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How to Ask for Support



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Making the ask, the art of actually inviting a potential donor to support your cause, is one of the most fundamental skills a fundraiser needs to develop. It is a technique that for some people will take some practice but can make a crucial difference between securing life changing funds for your organization and going home empty handed.

In today's difficult financial climate an effective ask can mean the difference between an organization surviving or failing and with more NGOs and similar organizations than ever before you can be sure that if you don't ask someone else will.

Too often people working in NGOs, often people who may not be fundraisers by trade, fail to grasp an opportunity to secure investment. This can happen for any number of reasons including:

- A lack of confidence either individually or in the organization
- Fear of rejection or failure
- Respect for the potential donor
- Belief that they will say no
- Fear of damaging relations

All of these doubts are a result of your own perception on what you are asking. If you don't believe in your organization how can you expect anybody else to? If you don't value and realize the difference your organization makes why should anybody else? Sometimes you will get turned down but it is better to have asked than to have never known. Whereas anyone who is offended by a polite ask to support a charitable organization was probably quite unlikely to support your cause anyway.

Do not allow yourself to think that you are taking advantage of someone by asking for a contribution, however big or small. Instead understand it as offering an opportunity to support a valuable organization they care about. We are all able to make our own decisions about how, when, where and why we spend our money and you are there to simply present a choice. But not just any choice, a choice that could change lives or even save them.

At this point we assume that the targeted donor already has an understanding for what your organization does, how it does it and why it matters. But if you are going to ask for a financial contribution it is important to make it tangible to the donor. What will their support mean for your organization? How will it change the lives of the people you work with? What will happen to your beneficiaries without your organization's support?

If you can you should try to make your ask even more precise than that. Exactly what will the donor's contribution do? If you can talk in terms of the number of lives saved, number of people treated,



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number of people trained etc that will enable the potential donor to really understand the difference he or she will be making with their support.

One of the biggest complaints of donors everywhere is, not knowing what has happened to their money or how it has been spent. Be as clear as you can about how your organization will spend the funds to help people to ensure that this doesn't happen, especially if you ever wish to return at a later date to request a further donation.

Another key element of a strong ask is to include a powerful and emotive case study. If your organization has helped someone in a meaningful way then be proud to tell the story of how your organization has made a difference to people's lives. Try to include the beneficiaries' emotions as part of the story, describe the real problem they faced and try to encourage your target donor to imagine themselves in their position. Take the opportunity to describe what may have happened without your organization's support to emphasize the importance of your organization and ultimately, the importance of donors who make your work possible.

Be polite but at the same time be confident and assured in what you are asking for. A suggested ask is below but it is important to try not to force words that don't come naturally you. It is normal to feel nervous but if they say yes you will feel wonderful and will know that you are helping a lot of people to lead better lives.

"Would you be able to support our project with a contribution of \$\$\$?" After you have asked the question try to remain quiet even if it seems a little awkward. You need to give time to the donor to consider your request and any talking is likely to distract from the important matter at hand. The donor should have all the information you need before you asked the question so be sure to give them a few moments to contemplate and come to a decision.

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