

The nuts and bolts of a major donor “discovery” meeting

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A few disclaimers

- Today's focus is getting to know current and prospective donors in a 1:1 setting, the most important piece of the major donor puzzle
- Solicitation training coming soon
- My primary focus is high net worth individuals
- Different takeaways for different folks
- Every meeting will be different

Why this method?

- Wealthy people are everywhere, not everyone is going to become a major donor (and that is ok!)
- The 80/20 rule
- Asking for money is scary, this method provides a pathway to the ask
- Bold plans come from these conversations

My agenda for most initial meetings

Thank you for taking the time to meet. I'm excited to tell you about my organization but first, I'd love to learn more about you and your philanthropy.

First: (you may not cover everything here and that's ok)

- Family
- Philanthropy
- Finances
- Their passions and potential interest in your field

Second:

- An overview of my work/organization
- Will they become a donor?

Family

- Who do you consult when you make decisions about philanthropy and why?
- Was philanthropy something you learned growing up or as an adult?
- Do you and your spouse have the same objectives for your philanthropy?

Takeaways:

- Other important decision makers
- Comfort level with philanthropy
- Decision making process

Philanthropy

- What are your top philanthropic priorities? Why?
- Can you tell me about a gift you've made that made you proud?
- Do you give from a foundation or fund? Tell me more about that...
- What are you looking to achieve through your giving?

Takeaways:

- Philanthropic objectives
- How the donor likes to be treated/communicated with
- Giving vehicles and staff

Finances

- Are tax deductions important to you?
- Do you have advisors who you consult when you think about making gifts?
- Is there a time of year you focus on making gifts?

Takeaways:

- Timeline
- Advisors
- Windfall events

Interest in your field

- Tell me about your interest in _____.
- What do you know about _____?
- When did this become important to you? What is your first memory of _____?

Takeaways:

- Specific interest in your work
- Areas for you to follow up or educate
- Emotional connection to what you do

Tell me more about that...

(works every time)

NOW the “pitch”

- Fill in where you heard connections with the donor
- Read the room and the donor
- After a few minutes, turn it back to the donor
- Recognize if it doesn't feel like a good fit
- Not sure what to say? Ask the donor!

Finally, teeing up the ask

- I've really enjoyed getting to know you better and it sounds like your philanthropy is closely aligned with my work. Can I come back to you in the new year to begin a conversation about a meaningful gift to support my organization?
- Other words you might use:
 - A five or six-figure gift
 - A leadership level gift
 - Something else you are comfortable with that signals what's coming
- SHHHH...Listen for a response. Drink a sip of water and listen

What's next?

- Debrief, take notes
- Is there a path forward with this donor? What is it?
- Reflect what you heard back to the donor and think about sending follow up materials that compliment your conversation
- Create a customized cultivation plan
- This work never ends