



Leading Through **COVID-19**

ADVANCING MAJOR GIFTS IN THE NEW NORMAL

*“Philanthropy, charity, giving voluntarily and freely...
call it what you like, but it is a jewel of an American tradition.”*

JOHN F. KENNEDY

Donor fatigue is a myth. If you connect with donors and discuss their passions, they will engage with you; however, your conversations must support their philanthropic goals. It seems an easy-enough concept, but it is more important than ever to cultivate relationships based on how and why donors want to give.

Your philanthropy teams are community connectors. You represent your missions and align them with like-minded individuals willing to help advance communities and the organizations within them. Transformative Philanthropy™ happens when donor goals align with health care organization goals. Many goals have changed due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Many organizations have raised significant and inspiring amounts of money in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Stories of supply contributions, mask production and gifts donated exemplify philanthropy during this unprecedented time.

However, how do you continue connecting great acts of kindness with your urgent organizational needs?

First, modify the way you work. Boots on the ground, knee-to-knee conversations have traditionally been the way to advance philanthropy together. Then comes COVID-19. No more boots on the ground, no more knee-to-knee conversations around a kitchen table. Times have changed quickly. But, so can you. Significant discovery phone calls and virtual video visits replace in-person donor meetings. And, yes, reach out to prospects, as well. Many donors and prospects find themselves anxious to get involved but don't know how. You can help.

Check on your donors and prospects when you first reach out. How are they doing through this? Insert important pauses in conversation that allow for the humanity and reality aspects of cultivation. While continuous engagement is key, and best



representing your mission is vital, pauses for donor reflection and input is the way to build long-standing and meaningful relationships.

A critical step in all donor cultivation is to have True North conversations with donors to learn their philanthropic passions. Find out what they most wish to accomplish with their charitable giving. With the COVID-19 crisis upon us, you may quickly discover donors' priorities now include helping teams on the health care frontlines. What better way to cultivate relationships and to build trust with your hospital and your community than providing donors a way to give back while fulfilling your organization's emergent needs?

Remove false perceptions of donor fatigue and break the traditional circle of identifying, qualifying, cultivating, soliciting and stewarding gifts. Times have changed. You now must consider this an ongoing process. Flatten the traditional circle to show a continuous arrow where you engage donors at different points for different opportunities (see diagram above).

This is a donor-focused, continuous engagement model that removes arbitrary timelines philanthropy offices often instill. Don't assume it takes more than 24 months to secure a major gift or that someone can't be approached while in pledge payment. Perfect timing is when your organizational needs

match that of your donors' intentions. It is likely your current needs include health care workers' emergency supplies or additional revenue to help the community while in this crisis. There are donors who are willing to contribute to those causes. It is our job to connect these, and the time is now.

After checking in with your organization's donors and prospects, ask their desires to help in this time of need. Be a storyteller and convey human stories of incredible care and your organization's response within this pandemic. Ask if they have used your telehealth channels, have a family member who has been treated at your hospital or if they are simply grateful for efforts made to prevent the spread of the virus. They may wish to show their gratitude for any of these situations. There is no better time for you to make connections that provide contributions benefiting everyone through this crisis.

Use these strategies to progressively cultivate your donor and prospect pool. Align their goals with your most strategic priorities, discover their affinity and celebrate significant gifts supporting these causes, especially in times of crisis. This is what campaigns of \$1M or \$1B are made of at their essence.

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