

Fundraising 101: Discovery of Your Donor

When it comes to fundraising, it is important to find and cultivate donors. Learn about how and where you can discover your donors.

Introduction

Rob: We are in the session where we're going to discuss discovery, acquisition, and nurture.

These are the three tasks of fundraising. I call it Fundraising 101, because you must understand that each of these tasks, discovery of your donor, your givers, your investors, your potential volunteers, everyone, is one task that requires a series of actions that are distinct and different from the tasks and series of actions you need in the other two.

When you look at fundraising, you must break it out into these three elements, and have a series of strategies and plans for each element.

How you're going to go about it, who's responsible, how you're going to measure, all of that will have... This is the hard work of fundraising.

Delving into these three tasks simultaneously, each requiring a different approach to the giver that you're involved with. Keep in mind that fundraising is hard work.

It's also God-provided. He has promised you. He has given you a calling. You've said, "Yes." Now, it's His responsibility to see you provisioned to accomplish your calling, and you have to go to work and find the worms.

If you [remember from a previous lecture](#), going out and doing the work is part of your faith exercise. It's not, "I have to do for myself before I go to God." He's with you through the whole thing.



Every Organization Has its Own Fundraising and Accountability Orbit

Okay. You'll remember from earlier in the sessions that I [discussed the orbit](#). I want you to focus on this picture, and again, think through what's your orbit, and where your donors are.

This is the work of discovery.

If you'll notice in the PowerPoint slide, there is a bunch of stars outside the orbit. Those stars, and many others, represent your potential givers.

The box that the orbit sits in is the universe that you fundraise from. In your specific cases, in the case of national alliances, what we're going to challenge you to do is to fundraise locally to develop some local funding, but as a national or regional alliance, you automatically deserve international funding, because you're a national alliance.

People that are interested in your country gaining strength and witness are going to be interested in helping you help your church and NGOs gain strength and witness.

That's going to be the story you tell. That will allow you to be in this sustained interdependence model with the rest of your colleagues and the rest of the world, and it will allow you to manage the Americans and Europeans that want to work in your country.

If you're not dependent on them, but you are equal to them, in terms of a communion of giving and receiving, this will start to work for you.

As we go through acquisition and nurture, we'll show you how to develop out a full slate of fundraising activities, as well as connections to your donors, your givers, and other things, and how to build it.



Where Are Your Donors?

First, starting with discovery. Where are your donors? This is hard work. First and foremost, I'm telling you that I think for national and regional alliances, your donors are everywhere.

That is, they're international, they're national, they're regional, and they are national.

Now, when you're nationally raising money, when you're raising money in your nation, you're working in the same orbit now as many of your NGOs and churches are, in terms of developing their constituencies.

Those people close in to them that are going to help them build and sustain their work, and the elders of whom will serve on their boards, and the businessmen and others will fund.

That's how it's going to go forward. You'll be providing services to your national constituencies.

As a result, I actually think that one of the issues, I'm going to call it tithe to tithe. I'll come back to that when we're discussing challenge grants, but I have an idea of how you can take your constituency through the same exercise you're going through here, and earn the reward of their gratitude, and with the sense of a tithe to back to you, and you tithing to the international.

The way that would work, if we are pulling off these challenge grants, is the international will challenge you to raise money as a national or regional alliance, and you, as a national or regional alliance, will challenge your component parts to start doing local fundraising in their own setting and their own universe.

That's the way I see it. Your thankfulness to the international means you can help them with some of the new money that you're bringing in, and your help to the NGOs and churches in your settings can help you with some of the new money they'll be bringing in.

It can be a covenant fellowship, in that sense, and utilize all of your pieces.



My Story of Discovering My Donors

In discovery, for me, when I started in fundraising, I had no idea what I was doing.

You all know that. The only thing that came to me, and the only thing I was asked to do by the leader of the [Rescue Mission](#), Reverend Lewis Whitehead, was go and speak in churches, because there were churches, for racial reasons, that just didn't want him.

There were churches for doctrinal reasons, because Lewis was a walking Pentecostal. He just laid hands on everybody.

He prayed for everybody. He was constantly evangelizing, and just very close to God. Very close in spirit. Some churches, surprisingly, found that difficult to be around, and/or were laboring under the impression that the gifts had died 1,700 years ago. That kind of thing.

In any case, it was difficult for Lewis to make a break into the white community, in the predominantly white community of Orange County, was the hard truth.

He was one of 6,000 black citizens in a county of three million people, in a very tight-knit neighborhood.

When I came in, I took advantage of the fact that I was welcomed into the pulpits of these churches. I just spoke the truth, and spoke the message out. That's how I did discovery. I had no other way.

I haven't told you this story, but this is an important one for you when you're in your discovery phase.

When I started fundraising and I was speaking in churches, I always expected the church to take up an offering, and they expected me to ask them to take up an offering.

Often, they would send the plate around a second time, and then I would be given those funds.

My message was an ignorant one. It wasn't mean, it wasn't manipulative, but it was ignorant.

I stood in front of the congregations and said, "We're your arm to go deal with the mess on the streets. You can see it. You can do something about it by giving us your money, because it's our job to do that. You don't need to get your hands dirty."

I was really popular with church secretaries in Orange County, because the system was that the homeless, and beggars and others on the streets, that would go to various churches on almost like a route.

They would go from church to church to church talking to the secretaries, because they thought of churches as places of charity. They'd go in there and ask them for money, and give them a story about why they needed it.

Church secretaries were inundated in this in the '70s, in Orange County. They were just deeply frustrated. Some of them wanted to keep their doors locked, which went against the philosophy of the church.

And so, I came up with this little coupon system. Thinking about my donor, my givers, I came up with this little coupon system, and I gave them to the church secretaries, and told them to get petty cash from their budget and keep a bunch of \$5 bills in the drawer of their desk with these coupons.

When a homeless person came in, or anybody came in begging food, clothes, or shelter, or transportation money...usually, the stories had to do with a dying grandmother somewhere that they needed bus fare for, when the truth was that there were other things they were going to spend the money on.

In any case, I gave them these coupons and told them to have \$5 bills, because you could buy a taxi cab in Orange County, then, from anywhere to anywhere for about five bucks.

When they would come into the office, the staff would hand them these coupons, call a cab and give the cab the \$5 bill, and send the person over to the Mission. The problem was nobody wanted to do it.

That was because most of those guys started their day out at the Mission with breakfast, or having had a night's sleep there, or were very familiar with it, and they were on a route. They did not want a ride back to where they had started. They wanted to complete their work.

Nonetheless, it gave the secretaries, the church secretaries, as they were known back then, a way of handling this problem. The issue died down for them with the coupons. Nobody wanted them.

But it made me really popular. They would put my phone calls straight through to the pastor. Tell the pastor, "You've got to have this guy come and speak." I'd speak, and I'd give that message, and it was the exact opposite message, really.

It was an ignorant message of a newbie Christian stuck into a role that he had to grow into, and wasn't there yet.

One Sunday night, I spoke in a small church. They took up a second offering and I wasn't given the money. I didn't ask for it. Usually, they just handed me an envelope, or gave me a check or something.

I went home, and for a week, I didn't hear from them. What do you do? Call back and say, "Hey, where's my money?" I mean, they took up the offering.

The following Sunday night, I was in another small church. Same situation happened. God spoke to me very strongly, that night, because I was deeply disturbed. I felt like, "Wait a second. These guys are stealing from God."

That's how warped my mind was, and how ignorant I was of how it really works. I was very mad at those two pastors who had held back the budget. I was sad for their congregation, because it felt like they had cheated their own congregation.

I do not know the actual details. What I do know is what God said to me in words that I understood.

Out of that deep part inside of you that knows the quiet, still voice of God, I heard, "Stop raping my bride."

I immediately realized that I only thought of the church's money. Only for what they could do for the Mission, not what we could do for them. I freaked out and realized I had been sinning, and had been treating the Lord's bride improperly.

Within a week, and when I spoke again, I had completely switched the message. Our brochure, which I used to hand out, I put a big red letter on it that said, "Do not give the tithe. Please only give to us those tithes and offerings, those offerings over and above what you give to your church."

I asked the church not to take up an offering. I switched the sermon to just teaching the parables in Matthew 25, and talked about all of our responsibilities to the homeless.

I probably wove a story in about the Mission, in some way or another, but mostly, I was focused on the congregation.

I learned a lesson. When someone gives you your pulpit... Now, all of you probably know this lesson. I was new.

When someone gives you their pulpit, it's an opportunity to bless the people in front of you.

In return, those that God has chosen to become part of your work will join you. What happened was extraordinary when I switched the messages. The fundraising of the Mission went straight up.

I mean, within a month, and continued to grow in that direction. We tightened our relationship with the churches, and we formed teams - Operation Love, where I happened to meet my wife, where we were fixing up the homes of elderly people.

There were just a lot of really positive things that came out of seeking the welfare of the church, not my welfare.

By inference, they knew. What started to happen was every time I spoke, 10 or 15 people, depending on the size of the church, would come up afterwards and say, "We've been waiting to hear this."

What that meant was God had given them a vision to do something about the streets of their own communities, and the hurting people that were living on those streets.

I came in with a solution that they could attach to, and that's how I built my donors. That's how I did discovery when I had no idea.



Think About Your Assets to Discover Your Donors

Also, part of the challenge... This is where the hard work of fundraising is, and this is where you start, and almost, you're discouraged before you get going, because you go, "Where are these donors? How do I know them?"

The thing is, do an assessment. Get your team together. Huddle together, and assess, "What are our assets?"

Don't look at what your deficits are. Don't look at who you don't know, or what went wrong two years ago, or why that person won't talk to you, or why these people are fighting with each other, and you can't get them together, and how that's hurting your fundraising.

Just sit down and do an asset look. Focus on what you have and don't have. We'll help you develop skills to look at your asset map, and begin to decide where the donors are in that.

Another exercise, when you're in your cohort, is think about your assets. Who is out there that you can contact? Who do you know? Who do you know that knows somebody?

Start putting together your assets. Don't think about your deficits. Just what you already have.