



## BOARD BRIEF: Strategies for the Ask

Board Briefs are "at-a-glance" resources that help board volunteers better support their Boys & Girls Club. They are designed to occur as five-minute education opportunities at board meetings.

### SUMMARY

No matter how well-planned your resource development program is, you can not avoid the "ask" – the *closing of the deal*. The three most common ways to ask are: in person, by telephone or by mail/email. Sometimes, a combination is used, but keep in mind that the key to success is effective cultivation. Finally, once a contribution is made, it is critically important that the solicitor and Club leadership effectively steward the donor so a relationship can be built.

### STRATEGIES FOR THE ASK

#### *Person-to-Person*

This is by far, the *most effective* way to solicit funds, particularly when done by a peer of the prospect. This method, therefore, is best for top prospects such as the board, major donors and prospects for restricted gifts. The visit can be made solo or as a pair. Studies show that face-to-face asks are 16 times more effective than telephone solicitation!

Volunteer solicitors should be *trained* so they know: how to secure an appointment with a prospect; and how to effectively solicit. Ideally, solicitors will be comfortable, passionate and willing to ask others to make introductions and join in the cultivation process.

#### *Telephone Solicitation*

Calling prospects on the phone can be effective if: they are already acquainted with your Boys & Girls Club *and* you are asking them to renew or upgrade their support. In these instances, a phone call is more personal than mail and more cost effective. Cold calls are difficult to make, although a study in late 1998 found that one out of 10 individuals were willing to make a gift to an organization they had not previously supported.

#### *Mail Solicitation*

This is the *most costly and ineffective* method of asking for money. However, there is a difference between direct mail and targeted mail.

- **Direct Mail** – sent to a large number of people who are not qualified/connected to the organization, but meet some demographic characteristic (i.e., family income, zip code). The return on direct mail is an unimpressive 0-2%, and most gifts are small. One benefit of this methods is identification of potential new donors to be cultivated through a select mail list.

- **Targeted Mail** – more personal; sent to individuals *acquainted* with your Boys & Girls Club. This kind of mail is often preceded or followed by a telephone call. Prospects are usually repeat givers. A reply envelope and pledge card is important to increase your response rate.
- **Email** – sent to targeted individuals; the opportunity to respond online is as important as a reply envelope in direct and targeted mail.

## SPECIAL ROLE OF BOARD

Some boards use *personal stationary* for mailing their friends and business associates asking for a contribution. The letter can follow a script or be a personal appeal based on shared knowledge, and include a specific request and clear expectations to respond (a pledge card is helpful) in a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Board members also act as *solicitors* to make personal calls on major donor prospects, and sometimes do follow up by phone. To be effective as a solicitor, each board member should first make his or her own gift to the Club.

## LOOKING FOR DONOR MOTIVATION

It is important to know what motivates donors to give, and then make the appeal as personal as possible. This should be learned during the cultivation phase. The motivation for foundations (in business to make grants) is quite different from that of corporations (business reasons).

Individual donors, however, give for a variety reasons, such as:

- **Consistency with Personal Values** – the Club expresses *values similar* to the donor;
- **Altruism** – a donor *cares* about the Boys & Girls Club, believes in its leadership, wants to help the Club do its work and make a difference to improve lives in their community;
- **In Gratitude** – donor is a *former Club member* or had relatives who were members;
- **To Receive/Exchange Something of Value** – from a simple, *intangible* thing such as friendship or recognition to something *tangible* like a T-shirt or tote bag;
- **Because They Are Asked** –many people give simply because somebody asked them. The ask is particularly effective if done by someone the donor does not want to disappoint!

*Seldom do people give for tax deduction purposes.* Although it is an important tool, a tax write-off is usually considered as a bonus rather than a motivating factor.

## RAISING THE STANDARD OF PHILANTHROPY

No Boys & Girls Club should ever feel as if it is begging. Donors get something for their contributions! By investing in the Club, donors can know they are improving the lives of children served. Philanthropy is described as love for humankind, and it is based on "voluntary action for the common good!"