

CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENT + QUARTERLY +

An informational DIGEST to guide development personnel in the emerging field of development.

Volume VII, Edition 4

DONOR RECOGNITION

Giving is a habit and a reflection of one's faith and commitment to the Gospel message. Appreciation and recognition of donors, by the Catholic institution, is at the heart of continued financial support and donor involvement.

When implementing a donor recognition program, it is important to base the program on key assumptions:

- 80% of all charitable gifts, year in and year out, come from people who regularly attend church;
- Major donors are not "found" nor do they move from institution to institution; major donors are created, not found; they are created through a process of relationship building, cultivation and recognition;
- 9% of all wealth is held in cash (checking accounts, money market funds, etc.) and 91% of all wealth is held in assets (stock, bonds, real estate, etc.).
- Communication leads to cultivation which leads to calls which lead commitment;
- The smaller the community and/or the greater the faith element of the people, the less ostentatious is the display of wealth;

Don't go looking for major donors among just those with the large house and large car and high profile. People of great faith do not necessarily aspire to the material things because they are "converted" to the spirit. Consequently, we sometimes make the mistake of looking for donors in the wrong places.

COMMUNICATION, CULTIVATION, CALLS, COMMITMENT

The four Cs of development represent the process and part of the cycle of gift giving. Remember, giving is a habit and your institution would not be in operation today without the generosity of hundreds, if not thousands, of people throughout the years.

THE GIVING CYCLE

Giving is not only a habit but a cycle. Historically, people have been asked to give in merely a few, sporadic ways: offertory, annual appeals, capital campaigns and fundraising (raffles, banquets, festivals, etc.). No regular reporting systems existed, no giving history and no professional development staff were available to support traditional giving programs in the past.

Catholic schools and churches have been in a mode of capital campaigns, special needs or offertory giving. When the need went away, so did the interaction with the donor. Professional, in-house development programs establish ongoing friendships and relationships with past, current and prospective donors.

Bearing these thoughts in mind, our Catholic institutions must be committed to the major gifts component of development. Reporting to donors and recognizing donors is also at the heart of the giving cycle which leads to major gifts.

Your best prospects for major gifts are current and previous donors. A little research can go quite a long way:

- Review any data or card files from previous campaigns, annual funds or stewardship programs; check current parish, diocesan or school giving records.
- Seek out previously published annual reports, plaques, dedications and events for those who have given previously.
- If available, compare diocesan campaign or annual appeal reports which are returned to individual parishes in order to thank them for their generosity.
- Interview previous administrators as well as development officers, campaign chairpersons and board members.
- Check on any "endowed" scholarships or endowments that have been set up and are "named" for a particular donor or family; donors and families who have been active over the years may be listed as special endowment donors you can recognize.
- Alumni directories.

After this information gathering process is complete, a simple thank you note for past generosity would be appropriate. Thanking donors is an excellent way to demonstrate gratitude and is also sound public relations. Also, a thank you letter that introduces a new administrator or development officer is even more positive recognition.

DONOR RECOGNITION ACTIVITIES

Most donors do not aspire for the spotlight, however, they do want to be appreciated and they want their generosity to be recognized in some fashion.

A formal donor recognition, if not previously in place, might meet with some early resistance. This resistance will be most pronounced in parishes. Somehow, some people in some parishes think a prevailing feeling may exist that all donors are created "equal" and someone might get "offended" by the recognition given to donors. Remember, any new program will garner resistance when first implemented. Just stay with it and fairly soon the new program will become a "tradition" at your institution.

However, in a parish, your donor recognition should be for gifts "over and above" the regular Sacrificial Giving or Stewardship program.

Donor recognition should be for the following type of giving concepts:

- The Annual Fund.
- Campaign.
- Special Gift or Gift Option.
- Planned Gift or Future Bequest.
- Endowment Gift.
- Endowed Scholarship or Endowed Memorial.
- Christmas or Year End Gift (see Catholic School Development Director's +*QUARTERLY*+ November, 1990, "Promoting Year End Gifts")

Your current activities may already provide you an informal donor recognition program. Here are a number of recognition activities you may wish to consider:

- Listing names in annual reports and donor publications.
- Names in "special donor recognition issue" of your development newsletter.
- Annual Liturgy and reception/brunch.
- Giving Clubs (to be discussed in a future edition of the +*QUARTERLY*+).
- Certificate of Appreciation.
- Special Events (tours of the church or facility, guest lectures, concerts, art shows, dinner/small focus groups, trips all with exclusive invitations).
- Gifts (artwork/replicas that symbolize your institution, watercolor prints of church or building).
- Awards and Presentations.
- Distinguished Alumni/Alumnae by State (states with large clusters of alumni); this would also stimulate a greater level of activity in National, Regional, State Alumni Clubs.

DEVELOPMENT IS "DEVELOPING PEOPLE"

A future edition of the +*QUARTERLY*+ will discuss the topic of "Leading Annual Fund Donors to Planned Gifts." Development is really about developing people and their relationship with Jesus Christ through the missions here on earth. The donor recognition program is one of friendship, appreciation, service and educating people how to express their faith through their giving. The ultimate faith expression of giving would be a significant Planned Gift which an individual donor would make to your institution. That is your ultimate goal for current, new and potential donors.

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