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The Major Gifts Report

MONTHLY IDEAS TO UNLOCK YOUR MAJOR GIFTS POTENTIAL

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PROFESSIONAL OPINION

Building a Well-Balanced Board

By Kerry Nenn

Q What steps do you take to build a balanced board where members pull equal weight?

"This starts with the recruitment process. As you bring on new board members, determine where you are deficient. We ensure balanced recruitment with our board, so all of our constituents are represented.

"Also ensure the recruit has a clear understanding of their responsibilities before they agree to join the board. Conduct multiple interviews, provide the opportunity to meet other board members and ask them to attend a meeting as a guest.

"Next, encourage accountability among board members. If someone is not pulling their weight, enlist the help of another member to speak with them. Encourage a discussion that allows the board member to evaluate whether the role is still a good fit. Maybe they've entered a new season of life. If their behavior has changed, there is usually something going on behind the scenes. Possibly a health issue has affected their meeting attendance. Another board member can reach out personally to discuss what is going on and talk through whether continued service on the board is feasible or if they may not have space in their life right now and need to step away."

— Alex Perez, Executive Director of WHCC Foundation, West Hills Community College District, Coalinga, CA. Phone (559) 934-2134. Email: alexperez4@whccd.edu. Website: westhillscollege.com

"First, be smart about your executive committee (EC). There's always a risk that your EC quietly becomes the 'real board,' which means your remaining members feel sidelined. When that happens, they're understandably not as motivated to do the work you need them to do. That said, you can reduce the risk by tightening the EC's scope, reducing its meeting frequency and implementing regular, transparent communication between the EC and full board.

Second, pull your governance committee lever. I see nonprofits underuse their governance committee, but it's there for a reason! A strong committee sets clear expectations that cultivate a culture of good governance. Most crucially, it keeps the board itself healthy through intentional recruitment and renewal.

Lastly, put committees to work. Create committees with clear charters so you establish equity of contribution. Committees are where deep work gets done, which is great for the organization. They're also where board members develop ownership and expertise, which supports board engagement and investment."

— Robin Powell Mandjes, Partner, Russell Philanthropies, Boston, MA. Phone (617) 595-1303. Email: robin@russellphilanthropies.com. Website: russellphilanthropies.com ◆

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Seek Gifts That Benefit Employees

During uncertain economic periods, employees can feel stressed and overwhelmed. To boost morale, consider seeking gifts that benefit them and their work, for example, a named professional development endowment fund that allows employees to attend conferences, enroll in education courses and acquire specialty certifications. ◆

Start at the Finish Line

Try this exercise: when planning a major gift strategy, start with the outcome you want and work backward. Identify the key goal, then map the conversations, introductions, cultivation steps and major decisions that will be required to achieve it. This flipped approach can reveal blind spots and help you shape a more comprehensive roadmap for success. ◆

THE MAJOR GIFTS REPORT

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WILEY

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

How to Cultivate Connection within Your Fundraising Board

By Daniel Lindley

You may think you have a good board. But it likely could be better, says Benjamin Mohler, chief executive and principal consultant for GivingThree (Richmond, KY).

"Working with nonprofits I'll ask, 'So how's your board?' and the response nearly every single time is 'My board's great,'" he says. "But it's like, 'OK, you say you have a great board, but what you really have is a group you like but who aren't actually performing.'"

Typically, Mohler learns that not all board members are making gifts, don't show up for every meeting and even when they do, haven't prepared well. But 100 percent gift-giving, attendance and preparation should be seen merely as "table stakes" by all nonprofits, he suggests.

Beyond that, Mohler advises nonprofits to observe the "three I's" to build better boards:

1. **Involvement.** Beyond showing up at every meeting, board members should read materials in advance so they'll be fully prepared to contribute thoughtfully to board discussions.
2. **Investment.** In addition to a financial gift, each board member should contribute time, knowledge and expertise.
3. **Influence.** Beyond making their own gifts, board members should reach out to their networks and beyond to bring like-minded people to support your organization.

To reach these ends, nonprofits should develop and share a clear set of expectations for board members, Mohler says. A staff member should talk with those who fail to measure up.

Offering enticements can also facilitate strong board-building, Mohler adds. "Oftentimes nonprofits are thinking about what they get, but they don't think about what it is that the individual board member gets," he notes. Adding some incentives for board members can be as simple as supplying snacks or starting meetings with public recognition of members, he suggests.

One of Mohler's clients, The Mensa Education and Research Foundation (Dallas, TX) regularly follows its board meetings with dinners where members can socialize without necessarily discussing foundation business. By breaking bread together, board members build friendships that help smooth over sometimes intense debates within the boardroom, says John Thompson, the Foundation's director of development and impact.

Six years ago, "clearly the board needed help," Thompson says. "They were in a state of complete disarray." After working with Mohler and using his three I's and other tactics, the foundation's board is now in "a good spot," he reports.

"Be intentional and purposeful in your efforts," he advises, "and never be afraid to ask for help. Above all, be patient. It's taken us six years."

Sources: Benjamin Mohler, Chief Executive and Principal Consultant, GivingThree, Richmond, KY. Phone (833) 766-4483. Email: ben.mohler@givingthree.com. Website: givingthree.com

John Thompson, Director of Development & Impact, The Mensa Education and Research Foundation, Dallas, TX. Email: johnt@mensafoundation.org. Website: mensafoundation.org ◆

AI INSIGHTS

Work Smarter, Not Harder, with AI

By Megan Venzin

AI tools can help optimize daily to-do lists, but only once the user has tackled the learning curve that accompanies new technology. Are you taking the right steps to get ahead?

"Most fundraisers are trying to use AI in some capacity, but not everyone can say they've seen huge improvements in productivity overall," says Louis Diez, CEO of WIZE (Allentown, PA). While this may be the current case, Diez believes it is only a matter of time before AI plays a starring role in how organizations raise money.

Diez speaks from experience. He launched a fundraising agency in the post-pandemic world and quickly saw how AI could aid with tasks like writing donor emails, impact reporting and more. This revelation led him to create the AI fundraising assistant WIZE, which learns an organization's mission, voice and donor relationships, then assists teams in planning and executing fundraising campaigns in minutes as opposed to weeks.

Through experimentation, he uncovered considerations that enable fundraisers to use AI more effectively. He shares his takeaways, below.

1. **Be flexible when defining AI usage protocol.** Don't wait for rigid policy before familiarizing yourself with AI tools—the technology is changing so rapidly that today's guidance may be different tomorrow. "Try to balance the guardrails with more ground up experimentation," Diez suggests. "While it's important to create space to have policy-related conversations, organizations should prioritize giving their people a sanctioned way to use AI tools internally as details are ironed out."
2. **Use AI to tackle the most time-consuming tasks of your day.** "Fundraisers will have a much higher success rate if they first think about what problems they want to solve," Diez says. "AI can do so many things, but you really have to find what's helpful to you to make the most of the utility. If preparing for donor meetings, administering follow-up to the donor meeting or writing the contact reports take a lot of time, this offers insights for a strategic relationship with AI."
3. **Be mindful of context.** "All of these models degrade and perform less effectively when you attempt to have very long conversations with them. After 200 turns, I guarantee you that the model will have a hard time responding to requests," Diez explains. "That's why I recommend starting a new conversation with your Chatbot anytime you have a new task to complete." Starting with a fresh slate for each new task pins the focus on a single objective, and also makes it easier to confirm the accuracy of the models' work.
4. **Link internal tools for increased productivity**. "Connect whatever AI you use with the tools your organization already has—you will find the result is much, much better," Diez shares. "If your policy allows, we highly recommend that you try to connect your AI platform to your CRM, email, calendar—if you thought AI worked well before, this step will take your ability to save time to a whole new level."

Source: Louis Diez, CEO, WIZE, Allentown, PA. Email: louis@wizenow.com. Website: app.wizenow.com ◆

AI APPLICATIONS

Use AI to Identify Ownership-Coded Phrasing

By Megan Venzin

A strong major gift prospect is someone who feels personally invested in your cause. Are you missing hints that they want to engage on a deeper level? Allison Strekal, MBA, CFRE, director of development for the Montana State University Alumni Foundation (Bozeman, MT) says AI can take some of the guesswork out of this puzzle.

"Watch for language that signals a donor is starting to think of the work as partly theirs," she suggests. Phrases that express feelings of ownership may include wording such as:

- "We should…"
- "Have you all considered…"
- "I was telling someone about your work…"

"That shift from supporter to owner is subtle," Strekal continues, "but AI is good at catching it across a year of contact reports when no single moment would have stood out." If an AI review flags recurring mentions of ownership-coded words, it may be a signal worth surfacing in your next portfolio review or cultivation conversation. ◆

DONOR ENGAGEMENT

How to Transform Objections into Opportunities

By Megan Venzin

Often, you'll see eye-to-eye with donors. Other times, you'll disagree—and that's okay! Navigating differences can actually make your relationships sturdier, but it takes a thoughtful approach to land on common ground.

"Objections should not be viewed as obstacles—they are opportunities for deeper engagement," says Jarrett R. Ransom, MBA, president and CEO of The Rayvan Group, LLC (Phoenix, AZ). "Silence and disengagement are often far more concerning than disagreement. When fundraisers approach objections with empathy, curiosity and confidence, they create stronger donor relationships built on trust, transparency and shared purpose."

Known as the "Nonprofit Nerd®," Ransom helps organizations deepen donor relationships through strategic fundraising, leadership and Cause Selling™ practices that teach fundraisers to slow down, practice active listening, ask open-ended questions and focus on uncovering root concerns instead of reacting to surface objections.

Today, fundraisers might face objections related to concerns around trust, organizational direction, financial uncertainty, mission alignment and donor fatigue. "Fundraisers can navigate these by acknowledging emotions first, asking thoughtful follow-up questions and redirecting conversations toward shared values and impact rather than trying to 'win' the discussion," Ransom explains.

Too often, fundraisers become defensive. In an effort to quickly solve problems, they over-explain or pound donors with data. This can cause confusion and lead to more questions than answers. "Trust is rebuilt when fundraisers slow down, validate donor perspectives, communicate transparently and follow through consistently on commitments and stewardship," Ransom adds.

During periods of change fundraisers should be ready to have candid conversations with supporters and really listen. Ransom recalls a situation with a client where a long-time donor had second thoughts about making a gift. In the midst of a leadership transition, the philanthropist voiced uncertainty about the organization's trajectory. "By validating the donor's concerns and connecting the conversation back to the donor's personal values and desired impact, the relationship strengthened—and ultimately resulted in a significant multi-year commitment," Ransom reveals.

To achieve similar outcomes, Ransom recommends adopting language rooted in empathy and curiosity. She recommends incorporating phrases like:

- "Thank you for being honest about that."
- "Can you tell me more about what's behind that thought?"
- "I can hear how important this is to you."

"These words help donors feel heard and respected while keeping conversations constructive and relationship-centered," she offers. "Today's donor conversations are often tied to deeply held values, identity, trust and emotion—not just programs or budgets. Fundraisers are navigating increased polarization, donor fatigue and skepticism, which means conversations require more empathy, active listening and emotional intelligence than ever before."

Finding consensus is achievable, but it takes work and openness to other perspectives. "Preparation starts with understanding that objections are information—not rejection," she says. Researching donor motivations and anticipating concerns ahead of time are also best practices. However, to be a true partner, Ransom recommends another key tip. "Lead with alignment, not pressure," she says. "Confidence comes from clarity and authenticity—not from forcing a decision."

Source: Jarrett R. Ransom, MBA, President and CEO, The Rayvan Group, LLC and Certified Senior Trainer, Sanford Institute of Philanthropy at National University, Phoenix, AZ. Email: jransom@therayvangroup.com. Website: therayvangroup.com, sanfordinstituteofphilanthropy.org ◆

BOARD ENGAGEMENT

Welcome Fall with Comfy Outdoor Meet-Ups

By Megan Venzin

Are you feeling the urge to get outside? Catch up with board members while the weather is still pleasant and before the holiday fundraising rush begins.

"Skip the conference room," suggests Amy Eisenstein, co-founder of Capital Campaign Pro. "Invite them for a walk or to sit outside in a local park. A change of scenery does wonders for a real conversation."

If a board member has a favorite location or place that's convenient to them, offer to come their way. Meeting them where they are can help build stronger and more intimate relationships—the kinds that do heavy lifting during high-effort fundraising seasons. ◆

DONOR-CENTRIC EVENTS

Five Ways to Unlock Six-Figure Gifts at Your Next Gala

By Daniel Lindley

Although some nonprofits struggle with making their events profitable, the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (Girdwood, AK) netted more than $100,000 from the first event it staged in more than two decades, according to Becky Chambless, development director.

"It was pretty incredible, and we really generated a lot of new major donors," she says. "At least 12 of the 105 guests turned into major donors."

What was the secret to success? Planning long and hard, working with a professional auctioneer and focusing on the nonprofit's mission, according to Chambless and Dan Newman, founder and certified auctioneer at Alaska Premier Auctions and Appraisals (Anchorage, AK), whose company played an important role in the event.

Five revenue buckets accounted for receipts including:

- Live auction.
- Paddle raise.
- Silent auction.
- Sponsorships and ticket and table sales.
- Raffles and games of chance and skill.

To throw a similarly lucrative gala, Chambless and Newman suggest the following steps:

1. **Make the event "mission-centric."** For AWCC, that meant offering one-of-a-kind auction items such as "Waffles with a Wolf," a photo session with a reindeer and a handcrafted artwork based on a grizzly bear's paw.
2. **Think ahead.** "Arguably the preparation and the planning are way more important than the night of the event," Chambless notes. Careful planning helps ensure a smoothly running event, while engagement with donors afterward generates long-term revenue. A year of planning and meetings preceded the event. "Everybody wants to throw a fundraiser because they think it's fun, but it can also end up costing money and being more of a friend-raiser if you're not specific and intentional about it truly being a fundraiser," Newman says. "There's a full life cycle of an event, and it's not over the night of the event."
3. **Include a remote participation option.** An online component, such as a silent auction, helps reach donors who don't live nearby. Most of the wildlife center's members live outside Alaska.
4. **Spring for a pro auctioneer.** Hiring a professional auctioneer to help with auctions can boost revenue by increasing bidders' buy-in, enthusiasm and momentum. A professional auctioneer can also help with preparation, planning and the myriad details involved in procuring, recording and otherwise handling auction items. If you choose to hire an auctioneer, either at a flat rate or on a commission basis, look for one who has expertise in working with nonprofits, Newman suggests, such as an auction house with a benefit auction specialist designation conferred by the National Auction Association.
5. **Collect clean data.** Beyond recording guests' email addresses, physical addresses and telephone numbers and integrating donor information with your CRM and auction software, record their specific likes. What in particular draws each one to your mission? "That allows me to send a little nugget along to a donor, such as when a baby is born or when we can say, 'You are the reason we were able to say yes to taking in an orphan,'" Chambless says.

Sources: Becky Chambless, Development Director, Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, Girdwood, AK. Phone (907) 301-7549. Email: becky@alaskawildlife.org. Website: alaskawildlife.org

Dan Newman, Founder and Certified Auctioneer, Alaska Premier Auctions and Appraisals, Anchorage, AK. Phone (907) 570-7050. Email: Dan@AlaskaPremierAuctions.com. Website: AlaskaPremierAuctions.com ◆

SOLICITATION TIP

Reframe Thoughts Around Big Asks

By Kerry Nenn

Do you practice any personal rituals to prepare yourself before a substantial ask? Victor Senn, associate director of development for Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, MI), suggests a simple reframing exercise.

Senn explains, "Since the bar for what constitutes a 'substantial ask' only rises over the course of a fundraising career, nerves are something even experienced gift officers continue to manage. Before an important ask, my personal routine is to sit and consciously think about removing myself from the center of the moment and reframe the conversation around the students and the donor's intended impact. When I remind myself that the ask is not about me, but about creating an opportunity for meaningful impact, the nerves give way to genuine excitement about the conversation I get to have with the donor." ◆

STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES

Flip Your Stewardship Approach Upside Down

By Kerry Nenn

Often stewardship is done at scale, but it may not always achieve the desired results. Heather Foss Thomas, assistant vice president for central development at the University of Maryland (College Park, MD), advises major gift officers to lean into the process of stewardship as a cultivation tool.

"Don't always assume tried and true stewardship methods are making an impact with your donors," says Foss Thomas. "You're the relationship expert. It's on you to know what will have a positive impact on each donor. And this isn't a one-and-done effort. It's the steady beat of the work we do in philanthropy. It's a constant drive to show relevant impact in a way that is meaningful for your donor."

Foss Thomas notes that this requires strategic partnership with donor relations and stewardship colleagues. Keep the team informed of what is special to each donor. Share the knowledge you have, so it can be applied to touchpoints and make them more meaningful. "For example," says Foss Thomas, "if you know that a donor's granddaughter just got accepted to the university, let the stewardship team know so it can be referenced in an upcoming thank you letter. Leverage all of your knowledge about what's special to a donor to help the team steward the donor beyond general thank yous and reminders."

This applies to the "who and how" of communications, too. "Does the donor prefer emails, printed materials or in-person meetings?" asks Foss Thomas. "Do they expect certain information to be delivered by a specific person in your organization? Turn required transactions into special experiences by tailoring to their preferences and ensuring the donor is getting the most out of each touchpoint."

Recognition is another area of stewardship that can be challenging to scale. "We need to understand how the donor's recognition aligns with their values," explains Foss Thomas. "A flashy thank you might not be motivating to a private person, but they may be motivated by a phone call from a campus leader. Determine what is driving the donor to make an investment in your organization, and then match your stewardship to that drive."

For ongoing cultivation of high-impact stewardship practices, Foss Thomas recommends reviewing and revisiting. "Regularly review your stewardship strategy to identify areas for improvement," she suggests. "Remember, each touchpoint is not just a checkbox but an important part of the donor's journey. Then, revisit your moves management strategies and identify where you can build in stewardship acts to move donor relationships forward. Understand how each effort fits with your overall goal—which is keeping the donor engaged and connected to your organization."

Source: Heather Foss Thomas, Assistant Vice President for Central Development, University of Maryland, College Park, MD. Phone (301) 405-8946. Email: hfthomas@umd.edu. Website: umd.edu ◆

BEST PRACTICES

Keep Burnout at Bay with Three Simple Strategies

By Kerry Nenn

Dr. Erin Wilson, founder of Design Ideal Consulting (Fort Worth, TX), shares three tips to stay energized and rejuvenated in the fundraising arena.

1. **Revisit impact.** Wilson explains, "If the focus of your efforts has shifted to hitting targets and meeting metric goals, try refocusing. Go back to the impact stories that drive your why."
2. **Analyze your energy.** What types of donor relationships energize you? "If you're working with a group that doesn't energize you, it's harder to communicate impact to them," notes Wilson. Find the audience that fuels you.
3. **Lead with purpose, not pressure.** "Remind yourself that you're meeting with donors to tell them why this matters and what the purpose is," suggests Wilson. "It's not about pressure for a gift." This adjustment in your preparation for donor conversations can transform your attitude—and outcomes. ◆

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MAKING THE ASK

Five Ways to Calm Nerves Ahead of a Major Gift Ask

By Kerry Nenn

Do you experience jitters before a big ask? Here's what's going on in your body—and how you can change your reaction.

"When we're in fear mode, the amygdala is activated," explains Sonya Perez-Lauterbach, holistic leadership coach and founder of Leadership Atlas (Minneapolis, MN). "This generates adrenaline and cortisol, which are stress-related hormones. They increase your heart rate. Your peripheral vision narrows. Your thinking becomes more focused. And this doesn't have to be all bad."

Perez-Lauterbach recommends learning how to navigate this response and use the stimulation in your favor. She offers five simple tips to calm yourself mentally and physically as you prepare for a major gift ask.

1. **Mindset shift.** Perez-Lauterbach suggests cultivating a mindset of excitement to replace a mindset of fear. She notes, "We want to emit emotions that ease our communication and encourage donors to say yes. Don't go into the meeting with a mindset of 'I don't want to mess this up!' Instead, tell yourself you're feeling this stimulation because this is important, I love this organization and I'm excited to offer this donor an opportunity to make an impact."
2. **Thought download.** Take a few moments to scribble down any "scary" thoughts. Get them out on paper. Then ask yourself if they are true. "Also include notes about why this ask matters and why the donor would say yes," advises Perez-Lauterbach. "Force yourself to think about the positive potential instead of the negative."
3. **Encouraging tune.** Listen to music to calm your nerves. "We all know how impactful a song can be, whether it gets you excited at a sporting event or takes you back to a memorable high school moment," notes Perez-Lauterbach. "Before your big ask, listen to a tune that calms you and puts you in a good mindset for the meeting."
4. **Dance party.** No dancefloor talent required here. The point is simply to move your body. Swing your arms, shake your hands or even do some push-ups. "The goal is to get that nervous energy out," says Perez-Lauterbach.
5. **Soothing sip.** Drink a glass of water. "This activates calm because, if you're drinking water, you're most likely safe," says Perez-Lauterbach. "Pause and drink. Hydrate yourself. Take some extended exhales. This helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which relaxes your body."

"Your mind, body and emotions all work in tandem," adds Perez-Lauterbach. "Bringing awareness to what's happening inside, naming it and working with it gives you the power to shift toward a more empowered and effective state for creating connection and communicating confidently."

Source: Sonya Perez-Lauterbach, MSLOC, Founder, Leadership Atlas, Minneapolis, MN. Email: hello@sonyaperez.com. Website: sonyaperez.com ◆

ANONYMOUS GIFTS

How to Handle a Confidentiality Breach

By Kerry Nenn

You have confidentiality protocols in place, but people make mistakes. Maybe a development associate emails the wrong file. Or a board member says something indiscreet at a gala. What are the best practices when breaches happen?

"I always say to clients that it's essential to get ahead of mistakes like this with clear accountability and regret," says Richard Russell, founder of Russell Philanthropies (New York, NY). He suggests three key steps:

1. **Call the donor and let them know what happened.** Be specific about the details and demonstrate what you've done to contain the error.
2. **Speak with the person who breached confidentiality**. Reinforce that it's a serious issue that can erode donor trust and prevent repeat donations.
3. **Give the donor their agency back.** "Ask what they want," Russell explains. "This could be as simple as nothing, to a meeting and a written assurance, to a redirected or returned gift."

Russell adds, "You might be pleasantly surprised by how much a simple, clear apology—along with concrete details on how the error will be avoided in the future—can help stabilize a donor relationship." ◆

CASE STUDIES

Learn How One Foundation Uses AI to Qualify Major Gift Donors

By Daniel Lindley

Confronted with the same budget and demographic challenges many schools and universities are facing, Oregon State University Foundation (Corvallis, OR) used artificial intelligence to fill its donor pipeline, reports Mark Koenig, vice president for technology and chief innovation officer. AI has helped the foundation operate leaner while feeding its pipeline "with a consistent set of new names that have good qualification opportunities," adds Jennifer Howe, principal at Huron (Franklin, TN).

Adoption of machine learning has been a 10-year odyssey, according to Koenig, starting with two years of data gathering. In 2017, the foundation began working with Fundmetric, an AI company.

Among other things, AI has provided "signal-based prioritization," using donor engagement and other factors to rate and rank prospects. As a result, Koenig can pull a report for top prospects in 30 seconds, compared to the month it required previously. Thanks to AI, his staff of two pipeline developers can do the work of 10, he says.

The effort paved the way for the development of new fundraising positions, including donor experience officers and regional gift officers who work with portfolios of 1,000 prospects apiece.

Donor experience officers reach out initially with personalized thank you videos to build relationships. Using multiple touchpoints, they have helped boost donor retention to the 75 to 85 percent range, Koenig says. Meanwhile, regional gift officers work through prospects to build donations.

The payoff is significant, Koenig says. With the addition of just seven new staff members, the size of the foundation's institutional pipeline has doubled to 11,000.

"The reality is that AI is really changing the nature of the work and almost democratized it in a way for institutions that don't have phenomenal resources," Howe says. "This is where strategic investment can have a multiplying effect." Donor count and the average size of gifts are up, she confirms.

Nonprofits with limited resources can get started by collecting and reviewing donor data, making sure to respect privacy. Once the data is ready, Koenig says prioritizing your pipeline can be as simple as plugging your spreadsheet into a secured organizational AI.

Although AI can boost efficiency, fundraising remains very much a human effort, Howe and Koenig say.

"It's not about replacing people," Howe says. "It's about enabling them to be even better at what they're doing."

Sources: Mark Koenig, Vice President for Technology and Chief Innovation Officer, Oregon State University Foundation, Corvallis, OR. Phone (541) 207-6671. Email: mark.koenig@osufoundation.org. Website: fororegonstate.org

Jennifer Howe, Principal, Huron, Franklin, TN. Email: jhowe@hcg.com. Website: huronconsultinggroup.com ◆

DONOR CULTIVATION

Two Signs Your Prospect Is Unlikely to Convert

By Megan Venzin

If you've put significant effort toward cultivating a prospect but haven't made much headway after two months, it may be time to wind down communications and share that energy with other potential donors.

Jim Eskin, founder of Eskin Fundraising Training (San Antonio, TX) and author of the book *10 Simple Fundraising Lessons,* says your time could be better applied elsewhere if you encounter these two signs:

1. The prospect shows no evidence of interest in the mission as indicated by gifts to other causes; conversations with the organization's management, board and other supporters; or funding priorities publicized on the website or elsewhere.
2. The prospect lacks a personal connector within the organization such as management, a board member or another supporter who can schedule a meeting.

"The above two concern me a lot more than perceived capacity," Eskin adds. "Major gifts are made much more due to interest in the cause than financial capacity to make a gift."

Source: Jim Eskin, Founder, Eskin Fundraising Training, San Antonio, TX. Phone (210) 415-3748. Email: jeskin@aol.com. Website: eskinfundraisingtraining.com ◆