

Are You Getting Those Donor Stories?

by Viken Mikaelian



It's always about relationships. Whether it's in the family or in business.

Are you nurturing your donors? One way to do it is by asking them to tell their story. People like to talk about themselves. It's natural. We like to feel that people are interested in us – in what we've done and why, in what we think and feel. So you'll find that most of your donors will enjoy talking about themselves. They are proud of the philanthropic gift they have made to your charity. They want to share the enthusiasm they have for your mission. And they want to claim credit for supporting that mission.

As a fundraiser, you benefit from this inclination among your donors, because *donor stories* are among the most powerful philanthropic marketing tools we have at our disposal. Donor stories put a human face on the process of giving. They inspire prospects to identify with those who have become donors, and invite them to project their own passion for your mission upon real-life positive giving outcomes. And donor stories go further by inspiring second-time gifts as well.

But What About Stewardship?

It's your job to ensure that those who give to your organization feel like they're part of the family, pursuing the mission they love. Basically, it's your job to make them feel special and appreciated all the time – the *opposite* of “take the money and run.”

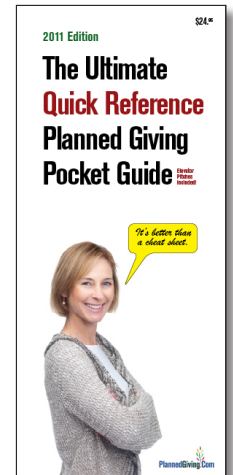
Here again, people's enjoyment of talking about themselves gives you a golden opportunity, this time to accomplish your critical task of quality stewardship. Because the process of getting donor stories is actually an advanced form of stewardship.

How better to *show your appreciation* to a donor than to ask them to tell their story? And how better to cultivate your relationship with them than by crafting and publishing the story of their generosity? For the donor, these are levels of gratification beyond that of simply giving – this is *recognition*.

Ride the Skill Building Express

But let's be honest – even when people want and like to talk about themselves, *good interviewing is a skill*. It's more than simply writing down what your donor says. It's

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guiding them to the significant points, it's eliciting telling personal details like emotions. In short, for fundraising purposes, a good interviewer must know how to get the donor's story with all the bells and whistles that maximize all the good results we spoke about earlier.

So where do you get these skills? Some people are born with them. David Frost, for example, *was*. David Letterman *wasn't*.

So if you're a fundraiser who wasn't born with interviewing skills, are you out of luck? Not at all. PlannedGiving.Com is here to help, with our *Donor Testimonial Form* (www.plannedgiving.com/27). It's one of our free downloads, and it's designed to guide you in creating top-quality donor stories every time.

One way to use the form, of course, is to personalize it (with your name and organization) and send it to the donor to help them write their stories.* But let's say 1) you want to maximize personal contact with your donors, and 2) you want to build your in-person interviewing skills. In that case, you bring the personalized *Donor Testimonial Form* with you on a personal visit to the donor, and refer to it as a guide to the interview.

However you choose to approach it, the best time for donor stories is always now. Call us at 610-933-6737 for more information.

The initial upgrade is always the steepest part of the learning curve, and with the *Donor Testimonial Form* you have a tool that cuts that learning curve down to size, enabling you to develop the competencies you will need to conduct future donor interviews without assistance.

Put simply, the Donor Testimonial Form is a professional development tool that you can put to use now to cultivate donors, develop effective marketing materials from their stories, and energize your career. Multipurpose tools are great gadgets, but this one can really make a difference. *And it's free.*

Professional Assistance

If you feel you need guidance interviewing your donors, we can help. We can set up a conference call with you, your donor, and **Brian Sagrestano** leading the interview with world-class skill and subject-matter know-how. Brian shows you how to get the kind of information you want from your donor *while giving him or her the recognition required for effective stewardship*. Your being able to participate enhances the learning experience. One session with Brian is one powerful way to *ramp up your interviewing and stewardship skills simultaneously*.
(fee: \$325 for one interview/story)

**Remind your donor she doesn't have to be a great writer.*

She just tells her story. You do the editorial smoothing for her.



I hope you find this white paper helpful. My mission is to provide you with the most effective planned giving support available, and to keep you, your organization *and* your career *permanently* ahead of the curve.

Contact me and let me know how you're doing! I would really appreciate that.

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