

GOING AFTER BIG BUCKS

By

Stan Levenson, Ph.D.

An astonishing 80% of all grants and gifts to colleges, universities, and private schools come from individual donors. In 2010, charitable contributions to colleges and universities in the U.S. reached more than \$41 billion according to the American Association of Fundraising Counsel. With so much money being raised even during these profoundly difficult economic times, why do public school foundations and other K-12 supporters continue to spend so much time on nickel and dime fundraising efforts such as bake sales, candy sales, car washes, and pizza sales? It is imperative that fundraisers in school and district foundations learn how to go after big bucks from individual donors. By discovering how to do this, you will save much time and effort and reap major rewards for the kids and the schools.

HERE'S HOW TO DO IT!

1. Recruit volunteers in your community to work on the fundraising committee for your school or district foundation.
2. Using a group process technique, have the fundraising committee prepare a two to five-page case statement that is clear, concise, and compelling.
3. Ensure that the volunteers contribute their gifts before approaching potential donors.
4. Use the services of a good fundraising consultant if at all possible or someone on staff that is experienced to provide a comprehensive training program.
5. Before you identify potential donors, set up a database to keep track of mailings, phone calls, meetings with potential donors, pledges, and gifts.
6. Develop a potential donors list in cooperation with the fundraising committee. Decide as a group how much you plan to ask each person to give.
7. Use teams of two to approach a potential donor. Involve the principal and the school superintendent when needed.
8. Visits (not appointments) with potential donors should take place in a quiet, peaceful atmosphere and not be disturbed by telephone calls, interruptions, and extraneous conversation and noise.
9. Visits should be scheduled for 30–45 minutes and no longer.
10. Break the ice by talking about areas of mutual interest that you have discovered in your research about the potential donor.
11. Don't ask for money during the first visit.
12. Explain why you are visiting with the potential donor. Watch for signs of approval or disapproval and body language that might indicate discomfort.

13. Treat objections as questions, rather than attacks on your school program or school foundation.
14. When making the big ask, always request a little more than you expect to receive and then remain silent.
15. Not asking for a large enough gift could lead to receiving a smaller gift than anticipated or not receiving a gift at all.
16. Do not accept a gift that you think is too small. It is better to arrange for another visit to further explore opportunities for giving a large gift.
17. If you receive a gift pledge from a potential donor that you are happy with, express your appreciation enthusiastically and ask the person to complete and sign a pledge card.
18. Continue to cultivate potential donors who did not make gifts the first time they were approached.
19. Acknowledge all the people who contributed to your fundraising campaign by sending them personal thank-you notes or having a reception in their honor.
20. Be a good steward of all monies, gifts, and bequests your school receives by investing with an investment banker or certified financial planner.

By employing all of these strategies, your school or district foundation can successfully snare their fair share of big grants and gifts from individual donors to bring about meaningful change.

The End

NOTE: For further elaboration on the above, go to my list of the **“TEN TOP FUNDRAISING BOOKS FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.”**
http://www.amazon.com/lm/RAUAKUFC3K822/ref=cm_lm_pthnk_view?ie=UTF8&lm_bb

Stan Levenson has been in public school fundraising for more than three decades. His writing has appeared in major journals across America. He is the author of **BIG-TIME FUNDRAISING FOR TODAY'S SCHOOLS** (2007, Corwin Press) and **HOW TO GET GRANTS AND GIFTS FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS** (2002, Allyn& Bacon). Be watching for his new book in 2012. For more information, visit www.stanlevenson.com.