

July 2016

Dear Donor,

I've always wondered if it is possible for people on the opposite sides of situations to understand each other when they're having different life experiences. One area this is true is the canyon that exists between nonprofit fundraisers and philanthropists. How do we cross the divide between those who wish to make gifts and those whose organizations depend on the gifts given? Is there no way around the natural disconnects between two groups of people who on the surface seem on opposite sides but at the core have the same interests. I wish to take the position of the fundraiser and offer some key words that might help you and the people who seek your support.

Gratitude: Please know that at our very core we are grateful for any and every gift that comes to our cause. We know that a donor has no obligation to gift anything at all. We know that there are tremendous needs in hundreds of nonprofit causes and that when our organization is chosen for a gift it is an honor. Please know that your gift is appreciated and that if we could tell you in person how much it means to us we'd love to do so. Knowing how grateful we are might help you to not feel any pseudo guilt over having to occasionally reject one of our appeals. We are always thankful.

Fear: We live in fear of disappointing you. Because our organizations need continual support we have to keep approaching donors for more help and that of course means we have to do a good job utilizing your gift. The problem is that often the actual administration is a messy and complicated task that varies in complexity with the size of our programs and staffs. We know you have a laser focus for your gift, but we have a broadspectrum administrative challenge. This is not an excuse for not administrating well, but it does produce plenty of anxiety for the fundraiser. Knowing that we are nervous about disappointing you might help you as you seek information from us about the success of a grant or project. Putting us at ease will get you more information.

Hope: We hope to make a difference with your gift as you hope to make a difference when you provide it. We chose our careers because we were passionate about helping others. We knew when we took these jobs we would not be compensated to the level of many in the business community, but our hunger to help keeps us in our task in spite of the challenges. We hope you know our heart, that in spite of our weaknesses we are dedicated to our causes. We can see your heart in the gift you give out of an understanding of the great needs; we just hope you can see ours as we attempt to carry on the work. Knowing that we literally live for a cause might ease your annoyance at our many requests for your support. We're sorry if we seem pushy, we're just intense.

I don't know if philanthropists and fundraisers ever really understand each other but we are bound together in the need to make an impact for good. Hopefully, we can trust each other's hearts if we can't always understand the other's actions. Let's cross the divide together to do all the good we can while we can.

With sincere gratitude,

Your Nonprofit Friend