The Major of Gifts MONTHLY IDEAS TO UNLOCK YOUR MAJOR GIFTS POTENTIAL The Major of the Major o

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FUNDRAISING ETHICS

Know Your Moral Compass

By Kim Pawlak

The unethical behavior of some fundraising professionals either directly or indirectly hurts all ethical fundraisers because it eventually leads to an erosion of trust that makes it more difficult for us to be successful in raising money for our organizations, says Scott Fortnum, president and CEO of Children's Health Foundation (London, Ontario, Canada).

"I don't think that very many people go out and intend to be unethical," he says. "I think that a lot of it comes from, in many cases, ignorance of what is appropriate and not appropriate." He recommends fundraisers be aware of and understand the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Code of Ethical Standards (https://afpglobal.org/ethicsmain/code-ethical-standards) and what the various sections mean to help ensure their actions are following an ethical code of conduct.

Fortnum says one example of a situation that might test a fundraiser's ethics is inflating the value of in-kind contributions: "While we have various rules and regulations in Canada around that, they don't really come into play until you're over \$1,000. So, I can make an in-kind contribution of \$300 and tell you that it's valued at \$800, and I won't be checked by the Canada Revenue Agency, but as a fundraiser I know what the value is.

I couldn't, in good conscience, issue that receipt for the higher value. One might think that there's no harm, or we're not going to get caught, but again, it's not the ethically right thing to do."

Mary Doorley Simboski, managing director of Changing Our World (New York, NY), shares one method fundraisers can employ to process such ethical dilemmas: "First, make sure you are clear and specific about what the ethical dilemma is. Then determine the considerations of that ethical dilemma, gather all the information you need to understand it and weigh the consequences. Lastly, take an action, and be willing to own that action and accept the impact it may have on you."

It's also important, she says, to reflect and understand your own personal ethical standards and to seek orientation and training every chance you get from professional associations and from peers.

Sources: R. Scott Fortnum, President and CEO, Children's Health Foundation, London, Ontario, Canada. Phone (519) 432-8062, ext. 1481.

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BROADEN YOUR FUNDRAISING REACH

Practical Ways to Go Global

By Daniel Lindley

Thanks to the internet, it's never been easier for nonprofits to seek international connections. It's a strategy worth exploring, says Bonnie Koenig, president of Going International (Chicago, IL).

"It opens up your ability to be more effective and to have additional knowledge and resources available to you," Koenig says. "Many organizations think, 'Well, I'm local, I'm national, why should I be global?' The reality is you can engage internationally in lots of different ways most effective for you."

Expanding your horizons internationally could help attract domestic donors with a global outlook. It also could potentially lead to gifts from foreign donors, Koenig notes.

Using the web to explore global links and initiate contacts abroad makes it inexpensive to test whether going global is appropriate for your group, Koenig says. She offers these tips:

"Many organizations think, 'Well, I'm local, I'm national, why should I be global?'

The reality is you can engage internationally in lots of different ways most effective for you."

Bonnie Koenig

- ☐ Make sure there is "alignment" for expanding internationally. A university might have international students or professors from other countries, for instance. A hospital might have physicians who want to team up on research with doctors abroad.
- ☐ "Play to your strengths and don't take international efforts as an easy win." If your organization isn't strong on diversity or multiculturalism, nurture those areas domestically before testing the international waters.
- ☐ Start small with a pilot program.

Focus on one country, and customize your connections incrementally to do due diligence to see if the project is feasible. If it isn't, there will be a minimal expenditure of resources.

□ Develop partnerships that will help you get closer to the country you target. A school with faculty and students from Germany would consider beginning with that country, for instance. In addition to helping you navigate across the language barrier, partners can act as "cultural interpreters."

Because English is the world's business language, communication shouldn't be a problem, at least at the beginning, Koenig says. Google Translate isn't perfect, but a translation button on your website's international page might be helpful to non-English speakers.

Just like cultivating a major gifts donor, establishing an international connection takes time and patience, Koenig notes. Although you can keep costs down via the web during the initial phases of going global, eventually representatives from your group will have to travel abroad.

"Remote is not a substitute for in-person," Koenig says. "At some point, if you really want to build a relationship, you have to meet in person. But that could be years down the road in your program. You can start relationship-building online and decide at some point if you want to have those in-person meetings." •

Source: Bonnie Koenig, President, Going International, Chicago, IL. Phone (773) 233-5755. Email: bkoenig@goinginternational.com. Website: www.goinginternational.com

DONOR APPRECIATION IDEAS

Make Your Top Donor Level Exclusively Yours

What particular benefit do you provide with your top-level donors that is unique to your charity or your clients?

"As a consultant and nonprofit educator, I work with nonprofit organizations to develop creative and unique solutions to recognize and give back to their top-level donors and sponsors.

"Recently in 2020 (during the hard-hitting pandemic) one of our clients wanted to host a benefit concert for their high-level donors and sponsors. They wanted a fun virtual event that they could use to give back and say, 'Thank you,' to their most loyal donors, especially after supporting them during such a hard year.

"The great thing about going virtual is that the access to top-tier performers was at an all-time high. Rick Springfield was available for a private virtual concert and gave shout-outs during the event to specific sponsors and their teams. It was a great way to entertain donors and sponsors while at the same time recognizing their gifts and contributions. We used this event to update the donors and sponsors on the client's programs and new services that were now available because of COVID-19 and which were made possible thanks to their generous donations." ◆

 — Danielle Snelson, CEO, The Profitable Nonprofit Event | Digital Fundraising Academy, Boise, ID. Email: Danielle@daniellesnelson.com.
 Website: www.daniellesnelson.com "NOMADstudio believes everyone should have access to participate in the cultural life of the community. Our Art Bus team visits places like group children's homes, juvenile detention facilities and neighborhoods in areas of high poverty. We prioritize the health and well-being of youth experiencing difficult situations by centering their voices through creative expression. Major donors can book time to paint the Art Bus — the exact activity we do on outreach with youth, and something the public does free when we're out at events. It's not exclusive; it just gives key donors a chance to feel the joy they make possible for our community's most vulnerable youth." •

— Carrie Boucher, Founding Artist and Executive Director, NOMADStudio – The Art Bus Project, St. Petersburg, FL. Phone (312) 545-7441.

Email: carrie@nomadartbus.org. Website: www.nomadartbus.org



Photo Courtesy of Todd Bates/Bates Photo, 2016

POST-CAMPAIGN CELEBRATIONS

Color Your World With Achievement

Looking for a way to highlight your capital campaign? Changing the lighting on an important building could get attention.

Augustana College (Rock Island, IL) did just that during its Augustana Now campaign, which raised \$135 million from 13,459 households and organizations in seven years.

To kick off the public phase in 2018, the college changed the color of the lights atop the oldest building on campus, Old Main, from white to blue. In December 2021, to celebrate the campaign's successful completion, the color changed from blue to gold. It is expected to stay that way until June 2022, when the college's current president is scheduled to retire.

"We wanted to do something in a way that got everybody involved and became a focal point," says Sam Schlouch, assistant vice president of institutional advancement. "It was a way to heighten awareness of the campaign on campus. It definitely was worth it. People were excited to see something different."

The change to blue occurred during a dinner for key donors. Due to COVID, the switch to gold three years later was marked by a virtual ceremony.

Because you can't always "just flip a switch and change the color," it's important to get buy-in from facilities and maintenance staff before trying something like this, Schlouch notes. He also advises "making sure you're ready with a story."

"You don't want to have a bad answer or no answer at all if you're changing something," he says. "Make sure you're ready to share why you did it and the importance of the campaign you're running."

Source: Sam Schlouch, Assistant Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Augustana College, Rock Island, IL. Phone (312) 448-6285. Email: samschlouch@augustana.edu. Website: https://augustana.edu

CASE STUDIES

How a Focused Legacy Campaign Resulted in 110 New \$100,000-Plus Planned Gifts

Planned gifts can provide a long-term source of stable revenue for nonprofits. But getting commitments for legacy donations can be challenging for busy gift officers who also have to master the complex financial and legal details of these types of gifts.

More than a decade ago, the Norton Healthcare and Children's Hospital Foundations (Louisville, KY) reacted by contracting for "values-based estate planned-giving efforts." The result: Some 110 donors have committed to making irrevocable planned gifts of \$100,000 or more to the Wade Mountz Heritage Society, set up to honor an emeritus CEO.

"It's been fantastic," says Lynnie Meyer, the foundation's chief development officer. "I know the power of these legacy gifts and the impact they will have on our community for decades after my retirement."

Norton selected an Atlanta firm, the Heaton Smith Group, to work with the nonprofit's key stakeholders on legacy planning. David Smith, the company's CEO, comes to Kentucky to meet with prospects and supports Norton's staff.

Donors' personal long-term financial needs come first, followed by the needs of their heirs and charities. Smith acts as "an outside third party with no conflict of interest" and no sales approach, Meyer notes.

All but one prospect has committed to an irrevocable gift of

six figures or more, Meyer says. New donors are honored at an annual induction dinner to which all members are invited.

Although the minimum donation is \$100,000, Meyer says she expects many gifts to far exceed that number. The cost of contracting has been less than that of one full-time employee, she adds.

"I get a full office in Atlanta that has CPAs, accountants, tax attorneys and estate planning attorneys," she says. "I get a whole team of people who specialize in this work."

Nonprofits without the means to invest in planned giving can use more affordable options, she adds.

"Don't think you have to be the know-all, be-all," she says. "If you're a small agency, build a committee that can help you."

Ask board members with specific skills, like CPAs and lawyers, to volunteer their services, she suggests. Make sure to concentrate on long-term donors who have given for 10 years or more "at any level," Meyer adds.

"We had a long-term donor that gave \$5 a year for 30 years," Meyer says. "He left an incredible \$3.2 million legacy." ◆

Source: Lynnie Meyer, Chief Development Officer, Norton Healthcare Foundation, Louisville, KY. Phone (502) 544-4152. Email: lynnie.meyer@nortonhealthcare.org. Website: https://nortonhealthcare.com/ways-to-help/norton-healthcare-foundation

BRIEFS

Keep Retiring Board Members In the Fold

Here's the usual pattern: You discover someone with financial capability, take steps to involve him or her in the life of your organization — quite often serving on a committee or advisory council — and then eventually move the individual to your board of directors (or trustees) to serve out as many terms as is possible before the person is "retired."

But then what? Is that it?

It doesn't have to be. Rather than putting board members "out to pasture," consider reversing the process.

Once a board member retires, offer him or her the opportunity to stay connected with your organization by rejoining one of your committees or advisory groups. The board member will be much more in tune with what he or she finds most fulfilling about your organization and can select a new point of involvement that will be mutually rewarding.

And besides getting valuable help, former board members will be much more likely to make a major gift if they're actively engaged in advancement activities. •

Think Big, Ask From a Position of Pride

Do you believe in the value of the mission of your organization? Of course you do. So, act like it when you ask for major gifts.

One of the biggest factors hindering smaller organizations' initial major gift fundraising is a lack of confidence that their work warrants transformational contributions. This is a frame of mind that has to be actively identified and counteracted.

As a fundraising professional, you may work for a charity, but you must never fall into the mindset of asking for charity. Veteran solicitors will tell you that if you don't own the importance of your work, you will never attract significant gifts.

This is sometimes referred to as asking for support from a "position of pride." What does this mean?

It means never apologizing for a solicitation and always presenting your organization as a partner offering a valuable avenue of collaboration, not a supplicant asking for a favor. •

MAJOR GIFTS SOLICITATION STRATEGIES

Responding to 'Yes,' 'No' and 'Maybe'

By Thomas Schroeder

After you have made the ask, there is much more you can do to secure the gift. "There is an uncomfortable period after you have made the ask for a major gift where much is dependent on how you respond when your donor says, 'Yes,' 'No' or even 'Maybe,'" says Cathy Sheffield, founder and president of ThinkGiving, Incorporated (Fort Worth, TX):

1. When your donor responds with, "Yes, I think we can do that," your job is to make certain not only that your donor follows through but that they also

"There is an uncomfortable period after you have made the ask for a major gift where much is dependent on how you respond when your donor says, 'Yes,' 'No' or even 'Maybe.'"

Cathy Sheffield

feel appreciated and valued enough to lead to a second gift. Consider these steps:

- Ask how and when your donor would like to contribute; would they like to give by credit card or online?
- Ask if they would be interested in touring your facility and meeting program staff and service recipients.
- Have a board member or the CEO call to express appreciation within 48 hours.
- Mark your calendar for follow-up in three and six months to let the donor know how his or her gift is making a difference.
- 2. When the donor responds with, "No, I don't think we can contribute," remember for the donor it is a business decision and not personal. The sales profession operates with a mantra that a "no" is just one step closer to a "yes." Your job entails determining the reason for the rejection of your request and finding opportunities in the future. It could mean waiting until next year or gaining more insight into the donor's interests and values to create a personal connection. Do not leave the meeting without asking open-ended questions and learning more about your donor's philanthropic goals.
- 3. "Maybe" is the most challenging response, and whether you are successful in achieving a major gift relies completely on your follow-up. Compassion and empathy are the keys. Consider responding with: "I certainly understand; we are asking you to make a serious investment with our organization and mission. What more can I provide you with to help you make your decision; do you have any unanswered questions or concerns? Is there anyone else you would like to hear from?" ◆

Source: Cathy Sheffield, Founder and President, ThinkGiving, Fort Worth, TX. Phone (817) 371-0597. Email: cathy@thinkgiving.com. Website: https://www.thinkgiving.com

For additional resources, visit www.wiley.com.

CULTIVATING YOUR BOARD

Nurture the Few Who Will 'Raise the Bar'

Want to convince more board members to give at higher levels? Focus your cultivation efforts on those few board members who possess the capacity and proclivity to give more generously.

If you build a group of board members committed to major gifts, their example will motivate remaining board members to do more.

Whether your attention is geared to a particular board member or a few, here's how to get them to step up to the plate:

- Get that board member to establish a sizeable challenge gift to match new and increased gifts from other board members.
- After he or she makes a large gift, convince that board member to be your spokesperson who encourages fellow board members to "give" at higher levels or "get off" the board.
- Engage board members in identifying a funding project that the full board can buy into and realize through their collective gifts.
- 4. Convince your targeted board member(s) to propose a board-only gift club that is limited to those board members who give at a certain level. Allow inclusion of emeritus board members as well.

BRIEF

Overcoming Objections

Use a portion of regularly scheduled staff meetings to address possible donor objections and how to overcome them.

Select an example of one donor objection for each meeting and then spend a few minutes discussing how to address or overcome that objection. Doing this will give each development officer greater confidence as he or she meets with would-be donors. •

CASE STUDIES

How One University Surpassed Its Campaign Goal By \$12 Million During a Pandemic

By Daniel Lindley

Despite challenges including an unexpected presidential transition, a spotty history of comprehensive campaigns and the COVID pandemic, the University at Albany (UAlbany; Albany, NY) managed to surpass its fundraising goals. From 2013, when the quiet phase began, to the end of 2020, the university's This Is Our Time campaign raised \$162 million, \$12 million more than its \$150 million goal, from more than 34,000 donors. Thirty-two donors made gifts of \$1 million or more, tripling the number of gifts at that level in UAlbany's entire 175-year history.

UAlbany had last successfully concluded a campaign in 1996, an effort that raised a total of \$55 million. Fardin Sanai, vice president for university advancement, and Larry Lichtenstein, associate vice president who directed This Is Our Time, believe this scant track record actually worked to UAlbany's advantage. An ambitious comprehensive campaign felt novel to UAlbany alumni and friends. In fact, many supporters thought it was long overdue. "'Give to the campaign' was a motivator in a way it probably would not have been at a school that campaigned regularly," said Sanai.

Sanai and Lichtenstein cited other factors for the campaign's success:

□ A feasibility study conducted by a consultant familiar with UAlbany's fundraising history and challenges was especially effective in identifying priorities that resonated most strongly for key donors. One important finding was that many major donors were themselves first-generation college graduates and wanted to ensure UAlbany

- remained an "engine of opportunity for others," said Lichtenstein. Campaign gifts created 175 new endowed scholarships.
- □ An increased emphasis on asking for blended gifts, implemented with the help of a newly appointed associate vice president for planned giving who collaborated closely with major gift officers, produced larger gifts than the university had previously received. In many cases, noted Sanai, "These gift conversations led not only to significant planned gifts but also larger multiyear pledges of cash."
- ☐ Securing a "terrific campaign executive committee" helped the campaign weather the university's leadership changes, said Sanai. From the feasibility study through the campaign's wrap-up, the committee provided valuable continuity and guidance.
- □ Emphasizing the importance of student support made a particular difference during the campaign's final phase, conducted during the pandemic. A newly created Student Emergency Fund was a catalyst for giving, including gifts from new donors. ◆

Sources: Larry Lichtenstein, Associate Vice President for Advancement, University at Albany, Albany, NY. Phone (518) 956-8061. Email: llichtenstein@albany.edu. Website: https://www.albany.edu

Fardin Sanai, Vice President for University Advancement and Executive Director of The University at Albany Foundation, University at Albany, Albany, NY. Phone (518) 956-8062. Email: fsanai@albany.edu. Website: https://www.albany.edu

ENHANCING YOUR SKILLS

Imagine How You Would Like to Be Remembered

To help plan objectives, carry out job responsibilities and stay focused, try writing out how you would like to be professionally remembered after leaving your current position. What phrases would you like others to use in describing your contribution to the organization? Do any of these phrases fit your wishes?

- ☐ Worked harder than anyone I've ever known.
- □ Led the effort that successfully completed our capital campaign.
- ☐ Always thought big and never gave up.
- ☐ Not always liked, but certainly respected by her staff.

- □ A very visible spokesperson for our organization. He brought our agency out into the community.
- Always put others first; thought and acted long-term; perfect planned gifts officer.
- ☐ Really creative at problem solving willing to take risks.
- ☐ Stayed focused on landing big gifts. Worked very methodically.

By focusing on just how you would like to be remembered for your contributions, you prioritize what matters most in accomplishing the work at hand. •

GIFT PLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Conditional Pledges and How to Handle Them

The biggest difference between a conditional pledge and pledges that are not conditional — otherwise known as a bona fide pledge — is financial in nature, says John H. Taylor, principal at John H. Taylor Consulting, LLC (Durham, NC).

Ever since the mid-1990s, bona fide pledges are required to be recorded on the organization's general ledger essentially as accounts receivable, he says, "This is a good thing because it makes nonprofit organizations look healthier financially, because these pledges are legally enforceable and can be booked as an asset." On the other hand, says Taylor, a conditional pledge, or a pledge where a donor has specified certain conditions the nonprofit must meet for the donor to consider it a bona fide pledge and pay on it, cannot be booked as an asset: "This requires you to carry a conditional pledge not on the books but rather as a footnote in your audited financial statements for the year, and some people turn a fuzzy eye to that."

Because of these financial recording changes, says Taylor, there are fewer conditional pledges being made, especially from individuals. They are now more frequently made by corporations or foundations, who may make a conditional pledge of, for example, \$100 million over five years, contingent upon the organization doing XYZ to receive the second and subsequent payments. "Oftentimes this is a very ambiguous condition, such as, 'You have to give us a report, and we have to feel that you've been doing the right thing by our money before we commit to a future year."

According to Taylor, as a result of these types of conditions, most educational institutions aren't recording multiyear pledges beyond the first year and are instead only recording the subsequent years once the corporation or foundation agrees to pledge the additional funds for that year. And, based on new standards released by CASE (https://www.case.org/resources/amatlas/case-global-reporting-standards) in 2021 that say you can count conditional pledges in the same way you would revocable gifts, the other difference between a conditional and bona fide pledge is the "counting" issue. Taylor says: "This means that when you go into a fundraising campaign, you are generally trying to raise 75 percent of your goal in the form of hard cash and unconditional pledges, so your conditional pledges don't count towards that. That makes it a bit wishy-washy on the 'counting' side." •

Source: John H. Taylor, Principal, John H. Taylor Consulting, LLC, Durham, NC. Phone (919) 816-5903. Email: johntaylorconsulting@gmail.com. Website: https://www.johnhtaylorconsulting.com

Five Things to Consider When Accepting Conditional Gifts

John H. Taylor, principal at John H. Taylor Consulting, LLC (Durham, NC), shares five ideas organizations should keep in mind when accepting conditional gifts or pledges:

- Remember the more conditional pledges you accept, the more internal management and oversight you will need to have over those pledges and the donor relations aspect to ensure you have, in fact, satisfied the condition(s).
- 2. Bring conditional pledges before your senior leadership or gift acceptance committee to review the conditions and determine if it is in your institution's best interest to accept the gift. "This allows you to say to your donor, 'Thank you so much for your pledge, but because you've added these conditions, I will need to take it before our gift acceptance committee, and they don't meet until July, so I'll have to get back to you."
- Draft a gift acceptance policy with language that specifies that acceptance of conditional pledges is contingent upon review and approval by a named individual or group.
- 4. Develop an institutional protocol that outlines the steps your organization needs to take to record a conditional pledge. This should be a detailed procedure or protocol that explains how you notify, whom you need to notify and how you record a conditional pledge differently than you would an unconditional pledge.
- Decide who is going to be responsible for administering the pledge to determine when and how that condition has been met so that you can then change it to an unconditional pledge.

BRIEF

Herald Your Reserve Fund

If your nonprofit is so financially solvent that it even has access to a financial reserve to cover unexpected surprises, tout it to those capable of making major gifts.

Donors like knowing they are contributing to financially

viable organizations — those they believe will be around for generations to come.

So if you have a reserve in place, don't hide it; trumpet it. •

DONOR STEWARDSHIP

Share a Thank-You Video With Your Supporters

By Megan Venzin

The nonprofit sector has a donor retention problem. According to a recent Fundraising Effectiveness Project survey report, overall donor and gift retention rates have lost steam over the past decade. On average, nonprofits are seeing those numbers average below 50 percent.

"That is an astounding number, and one that should be sending chills down the spine of every single development director," says Julia Campbell, founder and principal of J Campbell Social Marketing (When, MA). "The reason for this high level of attrition is that nonprofits tend to do a poor job of keeping donors informed about the impact and the results of their gift."

An engaging thank-you video can be a good vehicle for relaying that information, while also showing appreciation to your donor in a dynamic, inexpensive way. "The reality is that in the age of smartphones, we are all content creators and media companies — we all have the power to create and share video, literally in the palm of our hands," Campbell adds. She says thank-you videos should achieve two things:

- 1. Genuinely and authentically thank the donors.
- Show and/or explain what was done with the money (e.g., the impact).

Convey these messages and foster trust by using donor-centric talking points throughout your donor thank-you video (and don't forget to personalize them). "The language you use to thank donors is so important," Campbell explains. "Be sure you are making them feel like they are a part of your community and that they are helping to solve a problem." She recommends using these phrases, or something similar that is entirely your own:

- ☐ "Thank you for your partnership."
- ☐ "Thank you for your investment."
- ☐ "We are building something big together."
- ☐ "The work isn't done yet, but we have accomplished a lot."

"It's important to note that donor thank-you videos are not traditional fundraising videos. They are not meant to raise thousands of dollars," Cambell continues. "The purpose is to create a deeper relationship with the donor, which will, in turn, increase their loyalty to and affinity for your nonprofit." •

Source: Julia Campbell, Founder and Principal, J Campbell Social Marketing, When, MA. Phone (978) 578-1328. Email: Julia@jcsocialmarketing.com. Website: https://jcsocialmarketing.com

Three Apps to Amplify Donor Thank-You Videos

"Creating short, simple thank-you videos and sharing them regularly can help combat donor fatigue and deepen relationships, leading to long-term partnerships," says Campbell. "However, a pervasive myth continues to prevent many nonprofits, especially small ones, from making these videos — the myth is that effective thank-you videos have to be expensive, fancy masterpieces."

Here Campbell highlights three free, user-friendly mobile apps that help development officers create videos with ease:

FilmoraGo: "This app allows you to trim a video clip, create subtitles and text, speed up the content, add filters and add overlays," Campbell says. "You can add music to the video, which will play in the background, as well as fun themes."

Animoto: "With this app you can instantly transform your existing photos and video clips into stylized, branded videos," Campbell shares.

Nutshell: "Snap three pictures. Add captions. Choose graphics," Campbell says. "Nutshell, which can be found for free on the App Store, creates fun mini-movies for you in seconds using just these elements."

BRIEFS

Gift Potential Guide

Ten percent of a person's annual salary is a likely amount that individual might be expected to give over a five-year period. An individual who makes \$150,000, for instance, could reasonably give \$15,000 over a five-year period (\$3,000 per year). ◆

Endowment Marketing Tip

As part of your endowment marketing plan, send all of your constituents a copy of your endowment fund policy every year or every other year. Include it with a personalized letter to each constituent. •

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