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13 Tips for Crafting your Pitch

1. **Forget tax write offs**. Don’t sell tax advantages. Your donor can get a deduction by giving to any organization. They don’t need you for that. Instead, tell a story. They’ll give to you because they know their gifts will make a difference. Will your donors take advantage of tax deductions? Sure they will. But don’t sell tax deductions, that’s not why they’ll give.
2. Donors give big, audacious gifts to big, audacious ideas. **Don’t sell need. Your organization has no needs. You have the solution**. You do not need money. Your organization has no needs. The people you serve have needs. Your organization provides the solution. And don’t feel like people won’t give to you if you’re successful. I sometimes have organizations tell me that they think people won’t give to their organization because their organization is successful and doesn’t really “need” the money. But major donors don’t want to give to sinking ships. Major donors don’t give to help you keep the lights on. Alex Spanos was a great philanthropist. He came from virtually nothing and became a billionaire, became the majority owner of the San Diego Chargers, which later became the Los Angeles Chargers after his death. He gave away lots and lots of money and was a great champion of many causes. He once said,

***“I never give because I think there’s a need. There are lots of needs. I give because it’s a program I’m interested in and I think I can make a real difference.”***

1. **Brochures have a way of finding their way into the trash**. Don’t rely on your printed materials. Your people--staff, volunteers--this is what will move your project forward! Have some materials to leave behind, something the donor can look at when you leave, but don’t go through materials when you are actually meeting with the donor.
2. If you are not planning on asking for a gift at a particular meeting, but that build up has been taking place, **tell the donor you aren’t coming to ask for a gift.** When you’re calling on a donor, they may not actually be hearing what you’re saying. They’re thinking, “*how much is he going to ask for?”* Tell the donor right up front, *“I’m not asking for a gift today. That will come later. Today, let’s just talk about the program, or mission, and the difference we want to make in this world.”*
3. **Sell your mission.** It’s all about the mission of your organization. Once this is the shared mission of the donor, now you’re ready to talk about specific programs. Mission, mission, mission. Your specific programs are only the way you accomplish your mission.
4. **Your donors want their gifts to make a difference.** Your job is to describe how your organization can make a difference in a unique way.
5. **Some gifts are given cerebrally, but the bigger the gift the more emotional the decision.** Audacious gifts are given viscerally. So if you want a gift, make a rational case for support. If you want a big gift, go for the heart.
6. **Your heart ought to be in it.** There’s got to be passion. Legendary philanthropist Mailin Burnham once said,

***“When someone calls on me, I can tell if there’s a passion for the organization. I can actually feel it. If the fundraiser isn’t deeply committed, how can they expect me to be?”***

1. **Husbands and wives discuss their giving**. “Sell” to both. Otherwise you won’t be in the room to answer the objections. So always ask for meetings with both spouses. Be willing to adjust your schedule. Make clear how important it is to you to meet with both partners.
2. **The case for the gift must be bigger than the organization.** It can’t be organization-centric. It must be about your community, the nation, the world. Jerry Panas once said, **“Sell the dream, not the project. And tell them how lives will be changed.”**
3. **Urgency**. There has to be a sense of urgency. Why do I need to give now? What difference does it really make if I give now. You’ve got to create a sense of urgency.
4. **Recognition is important**. Importance varies, but it’s always important, should always be considered, and should always be discussed with the donor. Some donors are specifically opposed to recognition. And donors may downplay how important recognition is to them. But it always matters and you should always discuss it.
5. **Keep the spotlight on the donor.**