Motivations & Mindsets:
Donor behavior in research and practice

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why does understanding donor motivation matter?

Purpose:
Motivation matters. Learn the forces beneath the surface that compel your leadership, your donors, and your organization to action.
What we know about donor motivation from academic research

Seminal framework:
Awareness of need  |  Solicitation  |  Costs and benefits  |  Altruism  |  Reputation of donor  |  Psychological benefits  |  Values  |  Efficacy

New motivations identified through research:
1. Identity
2. Vicarious Achievement
3. Impact (on community, issue, or institution)
Has donor motivation changed?
Ways to uncover donor motivation

Ask

Confirm

Align

Listen
Ask

Ask Yourself:

• Has the relational foundation been established?
• What don’t we know about the donor?
• What’s critical to understand?

Ask the Donor:

• How have you and your family fared during the pandemic?
• How did you first become involved with our organization?
• Where does our organization fall among your philanthropic priorities?
• What do you do in your free time?
Listen

• Active listening is about being present and engaging with the other party
• Use conversation to build rapport and draw ties back to your organization
Confirm

• Clarify what you’ve heard by repeating back the donor’s words; directly ask how it links back to their philanthropic motivations

• Make no assumptions
Align

• Your objective is to align institutional need and donor motivation

• Common donor motivations:
  o Costs & Benefits
  o Reputation
  o Impact/Influence
  o Altruism
Donor motivation:
Costs & Benefits

- Gives due to a problem philanthropy can solve
- Gives to receive benefit
- May view philanthropy as a business transaction
- Solicit gifts that offer a benefit to the donor
- Especially appreciates timely acknowledgement; professionalism of fundraiser and institution
Donor motivation: Reputation

- Gives to showcase commitment to the organization
- Desires to inspire others to contribute
- Solicit gifts that can be celebrated publicly
- Offer naming opportunities or recognition from leaders
- Especially appreciates celebration with meaningful audience, engagement with beneficiaries, external recognition
• Gives to impact their community, your organization, or a broader societal ill

• Solicit gifts that have a measurable outcome

• Especially appreciates impact demonstration through quantitative data and reporting; illustrate measurable change through storytelling
Donor motivation: Altruism

- Concerned for the well-being of others
- “Feels good” to give
- Solicit gifts that support the donor’s view of themselves as altruistic
- Sometimes anonymous
- Donors will want to feel as if they’ve “done good”
- While not complex, respond from the heart
Questions and Conversation
thank you!

We welcome you to contact us with any questions.

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Upcoming Webcast:
The Great Resignation: Obstacles and Opportunities
11:30 ET | Wednesday, Oct. 20