

# **CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENT + QUARTERLY +**

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

Volume XII, Edition 3

## **THE CHURCH AND "THE CONFLICT DOLLAR SYNDROME"**

Our firm has served as development counsel to Catholic institutions since 1980. The institutions include archdioceses, dioceses, Catholic schools, parishes, agencies, seminaries and religious communities. From serving thousands of clients and traveling more than 2,000,000 miles in an 18 year span, we have a unique perspective on successful development efforts, stewardship programs, different working models, successes, opportunities and challenges.

One of the most significant issues to confront and overcome is what we call "The Conflict Dollar Syndrome." What is it?

"The Conflict Dollar Syndrome" is a persistently negative philosophy related to development, which holds that asking people to make financial and charitable gifts is somehow unseemly because it "conflicts" with other requests or invitations to give.

Often times, it will be manifested in the following same old tired phrases, code words, criticisms and objections.

"You're always asking for money!"

"People will find this 'offensive.'"

"What about stewardship?" or "This conflicts with stewardship."

"People can't afford it."

"Let's not do this. Give people a little rest and come back later."

"The timing just isn't good right now."

"I hate asking people for money."

"People like auctions, dinners, bingo and raffles better than this stuff."

"This isn't who we are."

"We don't have those kinds of people here!"

"This won't work here!"

"You just want to cater to the wealthy people. You don't care about the rest of us."

"The diocese (or the hospital, Jesuit High School, museum, university) is doing an appeal. We should wait. People will be confused."

"We were told if we gave back in 1970, we would never have to do this again."

These comments are some of our all-time favorites. I'm sure that you could add even better ones to the list. Most importantly, they illustrate the subtle and not so subtle weaponry that is used to disarm our development program efforts. You should be prepared to respond positively and turn around each and every one of the above listed objections.

## **DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY AND ASSUMPTIONS**

Msgr. John Flynn (1926-1997), who many of you knew during his lifetime, believed that development wasn't necessarily "developing resources" but rather "developing people" through lasting, loving relationships with the people of the institution by inviting them to be part of something special.

Successful institutions do not allow these criticisms to keep them from obtaining their objectives. Public universities and colleges are constantly being told they can't raise money because they are already "tax supported" institutions. Their response is that they are "tax assisted." Texas A&M University just raised 600 million in its last campaign.

Colleges and universities are also debating how the Law School, Medical School and the Undergraduate School can all be asking the same people. But they do it!

Colleges, universities and hospitals have the same problems that our Catholic institutions have. Probably the biggest difference is volunteer or Lay Leadership -- people who have a history of giving to the institution and therefore an implied commitment. Often times our institutions ask people to get involved without checking their giving history and level of commitment. "Time and Talent" are not substitutes for Treasure. We want their Time, Talent and Treasure.

A sound philosophy of development is to "invite" people to participate. It is not a command or obligation.

Historically, we in the Church have "limited and legislated" how people could give through the traditional means of giving: offertory, building campaigns, annual appeals and fundraising pledge drives or building fund "campaigns." Recently, campaigns have included endowments as well.

## **PARADIGM SHIFT AND COMMUNICATION**

The term "paradigm shift" arguably can be overused, but it eloquently and accurately describes the dramatic change in the financial condition of parishes, dioceses and Catholic schools in the United States. Until 1970, our Catholic institutions were blessed with a "Living Endowment" of priests, religious women and brothers who through their lifelong contributions underwrote the operations of our institutions. Historically, our needs were capital or building needs.

Today, our Catholic institutions must raise three kinds of dollars every year:

- Operations.
- Capital.

- Endowment.

Good, sound effective development advocates "effective public relations" to tell our story, advance our mission and ministry and communicate our needs. Most of our donors don't know we must raise "three kinds of dollars." We must "develop" our people (friends, parents, alumni and parishioners, etc.) to understand more clearly our mission and the kinds of resources required to attain that mission.

Resistance to the implementation of these concepts is to be expected. People are resistant to change, and educating people how to express their faith through giving is an educational process. But one of the great aspects of our faith and culture is "tradition" and what was once new and unpopular can quickly become a tradition. We must educate donors to give in a number of different ways, which is to counter "centralizing, limiting and legislating" how people give.

Ideally, our donors should be educated how to give in four or five ways:

- Regularly (sacrificial giving in parishes).
- Annually.
- Special Gifts (campaign pledge, endowment, memorials, etc.).
- Christmas and Year-End Gifts.
- Planned Gift.

Often times, we are unable to clearly engage and debate the objections that are so very typical. Two or three people may object to a development initiative and we make the mistake of "generalizing" and thinking that two or three people speak for the whole community. They don't. We should be debating *what difference* gifts to the project or program will make.

## **DON'T MISINTERPRET STEWARDSHIP**

One of the best documents recently published is the pastoral letter on stewardship published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Entitled "Stewardship: A Disciple's Response," the pastoral letter beautifully outlines the strong theological basis for stewardship and giving. However, we see a disturbing trend and serious misinterpretation of stewardship. Stewardship is being misinterpreted in many parishes and dioceses as *Sunday giving only* and that the only way people can and should give is through stewardship on Sundays. It is a "form" of stewardship just as prayer, service and bequests are "forms" of stewardship.

It is a case of trying to "limit and legislate" how people should give. Stewardship is not a collection system but rather "**... a (Christian) lifestyle based in Scripture that holds that all we are and all we have comes from God's manifold grace and that we are lifelong caretakers of His spiritual and worldly blessings.**"

Stewardship emphasizes giving Time, Talent and Treasure. Most people have their personal treasure in assets and only a fraction of their treasure is in cash. As a practical matter, if we legislate cash only giving on Sundays, the largest gifts will go to other charities. A tendency to centralize, legislate and develop a United Way mentality of giving is well-intentioned but wrong.

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## +*QUARTERLY*+ CHECKLIST

This edition's +*QUARTERLY*+ CHECKLIST addresses a number of issues that arise in development programs and how you might approach them:

- **Direct Mail** -- Often times, the notion of people being asked to give too often comes from not enough personal contact and letting the postal service do the asking.
- **Personal Calls** -- Eliminate the perception of "asking all the time" as asking people to make gifts is much more personal, specific customized to the interest of the donor, friendly and relevant.
- **Reaction and Response** -- Life is less what happens to us but more how we react to what happens to us. The same is true when asking people to invest in the ministry of the Church and Catholic education.
- **Consider the Source** -- Often times, the most critical voices are from those who give the least. Mature and practiced donors are usually not the critics of your giving program.
- **Let the Donor Decide** -- This is rule number one! Our job in development is not to limit and legislate but to maximize and multiply the ways and manner in which people can participate. We don't limit and legislate how people can use their time and talent, so why would we limit their treasure?
- **"Me Thinks He/She Doth Protest Too Much"** -- Why do people protest? Some have legitimate concerns. Others however attempt to use their influence to limit giving. Sometimes the small giver is at his or her limit and insists on insuring that limit.
- **Competition** -- It does not exist! Donors will always decide where they want to give their money. Comments will be made that imply competition. We don't compete with one another; we compliment one another. When one institution enjoys success, it motivates other institutions as well as other individuals to make gifts.
- **Giving vs. Getting** -- Giving is a result and outcome of lasting, loving relationships with donors who have a genuine love and devotion to Jesus Christ, and the mission of your institution is an object of that devotion. "Getting" is simply seeking dollars. Know the difference.

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