Major Donor Clues

You’ve got all these donors. If only you knew which one was about to be your next major donor. Let’s say you have 100 donors. Or 1,0000. Or 10,000. Whatever the number, you probably know the ten percent who are your most important. (You better!). But who among that other 90 percent is poised to be your next major donor with just a little cultivation.

Your donor rolls are like vast acres of diamonds. There are diamonds out there, but you have to know what you’re looking for.

What are the clues?

Say you’re planning a trip to San Diego. You have five donors you already know who you really want to meet with. Let’s say that one of those donors is already giving to your organization at a high level. Two are in cultivation. You’ve met with them and have already identified them as qualified prospects. Two more you know to be major donor prospects but they are ducking your calls or won’t take a meeting. These five individuals make the trip worth it. Get on a plane and go! What are you waiting for?

But you’re driven and want to be successful. While these five donors alone would more than justify a trip to San Diego, you run a query and discover you have 100 more donors within 100 miles of San Diego who’ve given to your organization in the past two years.

Who else do you want to meet with?

Of course you’d take a meeting with any of these donors, right? You never know where you’ll find your next major donor. I’ve met with a $25 donor who became a six-figure gift. And because you’re driven by a desire to succeed, you’ll leave no stone unturned!

But 100 donors are too many to focus on for one trip. Sure, you’ll send a visit letter to all of them, and you’ll make visit calls to anyone you have a number for. The simple act of taking a meeting is like a donor identifying themselves as someone with cultivable interest!

But out of those 100, you have to review the list and pick out a few who you really want to focus on for meetings. These people will get special attention. You’ll make a few extra moves on these folks.

Here are things that get my attention….

1. **They’ve given lots of gifts.** I don’t even care about the amount. Look for the donor who started giving 22 years ago and they’ve given every year, or multiple times a year. Maybe they even give monthly. Whatever the specifics, they’ve been with you awhile. There’s an affinity and there’s history.
2. **A brand new donor.** They gave their first gift a week ago, or a month ago. Imagine the impression this makes on a first-time donor! It’s half a chance that you’re calling them within a month of their first gift, but the donor may think you treat all your donors that way!
3. **High dollar direct mail donors.** They’ve never had any personal contact with the organization and they’re already giving at a “high” level. \*”High” is defined by the organization.
4. **Jumpers.** These people just gave a gift above what they’ve typically given. You have a donor who always gives $100, maybe two or three times a year. And they just gave $500. Why? Something changed. Either their financial situation changed or the way they view your organization changed. Either way, you want to be in their living room for a personal visit!
5. **Go to the right neighborhoods.** Yes, there’s the millionaire next door who’s been frugal all his life. Of course. But go where the money is. What parts of this metropolitan area are there great concentrations of wealth? If you’re going to San Diego, when you’re reviewing your list, pay special attention to names in places like La Jolla, Rancho Santa Fe, Coronado.