

The Path Forward

For New & Growing Non-Profit Organizations



March 2008

Recommended Reading

Sergio Zyman and Armin A. Brott's book, Renovate Before You Innovate, is a must read for anyone who is trying to market an organization or a brand. Case studies from major American corporations show strategies that work as well as some that don't. If you are interested in motivating people to do any specific thing like give a donation or become a regular volunteer you can use the information in this book. It will help you to identify what you want someone to feel, how you want them to act and what you want as a result.

Recommended Training

The Dale Carnegie Leadership Course for Managers will upgrade every nonprofit organization. Learn processes to help you with strategic planning, innovation, delegation, and meetings. Find out what works and what doesn't work to motivate and manage people and groups. Discover how to make all of your activities produce measurable results. This seven week course is top quality and utilized by Boeing, MasterCard and other for profit corporations on a regular basis. Go to [Http://carnegiestl.com](http://carnegiestl.com) to sign up or get more information.

Development Office In-A-Box

Sign up for this program and receive three hours of my personal time on your organization's priorities: grant-seeking research and writing, internal and external communications, donor relations, fundraising event planning, strategic planning consultation and research, board and volunteer training. You choose what you want my time to be used for or you can bank your time for up to one year for a larger project (like the rollover minutes on your cell phone.) Then, for additional hours, receive preferential hourly rates for my time. Our agreement will last for 12 months and is renewable annually. Call me at 314-422-5572 to find out more details.

Travel as a Fundraiser?

Does your organization rely on team travel or frequent travel? Would your donors appreciate meeting you on a fundraiser cruise or tour? Do you need help arranging your next trip? Call me at 314-422-5572 or explore my online travel store at www.teamlesleystravel.com

Ten Donor Centered Fundraising Tips -American Idol Style

1. **Market the experience not the need.** American Idol grew its audience (read "mailing list" or "donor base") by appealing to the American Dream—anybody can audition and obtain a real shot at becoming a star.
2. **Provide ways for donors to participate and have a voice.** American Idol provides its audience with a highly interactive experience. If you want to vote for your favorite performer call this number. But wait until everyone has had a chance to perform. Phone lines will be open for 2 hours at the end of the show. This conditions the audience to call and vote so that when it is time to call and give, the action is already routine and comfortable. American Idol also provokes people to visit the website by offering tickets and the option to download their performances to phones and i-pods. Finally, the recent addition of on air live answers to phoned in questions from the audience makes the experience accessible to everyone.
3. **Use compelling true stories to increase donors' interest.** American Idol engages the audience personally with the stories of the contestants. They add new intimate details each week. This increases the emotional connection between the show and the viewers.
4. **Recruit spokesman/fundraisers/Board Members who are influential, affluent, and prominent.** American Idol lets highly visible, prominent, influential and affluent Hollywood personalities be the ones to ask the audience to give. This appeal furthers the feeling that regular people are joining with the elite when they give to the same cause. When spokespeople like Ellen DeGeneres and Brad Pitt share the amount of their personal gift, they inspire other major donors to match what they have done and they also motivate smaller donors to stretch and give more.
5. **Find ways to recognize major donors.** American Idol gives frequent positive recognition to its major donors and sponsors. What is more American than Coca Cola? This is the message of the large Coke cups on the table in front of the judges. A major donor for the 2008 Idol Gives Back fundraiser is the Exxon Mobil Foundation named at each mention of the campaign.
6. **Report back evidence about the impact of each gift.** American Idol reports back to the audience about how their money is being used. Whether the recipients are impoverished African children with HIV-AIDS or victims of the Katrina disaster in New Orleans, they are filmed smiling and speaking directly to you saying "Thank you". The narrator never refers to what American Idol has accomplished although the name is ever in sight. The message is always "See what you have accomplished by your giving." While Paula Abdul may be filmed hugging a struggling child who is in tears, the message isn't, "Thank you, Paula." It is, "Thank YOU America."
7. **Use competition as an incentive to give more.** American Idol employs a subtle competition to motivate more donors to give more money this year than last year. Ryan Seacrest applauds the audience as it grows—this program resulted in the largest number of calls ever... Last year YOU gave \$75 million. This year, together, we will be able to do even MORE.
8. **Don't let the fundraiser come as a surprise.** American Idol gives lots of advance notice about the fundraiser. Every aspect of who, when, what, where, how, and why is explicitly previewed with increasing detail as the day approaches.
9. **Don't emphasize the size of the gifts you expect.** American Idol does not tell anyone how much to give. The amount is not emphasized; it is the number of individual donors that is applauded. Only major donors publish the size of their personal gifts.
10. **Frame the giving experience as fulfilling a larger goal.** American Idol motivates the audience to participate in a uniquely American experience. The emotional driver for many people is their patriotism as was illustrated by the cameo appearance after the fundraiser last year by President and Mrs. Bush thanking the nation for its unprecedented generosity.

Want to know what I'm reading?

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Feel free to add your comments there too.



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Serving Nonprofit Organizations with: Grantwriting, Annual Reports, Program Design, Training, Board Retreats, Brochures, Web Content, Newsletters, Fundraising, Endowment Campaign Literature, Research, Consultation, Capacity Building, Donor Relations, Event Planning, Seminars, Articles, Motivational Speaking, Press Releases