



## CONNECTING WITH DONORS TO ADVANCE MAJOR GIFTS

Donor fatigue. Many of you have heard of it. Many of you have experienced it, from both the organization side and the donor side. Donor fatigue, however, is preventable from an organizational standpoint. The concept is relatively simple. To avoid donor fatigue, connect with donors by discussing their passions. They will engage with you, often very eagerly. However, your conversations must identify and support their philanthropic goals and desires. It is more important than ever to cultivate relationships based on how and why donors want to give.

Making the connection is vital. Your philanthropy teams are the community connectors. You represent your organization's mission and should align your goals with like-minded individuals willing to help advance communities and the needs within them. Do donor passions match the needs of your organization? Transformative Philanthropy™ happens when donor goals align with health care organization goals. It's actually very exciting to watch this in action!

The year 2020 brought about significant and inspiring amounts of donations towards health

care. Philanthropy was a shining star during this unprecedented time. How do you continue connecting great acts of kindness with your 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. Those are returning; however, you can also have significant discovery phone calls and virtual video visits until (or even after) donors are ready for in-person meetings. Continue to reach out to prospects as well. By serving as community connectors, you can identify and help donors and prospects who want to get involved.

Always start your conversations by sincerely asking about the well-being of donors and prospects. You may be surprised by the stories, feelings and information they are ready to share with you. Pauses in the conversation allow space for this authentic exchange and connection. While continuous engagement is key, and best representing your mission is vital, pauses that allow for active listening and for donor reflection



and input is the way to build long-standing and meaningful relationships.

A critical step in donor cultivation is to have conversations with donors to learn their philanthropic passions. Find out what they most wish to accomplish with their charitable giving. Discover what is important to them. Donors' priorities now may be very different than a year ago. As these conversations unfold, you will not only cultivate deeper relationships but also build donor trust with your health care organization. These discussions provide donors a way to give back that fulfills your organization's needs. These connections allow you to become philanthropic partners with your donors because you are now also invested in helping them accomplish their philanthropic goals.

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Breaking the traditional circle of identifying, qualifying, cultivating, soliciting and stewarding gifts helps to remove the chances of donor fatigue. Times have changed and so must your approaches. You now must consider donor cultivation as an ongoing process. Flatten the traditional circle to show a continuous arrow where you engage donors at different points for different opportunities.

This donor-focused, continuous engagement model removes arbitrary timelines philanthropy offices have often instilled. Many continue to wrongly 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 occurs when your organizational needs match that of your donors' intentions. It is our job to connect these.

As donor engagement continues, serve as a storyteller to convey the tales of incredible care and philanthropic inspiration throughout the organization and community. Inquire about their use of services—such as telehealth, urgent care and specialty departments—and how gratitude has played a role in their care. Encourage them to show their gratitude through all the channels available, including caregiver recognition and philanthropic support.

Now is the time for you to make these connections... connections that provide support benefiting your organization and your community, as well as achieve the donors' philanthropic goals. Use these strategies to progressively engage and cultivate your donor and prospect pool. Align their goals with your most strategic priorities, discover their affinity and celebrate significant gifts supporting these causes. This is what campaigns of \$1M or \$1B are made of at their essence. Be the connector your community deserves.

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