



HOW TO ASK FOR DONATIONS

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change we seek.
-- US President Barack Obama

BEST PRACTICES FOR ASKING

Asking for the things an NGO needs to be successful is not easy. You will experience more rejection than you will taste victory ... especially at first. The good news is that seeking donations can be easier if you follow these best practices.

Donations are not just financial

Donations do not necessarily mean asking for money. It is often easier and cheaper for a Donor to provide a good or service directly to the NGO than to give it the money needed to pay for that good or service. In fact, small NGO's usually choose to pay for something they need only as the last option ... after they have tried to get the item donated or the service provided for free. Because a cash gift is the most difficult donation to obtain, it is usually reserved for those goods and services that can't be obtained for free.

Types of donations

- Products
- Services
- Time
- Expertise
- Financial

STEPS TO ASK FOR DONATIONS

1. Make a list

Create a Donor Worksheet. Write a list of ALL the products and services your project needs in order to be successful. Carefully think through each step of your project. Be thorough and detailed. Remember, needs can be for goods, services, or for the cash to pay for goods and services.

2. Identify donors

Write down all the possible donors for each need. Think hard. At this point in the process, it is not important if you or your fellow volunteers know the donor personally. It is more important to think through all of the people, companies, institutions, offices, and departments in your area and then identify which of them either:
A) Shares a similar mission to the one you are working on or
B) Would benefit from your project succeeding.
These are the donors you want to list.

3. Find out who knows the donor

You are more likely to succeed if the person making the request knows the person being asked. Identify who within your NGO might know the person or someone else at the organization you wish to ask.

Consider asking your NGO's Board of Directors, beneficiaries, and constituents if they know someone at this organization. Use LinkedIn, a social media app that helps you grow your network of contacts.

A fast way to build a library of donor contacts is to ask fellow volunteers who they know when they fill out the volunteer information form described in the How to Manage Volunteers worksheet.

Pro Tip #1

Believe in your cause

Never feel or act ashamed when asking for a donation. If you believe in your cause, others will too.



4. Research each donor

Try to find out as much information as you can about each donor on your list. Do they have an office devoted to giving within their company? Have they given to charity before? If so, which charities? Who are their customers? Where do they sell? Were they profitable this year? Knowing all of this will help you with Step 5.

5. Reasons to donate

For each donor, assemble all the reasons why you believe they might want to donate. For example, they believe in your project; the project benefits them somehow; their employees/members would directly benefit from the project; participating would be good for their reputation/sales/election.

They also could benefit from things your NGO might offer them directly like sponsorship opportunities; direct contact with your beneficiaries/members; tax benefits for those who donate to charity.

The reasons identified here are similar to those listed in Step 2. The main difference is Step 2 focuses on the common ground your project or NGO shares with the donor, whereas here you are listing the reasons why donating to your NGO would benefit the donor.

Pro Tip #2:

Use LinkedIn

LinkedIn is not like other social media sites. It can help you connect with people who can help your career and your NGO. Here's how it works: If you connect with your cousin Julia on LinkedIn you will be able to see all of her professional contacts. When you need an introduction to - let's say an art teacher or someone in banking or any career field - you can search all of Julia's contacts and ask her for an introduction. Likewise, friends, family, and colleagues will ask you for introductions based on your contacts.

EMPLOYABILITY SPOTLIGHT:

Learning to ask for donations will make you more employable

Why would an employer be more interested in hiring you if you know how to ask for donations? Getting people, businesses and organizations to make cash donations or non-cash donations of products and services IS THE HARDEST TASK THERE IS IN THE NGO WORLD.

When you ask someone for a donation, you are using a combination of skills taught in other workshops in this series including: research, preparation, listening, and selling.

But the most important skills you need to be successful in asking for donations are perseverance and resilience. It's a fact that more of your requests to donors will be rejected than approved.

One path forward is to give up. There is another path, however. That's the one where you try and try again, the one where you learn from your mistakes, and change your presentation. This path shows dedication and commitment and that is a quality that employers want their staff to have.

DONOR WORKSHEET



Bring the donor worksheet with you when you ask for donations

It tells the donor:

- You have carefully thought out your project. You are a serious person with a legitimate request.
- The donor will be part of something larger than themselves. They are not being asked to support this project alone and might even feel embarrassed if they do not participate.

The following is an example of a donor worksheet used by a community organization that is producing a fundraiser event to benefit three families and four business owners that lost everything in a fire on Main Street.

Need	Donor/Motivation to donate	Who knows donor	Research on donor	Reasons to donate
Tables, chairs, microphone, loudspeaker	Local Church - The fire happened in the church's diocese. Sympathy for the victims.	Volunteer Jose is a Deacon at the church.	Lent these items last month to another group.	The victims were members of the church and the funds raised would directly benefit them.
Ingredients for dinner to be held at event	Local supermarket - A thriving neighborhood is necessary to have a thriving business.	Maria, the sister-in-law of the NGO's Board vice-president, works at the supermarket.	Lost money last year. Opened second location this year.	The event could be held in the parking lot of the new location to promote it.
Desserts	Local Bakery - A thriving neighborhood is necessary to have a thriving business.	Staff Member Antonio knows Chamber of Commerce Staff member Laura, who knows Bakery Owner	Family business in neighborhood for 87 years.	The Bakery could offer a baking class in their facility. The desserts produced would be sold at the fundraiser with the profits going to the victims. Amazing public relations for this business and perhaps a new revenue stream: baking classes.
Money for raffle prize	Regional Bank - Wants to see neighborhood recover and succeed so they can continue to make loans.	No contact as of now	The Bank has a program where each of their branches can give grants up to \$3,000 per year.	Good public relations. The Bank could have a table at the event with brochures about its banking products.
Poster to be designed	Eduardo Gonzalez, Graphic Design. Though his house was untouched, Eduardo lives near the fire.	Volunteer Roberto	Just started his business	Advertising - Eduardo's logo will go on the poster.

