that we both understand and can be understood is fundamental to attunement" (Pink, 2012 p.75). To fully attune with who we are pursuing to persuade, we must be able to conform strategically to the habits of the other party. Whether it be a donor or board member of an organization, we must find an approach to synch in similarities and connect to form a relationship based on humility.

Listening

Fundraising (2015) says,

Those who are most successful at soliciting gifts possess a key quality: the ability to really listen to prospects and key in on what most matters to them. Being sensitive to every word a prospect utters ultimately plays into the way in which a gift is solicited and the type of request that is made. (p. #)

To enhance listening skills, gift officers must allow a prospect sufficient time to finish a thought. A delayed response is a powerful response because it gives both parties time to formulate the correct reply. Attentive listening requires gift officers to ask questions when a statement is not fully understood or if there is a deeper meaning. Asking a prospect their thoughts and meaning behind a statement will help find underlying passions and strengthen conversation that will ultimately lead to an ask. Listening requires practices. Gathering colleagues, board members, or a mentor to practice listening sessions will help a gift officer development a fine tune their listening skills.

To prepare oneself for rejection in a world full of harsh criticism, is a quality that is essential in successful fundraising. People will say no to the opportunity to give in support of an organization but that does not mean it is a personal no to the gift officer. Gift officer must remain resilient in their endeavors to create relationship and know when to end a relationship and continue pursuing others. To keep an optimistic and cheerful temperament requires personal strategies before, during, and after any effort to solicit a gift. Interrogative self-talk before an attempt to solicit another will manifest success. Gift officer can research details about a donor prospect before a meeting to enhance the ability to spark conversation and find common interests

to build upon. Gift officer must be confident in their own ability to build relationships with people who are not familiar. This effect of intrapersonal dialogue builds self-confidence and courage to positively pursue others to give. Asking yourself questions such as, “can I persuade him/her?” reaches a deeper challenge personally and prompts strategic and creative answers.

Throughout the actions of solicitation, individuals must pursue unyielding positivity. Barbara Fredrickson, leading researcher on positivity at the University of North Carolina explains, negative emotions narrow people’s vision and propel their behavior toward survival (Spear, 2019). Individuals who are frightened tend to flee or relent to defense mechanisms. In contrast, positive emotions do the opposite. Leading with positive feelings expands ideas to generate more empathic responses and creative solutions within a conversation. The result of positivity during a solicitation will influence a prospect to be more acceptable of opportunities and develop a relationship that transpires to more succeeding fundraising. Another dimension in successful soliciting is believing in what mission and vision a gift officer is fundraising to impact. To put your efforts into soliciting a gift, a gift officer must back the product or principle. If gift officers do not value the object in which they are trying to promote, her or she cannot be successful in convincing others to believe in it either. Although gift officers must push themselves to be continuously positive, they need to listen to negative criticism. Negative feedback instructs self-reflection and improvement in personal and professionally lives. Negative responses from critics develops positive performances. To keep spirits uplifted, gift officers should pursue positive communication throughout the day. These are the conversations that keep individuals going and able to persevere.

Clarity

To strengthen cultivation methods, gift officers must examine their circumstances at the end of a meeting with a donor prospect. This is how a gift officer can explore the results of their individual performance. To stay confident, gift officer must see rejection as temporary. Staying optimistic in your reflection of your work clarifies the negative outcomes and influences positive aftermath (Pink 2021, p.101). Rejection is not personal but an external event that comes with the job. A gift officer provides the opportunity for others to be philanthropic. The Wiley Online Scientific Research (2017) says, “all successful fundraisers experience rejection. It’s the law of probability, but it’s the ability to bounce back that separates the most successful development personnel from others” (para. 2).

When a gift officer is denied, they should work at diminishing any feelings of failure. Staying optimistic empowers persistency to solicit another day.

Knowledge in clarity is the capability to help oneself examine their situation in a new manner and exposing problems not previously known. We know that skilled fundraisers are good at solving problems but more importantly is finding the problem. To exude the different dimensions to reach clarity in soliciting, Pink (2012) implies five frames. Human beings prefer a choice but too much of a good thing can dictate a bad outcome. The less frame shows that limiting people’s options to restrict their choices avoids the overwhelming feeling of indecisiveness. As a relationship is built between a gift officer and prospect, the capacity of the prospect will be known if the correct questions have been asked and answered. The specific desired amount an individual is interested in giving will help the gift officer identify a specific dollar amount to ask for. Giving a donor less of an option in the amount of money to give to a nonprofit organization will increase giving trends for a gift officer. The experience frame is a

technique that creates an observation of what can happen if a potential donor gives to an organization. Gift officers will need to communicate the gratification people feel after giving to a noble cause and how you expect to steward their generous donation. The experience to the donor leaves a memorable mark in their mind more than the money given. Creating a story of future experiences when a donation is made develops a deeper connection and more likely to result in a legacy gift and better retention. A gift officer can talk about the impact within the community and how people will benefit from a donor's gift. Labeling is a framework that changes or maintains positive behavior. Persuading individuals to donate is more suffice when there is a clear label to adapt to. If something is labeled with the adjective good, more than likely individuals will strive to keep the good. In life we know everything is not all it is talked up to be. In fundraising, being positive about an organization mission is of course necessary but also the negative is equally important. Gift officers need to have the hard but true conversation of what negative can or will happen if an organization isn't funded. Gift officer will need to talk about suffering societies and communities. When you list only the good outcomes, individuals may relent in donating, thinking that it's too good to be true. Fundraisers should give a blemished comment followed by the positive results. Being honest about a blemish can enhance the nature of the impact. The potential frame is how a gift officer sells themselves. Simultaneously, to sell oneself a gift officer needs to communicate their accomplishments and put emphasis on their potential they have not conquered yet. When speaking with a potential donor, gift officers need to speak about other who have given in support of the cause and backing the organizations mission. Talking about community involvement will encourage others to supports. Talking about what a gift officer has the potential to accomplish is more interesting

than what he or she has already accomplished. It also reveals work ethic and intrapersonal aspiration, which people are attracted to.

Gratitude

Gratitude opens your heart and carries the urge to give back- to do something good in return, either for the person who helped you or for someone else (Fredrickson 2009, p.41).

Gratitude is a powerful source for gift officers to use as strategy during the cultivation process.

Opinion writer and experience fundraiser Carter Skeel for Philanthropy Daily (2021) says, “As a fundraiser, gratitude- both well expressed and sincere is one of the most important tools you have. It’s good for you and the donor” (p. #). Fredrickson discloses in her research of positive emotions, the habit of building and maintaining strong relationships is directly linked by the need to do so by self-disclosing to people you care about and cultivating positive emotions in mutual experiences with them. According Bock et al (2018), 94.5% of household gave an average of \$2,974 to charity in 2013, and 64.5 million adults volunteered. These statistics are a testament that American citizens are motivated to contribute to charitable organizations.

Gratitude, as a trait, refers to a “generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people’s benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains” (McCullough et al. 2002, p. 112). Grateful individuals are motivated to impact others’ lives because of their fortune of good experiences. Gratitude creates a desire to act in ways that benefit others. According to research, gratitude appears to make people happier and healthier while facilitating the development and cultivation of relationships (Skeel, 2021). The psychological emotion of gratitude is a catalyst to use as strategy to influence a donor giving. Harvard experts say that gratitude is not only beneficial for individuals’ health, but also for the wellbeing of society (Harvard University, 2021). Years of research has proven the theory that

feeling grateful is a benefactor increases direct reciprocity toward that person, but also increases helping behavior and generosity toward third-party strangers (Bartlett & DeSteno 2006; McCullough & Tsang 2004). Donors have a driving emotion that propels their giving. For example, a donor giving to homeless shelters because they feel sad for their despair and the donor recognizes the gratitude he has for his own home. Another example is, a new mother whose baby spent time in the NICU had a good experience and is indebted to the care her family received. Her feeling of gratitude enhances her ability to want to give back to the NICU that significantly made an impact on her life.

Karns (2018) conducted research that supports brain regions and connections between gratitude and altruism. The research was supported by a grant from Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude Project. Dr. Kam explored how changes in emotions leads to changes in others. To study her theory of people who are grateful being more altruistic, she asked volunteers questions meant to shadow how frequently they feel thankful and the degree to which they tend to care for others. Those statistics were used to determine the extent to which someone's gratitude could predict their altruism. Karns found the more grateful people in the group tended to be more altruistic. To validate her theory once more, Karns explored how the brain reflected gratitude and giving. The volunteers conducted a giving activity that consisted of a computer model giving money directly to their own bank account or to the account of a local food bank in an MRI scanner. The MRI findings during the experiment proved the neural connection between gratitude and giving. Karns found the ventromedial prefrontal cortex in the brain became overwhelmingly active when money was donated to the local food bank and less active when money was deposited into their own accounts. This part of the brain is responsible for supporting risk, reward, and complex reasoning. Because of the brains reward response, it

was found that giving is better than receiving. Practicing gratitude shifted the value of giving in the brain which concluded her theory that gratitude and giving is a psychological and neurological response in humans and when you are grateful, your brain becomes more charitable.

Identifying gratitude an individual feels in their lives will increase the ability to further the donor relationship and cultivate trust built on emotions. Gift officer who can align their priorities with the other party's gratitude can increase their ability to solicit a gift successfully. Aligning yourself with a donor needs to be pure with raw emotions and understanding. Some donors might have experienced hardships that they have overcome and now can give back to benefit others in the same position. Gift officer must be adaptable to sympathize with all people of every background to relate and be conscious of all aspects during conversation. Using gratitude as a strategy can renew a culture that is morally declining in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Gratitude is contagious to others because human nature is inclined to want to feel and do good.

Psychological Reason of Giving

Psychologically, giving to others most in need creates an emotion inside our brains that reflects pure happiness which inclines humans to do it again. Although gratitude is an immense reason for giving, there are other notable motivations as to why people give. Rees (2021) is a leading consultant that instructs nonprofits how to achieve their vision by relationship fundraising process (Rees, 2021). Her experiences and research in fundraising developed a strong understanding of reasons why people give.

Rees (2021) compiled a dynamic list of eight psychological reasons why people give to assist gift officers during consultations.

1. Social Dynamic- Some individuals give because a particular cause or organization matter to someone they care about. For example, a friend suffers from a disease and the donor supports a charitable organization that has a mission to cure the disease.
2. Altruism- Many individuals have a belief to selflessly help others most in need. These individuals enjoy being philanthropic and receive joy from their actions.
3. Trust- Organization who are successful at showing donor dollars at work and being good stewards of philanthropic funds builds the public's trust and is a respected attribute that entices people to give.
4. Impact- telling impactful stories that captures the donors' emotions produces a psychological feeling of affection and propels an individual to give to support more positive stories.
5. Goal Proximity- Reason people give toward the end of a public campaign is that they feel like their contribution matter more because it moves the gift officer closer to the finish line. Psychologists suggest that the excitement of helping push a fundraiser over the line donate feel more important.
6. Overcoming Difficulty- Psychologist call this the martyrdom effect, where people give because they are challenged to achieve a goal. For example, a charity marathon or the popular "ice bucket challenge". Gift officer can facilitate fun but challenging fundraising events that attract people to want to participate.
7. Egoism- Some individuals don't give selflessly because it's the right thing to do. Egoism is giving because people want to feel good about themselves or look good to someone else.

8. Fear of Missing Out- the fear of missing out from a rewarding experience from which someone is absent will be a force to give. In some circumstances, when someone see a donor being celebrated because of their gift to a nonprofit organization, it will attract others who are missing out to give to receive the same stewardship.

The reason a person becomes philanthropic varies upon their circumstances, personal beliefs, and psychological thinking. The importance in knowing the true reason that fuels a person's giving will assist a gift officer in revealing a strong strategy to integrate while cultivating the relationship and achieving a successful solicitation. Dynamic conversations and assessing a person's interests and beliefs will help lead a gift officer to understand how to ask for their support for the organizations advancement in helping society.

Relationship Fundraising

Philanthropic fundraising values the model of community involvement. It is considered more valuable to collect a few hundred thousand dollars from many members of the community than to collect a similar amount from a handful of rich businesspeople (Bhatia, 1998). Payton et al., (1991) explains, "Fundraising is inextricably tied to philanthropic values, purposes, and methods" (p. #). They identify fundraising as moral action, which is a major factor distinguishing philanthropic fundraising. Fundraising literature is increasing their research on the importance of cultivating relationships with all current donors and new prospects rather than devoting time to marketing and advertising an organizations impact. Donor relations is the comprehensive effort of any nonprofit that seeks philanthropic support to ensure that donors experience high quality interactions with the organization that fosters long-term engagement and investment. Waters (2008) says, "Dedicating more time to donor relations principles can result in increased donor loyalty to organizations" (p.4). Gift officer must be prepared to continue the

longevity of existing donors while on the lookout for new individuals to bring on board as donors. Relationship driven fundraising is a strategic cycle that allows gift officers to cultivate meaningful and purposeful commitments (Vinson, 2019).

Beginning of the relationship cycle, gift officer must identify and research the individuals they would like to ask and determine what they will ask for. Some organizations use a metrics system to prioritize new leads and an estimated capacity of giving. If a gift officer does not have the support of a prospect development manager, they will need to master techniques to discover new people to network. Gift officers have several methods to interact with new leads such as referrals from internal and external sources, circle of influence, event prospecting, and social media. As soon as a new prospect is identified, a gift officer should research specific details that would guide the path of communication. Gift officers should research their career path, hobbies, and community involvement. Searching wealth capacity markers can be evaluated by real estate ownership, business affiliations, and stock holdings (Davis, 2022). The more information a gift officer consumes will aid in a gift officers' ability to find allies between them and begin to formulate a pitch to pursue the lead.

The next process in the relationship cycle is cultivation, which is the introduction and development of a new relationship. Cultivating and deepening donor relationships is essential to nonprofit fundraising to accomplish its potential. This process can be timely because of the proactive approach of listening, learning, and building mutual trust between both parties. Most often, a gift officer will introduce the cause, describe the cause, indicate the value of the cause, indicate the potential value of solicited support, and communicate the established record of accomplishment in an organization (Bhatia, 1998). "Every relationship takes a journey and the one you engage in with you supporters is no different" (Micrchandiani, 2022, para.3).

During this process, a gift officer must be respectful of the prospect time and use their preference of communication that works best for their schedule. Gift officers need to be accommodating during this process and not put intense pressure on their time. During the time a gift officer does have, they must ask the correct questions such as,

- What are you most proud of?
- How did you get where you are today?
- What is your #1 charity?
- What inspires you most?

This information will help a gift officer understand their prospects values and build commonalities. The more they tell you about what matters to them, the better job you can do of customizing an “Ask” for them that is an exact fit between your funding needs and their philanthropic desires (Rees, 2022). During this stage in the cultivation process, gift officer should ask for feedback to acknowledge the need for their opinions. Gift officers should document conversations after meetings to use as a reference when preparing their solicitation.

Cultivating donors and prospective donors need to be involved inside the organization to be fulfilled in their philanthropic giving. Gift officers can include current donors by asking them to volunteer on a special project or inviting them to accompany the team to an event representing the organizations. This act of involvement will be a sign of respect and gratitude for their generosity to the organization. New donor prospects that have not yet given can be involved in the same way and this engagement will show the impact of donor funds and advance their knowledge about the organization. If a gift officer can attract individuals to volunteer for their organization, more than likely they are committed to the mission and vision of the organization.

This strategy of engagement will open a multitude of conversations that a gift officer can build upon to ultimately secure a gift. New prospects will be more inclined to give when they see the quality and influence an organization promotes. Donors do not give solely because they support a cause, but because they have experienced policies in motions, financial stewardship, and accomplishing an organizations mission and vision (Krupp, 2021). Gift officers have a duty to their current donors and potential new contributors to regularly communicate the impact of donor dollars and how an organization is using funds to make a difference in their community.

Gift officer should remember that cultivating a relationship is not a sprint but a marathon. The relationship journey should be nurtured in a timely manner because eventually gift officers will see an investment in their organization. The cultivation process in the bulk of a gift officer's time. This process is an art that requires unique approaches and skilled conversations that eventually creates a concrete relationship that prepares the next process of solicitation. Soliciting a donor is making the 'Ask'. Every conversation and engagement strategy a gift officer has deployed is to get to the solicitation stage. When soliciting a donor, a gift officer must refer to their notes of conversations to pull our details from past conversations that will build the perfect pitch. Soliciting for money can cause feelings of anxiousness. To overcome those feelings, gift officer should practice their pitch with a colleague to get feedback and adjust strategy. A pitch is a method in delivering a message that compels a discussion that brings the participant into an intentional conversation that will eventually lead to an outcome best for both parties (Pink, 2012 pp. 156). Practicing a solicitation pitch beforehand will increase confidence and calm nerves. Gift officer must tailor their direct ask to the desire of the other individual. A gift officer should use statements like,

- I know you said this was important to you because...
- We have talked about the significant impact our organization has on...
- You told me how you feel about our organization...

These statements bring up empathic emotions and embrace the reason behind why a gift officer is asking for support. A gift officer will proceed with a direct solicitation. Example: *Would you be willing to consider a gift of \$100,000 to support this project? The dollar amounts will be personalized to the prospect and will change depending on everyone's capacity to give. After the ask, gift officers should be silent. It is essential to remain quiet and let the potential donor formulate an answer (Mirchandai, 2022). Gift officers would hope for a short answer of yes and then begin to show gratitude for the generous gift.* That is not always the case, and the gift officer should be readily prepared to adjust contribution amounts if the individual is not comfortable with the ask amount. The consideration is important and should be said to the prospect. To follow, the gift officer should ask what amount he or she feels most comfortable with. This will continue the conversation and eventually a gift will be donated. Unfortunately, a gift officer will receive a no as a reply. To further the conversation after a no, a gift officer should always respond politely and thank the prospect for their consideration. Leaving the conversation open ended is best to revisit the solicitation later that is more convenient for the potential donor. A gift officer should continue to keep the prospect informed about organizational milestones and achievements.

The final step in relationship fundraising processes is donor stewardship. According to the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), stewardship is defined as “a process whereby an organization seeks to be worthy of continued philanthropic support, including the acknowledgment of gifts, donor recognition, the honoring of donor intent, prudent investment of

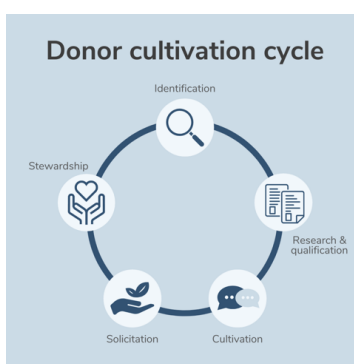
gifts, and the effective and efficient use of funds to further the mission of the organization.”

Stewardship strategies are implemented when a donor makes a gift to the organization. This importance of this process is to deepen the connection with the donor and increase retention to secure the maximum lifetime legacy gift by showing gratitude for their generous gift (Successful Fundraising, 2017). Lisa Sargent, donor communications specialist with Sargent Communications says, “Simply put, stewarding is what an organization should be doing from the time of a donors first gift, through the life of the relationship. Stewardship following an initial gift is directly related to the effort involved in cultivation before the gift.”

Every nonprofit organization should have a proper stewardship plan that shows thankfulness, intention, knowledge, and feedback. A gift officer should not neglect the simple words of “Thank you”. A donor expects an acknowledgement of their gift. Gift officer should make saying “thank you” personal and heartfelt. Communicating gratitude for a gift is meaningful when done face to face. Another option for showing thankfulness is a special handwritten card that documents how important their relationship with the organization is and will continue to be. Successful Fundraising (2017) displays the importance of exhibiting the impact of a donor’s contribution. It is vital to share the influence donor dollars has on an organization and the specific impact it will have on the mission. A donor cannot feel like their gift will not make a difference or the efforts of cultivation will be ended, and the donor will not feel a connection with the organization. A gift officer must stress the significance of their act of giving. Major gift should be celebrated appropriately. Gift officer can arrange a dinner with board members and organizational staff to show appreciation. If agreed, a gift officer can invite someone who has benefited from the efforts of the organization to tell their story. This would create a personal connection between the organization and donor by putting a face to the mission.

To keep the donor engaged a gift officer should create opportunities for personal interaction by asking for feedback or involving the donor in service projects or volunteering. Asking a donor to publicly represent the organization would be an honor for someone that is financially contributing. All stewardship efforts are to continue the relationship cultivation process and create meaningful strategies to engage lifetime legacy gifts.

Visual representation of the donor cultivation cycle:



Donor Recognition

Every efficient organization has implemented policies and procedures for major gift to be recognized by naming opportunities. Naming opportunities can consist of a donor recognition wall or the naming of a facilities space or program. Other naming opportunities can include scholarships, publications, research funds, conferences, and new initiatives. According to Associates of Fundraising Professionals (2018), in developing naming opportunities and related policies, organizations should include the following:

- morals clause and procedure for removing name(s) in certain situations
- naming opportunities available with minimum gift amount required
- how and when gifts will be recognized

- sample language for naming and plaques
- payment schedule
- process for handling a merger
- process for replacement of property
- recognition time frame (in perpetuity or for a defined time period)

Depending on the organizations policy, donor recognition amounts with naming opportunities vary. For example, a donor who contributes \$5000 to an organization will be recognized by a naming on a donor wall acknowledging their gift inside the organization's facility. A donor who contributes \$500,000 could have the opportunity in naming a wing of a building. Different donor levels and the procedures of the organization would classify each gift with its intended naming opportunity.

Ways to Give

Having various options that can collaborate to anyone's willingness to give is important in gaining more funds for a nonprofit organization and being adaptable. Beside gifts of cash and pledges, charitable organization have several ways to enhance philanthropic funds. Larger organizations can provide employee giving, where a determined amount of money from their paycheck is directed to the charitable foundation. Engaging with employees who give will strength inhouse relationships and inspire others to become a part of the mission. Endowments gifts is a voluntary transfer of cash or another asset to a charitable organization, who commits to using the gift according to the donor's specifications. Endowed gifts are permanent and a self-sustained source of funding. Swanson (2022), says, "the best endowments are built out of honest, trust relationships between organizations and donors and are designed to help organization fulfill its mission for years to come" (p. 3). Although endowments can come with restrictions the upside is they create a stable income for the organization. Planned giving is a

popular strategy donors like to use to contribute a major gift to a nonprofit organization of their choice beyond their lifetime. Planned giving can also be called legacy giving. According to The Official Planned Giving (2022), planned giving enables philanthropic individuals to make a larger gift to charitable organization than they could make from ordinary income. Planned giving is a sentiment to leaving a legacy after someone has died. Most times planned gifts are honors one's life. Gift officer should familiarize themselves with their organization policy and procedure to best identify what would make the greatest impact for the donor's gift. Gift officers should be able to explain during the cultivation process the different way their nonprofit organization accepts gifts and discover how the donor plans to contribute. Endowments and planned gifts will consist of legal paperwork and gift officer should lead the way to make sure all documents are secured properly.

Leadership Qualities of a Gift Officer

The ability to advance within an organization is a competition of greatest abilities. What I mean by abilities is how elastic an individual be. Before the change in the economy, laborers exhibited fixed skills. Companies functioned one dimensional and did not require employees to stretch their abilities. Their qualities and skills did not change but remained stagnantly the same. As the trade market grew and supply and demand for production and service progressed, it also revamped working individuals. Modernized organizations required employees to extend their services and potential to new heights. Pink (2012) says, "our world punishes fixed skill and prizes elastic ones" (p.34). Day to day gift officers must reach new boundaries and be prepared to conquer what innovative circumstance the world may throw out next. By expanding our boundaries and exploring new abilities required gift officer to assume leadership qualities.

Philanthropic fundraising has existed for thousands of years through ancient Greece and Rome as citizens raised money to build their cities. Religious groups across the globe have raised funds for places to worship and care for the poor. Today, philanthropic fundraising is an established career path that provides nonprofit organizations the ability to assist community needs. Gift officers are leaders in philanthropy that influences society to improve the quality of life in an ethical manner (Brunson, 2021). Leadership is the ability of an individual or group of individuals to influence and guide followers to change their behavior (Grenny, 2013). Gift officers are those leaders who understand how to create rapid, profound, and sustainable change for their nonprofit organization. To be called a leader you must have the capacity to influence others to change their behavior to achieve important results. The important result to a gift officer is cultivating relationships to successful close gifts for their organization. Gift officers are challenged with influencing society to be attracted to their organizations mission and ultimately being involved in some capacity. Gift officers who are beginning their careers in philanthropy can learn the skills to effectively influence others to begin relations with an organization. Gift officers create lasting change that is beneficial to an organization and the community it serves. Gift officers must set themselves apart from a medial environment to stand out amongst the crowd and reflect positive change and create new norms.

Gift officers are not genetically born or accidentally proficient at cultivating relationships that last or creates legacy giving. To be successful, gift officer should follow three key principles to advance their efforts (Grenny,2013).

Focus and measure is a source of metrics for gift officer to analyze and track their cultivation conditions. It is a self-growth track that aligns with the work and development a gift officer is pursuing. Gift officers must clearly communicate the goal they want to achieve.

Setting expectations and goals to achieve is significant to staying on track and moving forward. Just as important to communicating, gift officer must routinely measure and track their efforts and hold themselves accountable. Many individuals fail at these intentions because they have a vague goal to achieve, their measurements do not match their intentions, or they measure the wrong component. To influence change, leaders must have their objective accurate. The objective is the voice that calls out the change (Grenny, 2013). Only clear and compelling goals are successful. There can be no room for misinterpretation when communicating a behavioral change. Individuals who misapprehend your intentions will not cooperate with your work resulting in a failed attempt to cultivate a relationship. A clear goal represents a creditable movement for others and a strong focus for the gift officer. Objectives should be given a time of completion. A specific time frame provides encouragement to strive for achievement without wavering from the main goal and acts as an inspiration of persevering. “A clear and compelling goal can provide focus and inspiration to families, communities, and even whole countries as individuals rally around a compelling cause” (Grenny, 2013, p.32).

Bad measure can cause all change efforts to fail but consistent good measure recruits the right behavior. Gift officers tend to fail because they measure the wrong variable. To be successful in all cultivating endeavors to promote meaningful relationships, gift officers must measure the real target that needs to be changed which are people's thoughts and actions. By frequently measuring and consistently studying the details during donor conversations, gift officers are in a much better position to increase or decrease their efforts in the proper places to further their efforts of productive fundraising. It is so important to measure the correct variables and do it frequently. The encouragement that flourishing change is happening will entice the drive in a gift officer to continue the time it takes to build a trustworthy relationship. “A

measure won't drive behavior if it doesn't maintain attention, and it certainly won't maintain attention if it rarely assessed (Grenny, 2013, p.52).

Vital behaviors are the high leverage actions that lead to the result gift officers are developing. To be effective, gift officers must identify the behavior that needs to be displayed to see the results they are striving for. Taking time to study the circumstances that are causing the negative result in an environment and picking one or two behaviors to change, the gift officer will begin to see results. For example, Grenny (2013), discuss the problem of 3,000 Americans drowning in pools and mostly in public pools. A team of leaders from the YMCA and Redwood Insurance begin to study the tragedies and successes of lifeguard policies until they found one vital behavior that made the difference in people drowning or not. The team discovered that many traditional lifeguards were spending their time greeting swimmers, tending to the pool chemicals, or cleaning up. The team also discovered when lifeguard's do the 10-10 scanning, drowning rates drop immediately. This means that a lifeguard can offer aid to a distressed swimmer in 10 seconds by scanning the pool in their section every 10 seconds. The team of leaders were able to spread the information of their studies to across the world by identifying and implementing one vital behavior that made all the difference. As for a gift officer, instead of talking about the impact of the entire organization, focus on one vital impact that draws out emotions in a donor. When focused on one or two vital behaviors and distinguishing the high leverage action can achieve results that can impact a mass of individuals.

Grenny (2013) teaches the ability to engage all six sources of influence. Finding a circumstance for people to embrace the vital behavior leaders identify is challenging. Leaders adhere to six sources of influence that overdetermines their results by shaping human actions. Personal Motivation is a strategy that generates joy for others when they embrace the right

behavior. Connecting the right vital behaviors with success will motivate individuals to act out the vital behavior such as contributing a donation to the charity that touched their life or an impact story the potential donor feels connected to. People are more apt to do something they enjoy. Creating an environment that relates to pleasure will influence the right behavior of giving back to a great cause. For example, if you ask a student if they enjoy school they will probably reply with a negative feeling. Creating an environment where learning is fun and not a repeated drill will motivate students and result in better grade and positive feelings. A gift officer cultivating a relationship that is enjoyable with meaningful connection will fabricate positive motivation for both parties.

Personal ability is the qualities that a gift officer possesses to achieve their goals to raise money for their charitable organization. Gift officers must provide intentional practice and experiences to learn how to navigate the donor relations process. Many learn best by seeing and listening to others. A successful way to learn is to accompany a seasoned gift officer on donor visits to become more knowledgeable about dialogue and better understand how to navigate conversation. Once an individual succeeds, human nature only endorses them to do it again.

Social motivation is how a gift officer is viewed in society. Being a gift officer and soliciting people for money requires good ethical behavior seen in social settings. Gift officers must encourage the view of honesty and living on ethical principles that attract others to see the good in oneself. Looking at the people that make up a social environment, gift officer must examine if people are being encouraged to become engaged or withdraw themselves from surroundings. Human nature manifests society to conform to the environment that is said to be normal by their peers. If the new vital behaviors such as, learning more about organizational

charity giving, are accepted by their social influences, then others are motivated to accept the change.

Social ability can enable vital behaviors and is an important source in influencing society to support the organization and its mission. Leadership calls for mentoring others into achieving the right results such as, cultivating relationship with the right people who desire to make a philanthropic difference in society. When leaders enable others to embrace new behaviors that are uncertain to them, it begins to build trust. By developing a relationship that is unwavering of motivation will increase the probability to close a successful solicitation.

Structural motivation is good behaviors being rewarded. When a potential donor or donor acts on behalf of the organization their willingness to do so should be rewarded with appreciation. An incentive of appreciation is motivation for a person's efforts being recognized and provides motivation to continue the cultivation process. Motivation of gratitude can influence other to want to become involved. Society will notice the involvement and will be curious to find out more. This is an opportunity for gift officers to expand their network and make new connections.

Structural ability is the capability of influencers to analyze the aspects inside an environment. To cultivate properly gift officer should study what issues, atmosphere, or settings are in the environment that could hinder or aid the success of adopting vital behaviors and achieving results. If the environment does not enable the behavior that is planned, leaders must make it their responsibility to change the environment that will create the atmosphere required to successfully achieve the behavior. The competitiveness of noteworthy nonprofits across the global requires gift officers to strive in all efforts for their organization to stand out against the

rest. A steadfast gift officer can achieve their goals by adhering to the donor relationship cultivation processes and being good stewards of donor dollars.

Grenny's (2013) three keys to influence are learnable principles. All successful leaders use these principles to create lasting change and achieve remarkable results by following these strategies. Gift officer should mimic the actions of prominent leaders and conform the abilities to the work as philanthropist.

Volunteerism

Philanthropy refers to charitable acts or other good works like volunteering your time or efforts that help others or contribute to the well-being of society overall. Volunteering creates an impact on the person sacrificing their time to selflessly assist others. Volunteers within a nonprofit organization are extremely important to gift officers. Their involvement with the organization endorses their support for the mission. A gift officer can use volunteering as strategic engagement when creating new leads to cultivate. Volunteering is also an important initiative for gift officer to participate in as well. A gift officer sole job is to raise money for an organization but if society see a gift officer putting in time to benefit others in the community it will reflect a positive image. Society will know that you are not asking for money because it is what you are paid to do but because you want to impact the community and make a difference in people's lives.

Volunteering has many benefits that a gift officer can utilize to advance their mission of raising philanthropic funds. Segal and Robinson, (2021) compiled a beneficial list of reasons to volunteer. Volunteering connects you to other likeminded people who want to make a difference in the world. Networking with new people can increase your social ability skills and strengthens

a gift officer ties in the community. Volunteering is beneficial for your mental and physical health. As a gift officer juggles numerous relationships and portfolios, the stress can become overwhelming. Helping and working with others combats the mental health strains and benefits the overall psychological well-being of an individual. By measuring hormones and brain activity, researchers have discovered that being helpful to others delivers immense pleasure (Segal & Robinson, 2021). As a gift officer meets new people during volunteer engagement, they unknowingly advance their career. It allows a gift officer to practice important skills and provides opportunities to learn new abilities. Volunteering also brings fun and fulfillment to an individual's life. It's a great way to explore new interests and passions while giving back to the community. The community work that a gift officer will not go unnoticed. It will project goodwill and help the overall accomplishments of new relationships and cultivation.

Social Media

Online donors have increased rapidly because of the use of social media (Hong & Li, 2020). Social media platforms offer nonprofits considerable potential for crafting, supporting, and executing successful fundraising campaigns (Bhati & McDonnell, 2019). It is important for nonprofit organizations to effectively manage their presence on social media platforms and continue to cultivate healthy relationships with donors. Nonprofit organizations should use the popularity of social media platforms to communicate with the public about upcoming activities, vision, community impact, and standards. Bhati and McDonnell (2019) conclude social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are among the most visited websites in the United States and around the world. The public's interactions with social media posts are a new connection for a gift officer. It provides a gift officer with an opportunity to reach out on behalf of their interest in the organization.

Dietz (2018) says,

Virtually all future donors to charitable organizations, and an increasing number of current donors, are very active online and involved in social media. In addition, everyone today is dependent on mobile devices for business and personal use, and charitable organizations can greatly benefit by utilizing digital fundraising to engage prospective donors in ways that are simple, enjoyable, and repeatable. (para. 2)

Online donation platforms are a low-cost initiative to reach a broader population of people who may be interested in an organization mission (Shier & Handy, 2012). To conform with the busyness of today's lifestyle, online platforms are beneficial for people who want to be philanthropic, but schedule do not allow the time. This does not mean a gift officer ignores their online giving or interest. It simply means that a gift officer must adjust their normal face to face interaction with a more simplistic strategy. For example, a handwritten acknowledgement or text message showing appreciation for the generosity. Also, gift officers can offer the online donor the chance to follow up with them face to face when their schedule allows. It will show respect for the time but also give the acknowledgement the donor deserves.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, face to face contact was put on pause to protect society and decrease transmission of the virus. During this crisis, the donor relationship process was reshaped, and gift officer had to develop a presence on social media to market their organization and communicate with the public. Even though Covid-19 decreased interaction, the needs of the community increased. Nonprofit organizations were needed more than ever to support their community's people. Many gift officers used online video such as, Zoom to interact with donor prospects and continue relationships with current donors.

The future of online donorship is growing and the use of technology is allowing gift officers to interact with new networks of people. The presence of a gift officer should rely positive messages and organizational growth. The metrics on online interactions should be studied and used to become more personal with an interested individual. Online giving can still be donor centered interaction, but gift officers will have to put effort into communicating the correct messages for the public to see and then retain interested individuals with meaningful follow up.

Organizational Culture

Beginning with the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020, organizations have been hit hard with a decrease in employee morale which has created a toxic cultural environment. Communities around the globe were faced with navigating a new transition in life due to schools closing, complete lockdowns, unemployment, working from home, and numerous other diverse situations of change. Present day, gift officers are fighting inflation increases and unstable economic markets. Philanthropy consultant Lindley (2021) says, “it’s enough to make the most optimistic fundraiser fret.” Routing new obstacles during Covid-19, nonprofit organizations had to practice resilience to adapt to new norms that caused stress and strains on internal relationships. American Psychological Association (2020), define resilience as a process of bouncing back from difficult experiences and adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.

Organizational culture is defined as the collection of values, expectations, and practices that guide and inform all team members within an organization. Organizational culture is a key to innovation success (Büschgens et al., 2013). To be successful in fundraising endeavors, gift

officer must be innovative in their ability to cultivate meaningful relationships. A contaminated team culture negatively effects the outcome of accomplishing organizational ambitions.

Dismissive morale causes a void in team communication which hinders the objective of raising funds to further the organizations mission. Teamwork is necessary in raising money. Nonprofit organizations have many moving parts that makes a foundation team successful. From fiduciary responsibilities, metrics management, and cultivating relationships, all functions correspond to achieve organizational accomplishments. The operation behind a gift officer maintains the organizations systems and processes. Positive office morale can super-charge an organization by increasing the odds of meeting goals and enhancing performance (Jones, 2009).

To combat a workplace morale Latta (2019), proposes that foundation teams must strive to have winning attitudes to improve successful fundraising. To maintain positive attitudes and protrude enthusiasm gift officer should celebrate large and small victory as a team. Victories can include, the number of phone calls made to new donor prospects or closing a donation gift. Celebrating as a team will produce encouragement to all people in organizational operations and increase happiness for accomplishments. Gift officer should maintain an upright attitude and not project frustration from unsuccessful solicitation to the foundation team. A gift officer must know that people are not rejecting them personally but rejecting the opportunity to support the organization. Always Be Closing (ABC) is a motivational phrase use to describe sales strategy that implies that a salesperson should continuously look for new prospects, pitch ideas, and close deals. Like a salesperson, gift officers should remain persistent but also know when to cut their losses and move on to another prospect (Dollarhide, 2022). Another way a gift officer can help transform negative morale is avoiding slipping into negative thinking. Enthusiasm is contagious and people will eventually want to be as positive as you are which will create a successful

culture. Look for colleagues' good points and verbally recognizing their work within the organization is a wonderful ethic that pushes other to strive for greatness. A gift officer can facilitate a positive office atmosphere and provide a culture of support and enthusiasm which is critical for successfully fundraising.

Conclusion

The immediate needs around the globe are plentiful. Everywhere you look there is an essential lack of resources required to enhance the quality of life which requires the support of a nonprofit organization. Nonprofit organization also impact the United States economy by employing over 12.9 million people and collectively spend over 2 trillion dollars annually (National Council of Nonprofit, 2020). Gift officers are faced with a profound but challenging task to raise philanthropic dollars to help support the community's people most in need. Acquiring the title of gift officer is a significant responsibility that requires an art of cultivating meaningful and purposeful relationships with donors. Environmental events such as Covid-19 and recent economic market crisis has reshaped the processes of cultivating relationship to be donor centered. Nonprofit organizations have had to adapt and overcome numerous challenges to continue the servant leadership they provide for communities and remain strong in the philanthropic endeavors.

The success of a nonprofit organization requires superior board governance. The board of directors are the heart of the organization. Their full and loyal involvement is critical to properly achieve fiduciary responsibilities, being a donor, new innovations of policy and procedures, and advocating for the organizations mission. Board members are usually well connected in the community and can provide new connections to gift officers. Board members are also great mentors to discuss cultivation strategies with new prospects and endorsing a gift officer endeavors. It is proven that selecting the right people to govern a nonprofit organization will help increase fundraising efforts which furthers the organizations mission. The boards support is vital for a thriving foundation of any size. The leadership that can be provided when the correct people sit at the same table can increase fundraising goals and expand network of

potential prospects. Gift officer who strategically use their board leaders as allies can maintain strong working relationships and increase credibility to the community.

Gift officers need to be distinguished and innovative during identifying and making introductions with new donors by determining the appropriate form of communication. The many types of communication tools in today's market provides convenient approaches to interact with prospects and current donors. As society is now face paced and more on the go than ever, text messaging is a convenient way to quickly communicate with clients about information donors need to know. The new norm is for people to always have their email at their hands via their cell phone. Email is an efficient communication avenue gift officers can utilize to transfer information from the organization to the donor or prospect. Gift officer must research the best communication strategy that best fits the other party to boost their chances of connecting. Accommodating their communication habits will increase the probability of good conversations and cultivating relationships. Social media is a new strategy many nonprofit organizations are utilizing because of the low-cost effectiveness it has on reaching more broadly. Showing impact through social media messages can attract new donors a gift officer might have not connected with. Social media can also influence younger generations about the importance of being involved with a nonprofit organization and how it impacts the community they live in.

Nonprofit organizations have shifted their efforts to identify and retain donors by following the relationship fundraising process. Research supports high quality personal relationships increases fundraising efforts for gift officers. Donor relations encourages donor loyalty by following the donor cultivation cycle. The cycle identifies prospects, research qualification, cultivating professional but personal relationship, solicitation, and stewardship. Each stage is proven to help increase the next and ultimately securing a gift. The donor

cultivation cycle takes strategic ideas and time to ensure the relationship is being properly cultivated. The cultivation process, if done correctly, should be timely as it takes significant development to earn trust, creditability, and perspective with donors.

A donor should be recognized for their selfless generosity in support of the organizations mission. Properly recognizing donation involves following the policy and procedures of the organizations. Gift officer must familiarize themselves with what donation amount permits what level of recognition to correctly convey acknowledgements and stewardship expectations to donors. Examples of recognition of donor's generous support can be naming opportunities of buildings, scholarships, seminars, and other innovative ideas an organization develops. Through recent years of research psychologist have vividly identified gratitude as being the number one factor of reasons why people give to nonprofit organizations. A good experience can turn into a major donation for a gift officer because the grateful person wants to express themselves by a donation. When saying "Thank You" is not enough, a gift officer is able to strategically align their passion of giving back with the organizations mission.

Gift officer should obtain certain qualities that express intimate listening to discover ques of impactful stories. Pink (2012) justifies that ambivert personality characteristics are the best at persuasion because they are not overly aggressive, give time for thoughts before response, and can intimately listen. Deliberate cultivation requires a gift officer to understand the perspective of others and be in tuned with donors' ethical principles and values. Gift officer should be respectable members of society and have leadership qualities that mirrors the organizations values. Gift officers are leaders in the community and for their organization as they represent quality and performance that can influence partnerships. Members in society are attracted to others who are fully committed to their ethical values and professionalism. A gift officer's

responsibilities can cause stress and negative intentions because continuous multitasking of numerous relationships and portfolios and pressures of hitting goals. Research has shown that volunteerism is a wonder way to alleviate strains caused by the job because helping others produces happiness. A gift officer who also volunteers their time to help others is well perceived by the community. Volunteer work will also start new connections and partnerships that could be viable for an organization.

Over the past several years, organizations have battled declining employee morale and recreating a positive culture. A nonprofit organization is completed by a team of people who have worked vigorously through hardships cause by Covid-19. Gift officers can change the current dismissive attitudes of employee operations people by celebrating small and large accomplishments. A foundation team is a system of people who cannot work without the other. When a member of the team is not working at their full potential it hinders the entire team. Gift officer can influence a culture change by showing enthusiasm and positive attributes.

Gift officers improve the lives of many in their work to raise philanthropic funds for their organizations mission. It takes a determined individuals who does not take rejection personal and uses personal touches to cultivate meaningful relationships. To be a successful gift officer, you must profoundly want to make a difference in the lives of others. Experiencing the transformative impact, a gift office can make in others lives to improve their quality of life is monumental. Donor centered fundraising can have bumps in the road that involve resolutions with difficult conversations but the feeling of seeing the organizations vision come to life is exhilarating. Accomplishing goals and reaching milestones is captivating and serves as motivation to continue the pursuit. Wanting to serve others by improving the quality of life is a purposeful career and creates a legacy of giving for years to come.

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