



## Tips on Raising Funds for Missionaries

By Dan Bouchelle

### General Backgrounds

1. **Prayer should be your chief fundraising strategy.** Jesus tells us to ask. Before we ask anyone else, we need to ask the Father. (Reflect on the following Scriptures: Matt 7:7-11, 18:19-20; James 1:16-17, 4:1-3)
2. **Think in terms of relationships.** Everything runs on the rails of relationships. People don't typically give money to organizations or causes. They give money to people. They give to people a) they trust, b) who are doing things they value, c) whose mission has a sense of urgency, and d) who have a vision and strategy that makes sense to them. Your passion is important and is inspiring, but your credibility is essential. People have to trust you and be inspired by what you are doing.
3. **The motive behind giving is emotional.** The barriers to giving are a mix of emotion and intellect. People's wallets are tied to their hearts. Even when they talk strategy or ask process questions, the real motive to give is emotional. They give because you touch their hearts and earn their trust. They only ask questions of strategy after their heart is engaged. They need to grasp a picture of the people you are seeking to help, more than of those who will be providing the help. That said, keep in mind that there are also those who are motivated by numbers and statistics. Use your instincts to decipher which type of donor you are addressing. The best way to use numbers is after you tell a compelling story. If you can help people see the impact on one life, then you can help them see the potential impact on the larger numbers.
4. **To get people involved you must sell the problem before you sell the solution.** Americans LOVE to solve problems, but only those with viable solutions. We like to think we love people, but we really love projects and progress. The only thing we love more than problems is opportunities hiding in the midst of problems. We want to "make a difference." We want to think we are heroes (but do not typically know this about ourselves). We are pragmatic fixers. A good approach starts by painting a picture of a problem that will concern them (i.e., they can picture the need and it feels personal because they can visualize and feel the need) and then show them how THEY can solve it by working with you. Develop your storytelling skills and use it when painting a picture of those you serve. Most donors find stories compelling and motivating. Tell them how THEY can impact the world by partnering with what God is doing through your ministry. If they see the problem, and it grabs their hearts, and you are the only one (or the only one they trust) who can help them solve it, they will

want to support your work. Only then will they begin to care about your strategy, because then they begin to care about your trustworthiness and skill. Also keep in mind that younger donors are more interested in getting involved as opposed to more mature donors who are mostly interested in simply hearing about the ministry.

5. **You will need more money they you think.** You can't anticipate everything. Don't be afraid of this, but don't aim too low just to get to the field. It will not end well.

### **Strategy**

1. **Fish your relational pond and then the pools of people who know you.** The farther you get from your relational pond, the harder it is to get a meeting and a hearing.
2. **Most churches give because someone of standing in that church will advocate for you.** You need to find insiders in churches who can introduce you to people and vouch for you. Think about who you know, where they go to church, who they know, and who they can connect you to.
3. **Whenever you get a yes (or even a no) from someone who seems genuinely interested in what you are doing, ask if they can connect you to others who may share your vision.** Fundraising is connecting the dots between relationships and people of shared values. Oftentimes a "No" simply means it is either the wrong time or wrong amount. Give the prospective donor the opportunity to express why they turned you down.
4. **Giving people an opportunity to give to your ministry is a blessing if you do it right.** You are not trying to talk people into giving away money. If they are not interested in supporting ministry, you won't get a meeting. They are trying to discern where to give and how much. You are helping people who love God and want to support his mission learn what God is doing and discern their calling. This is a gift you give people, which you should embrace as a joyful service to them, not a burden on them. You are helping people fulfill their calling.
5. **You don't raise money by talking about money.** You raise money by talking about vision. What is the problem? You must sell the problem before you sell the solution. People need to be able to visualize the people who will be blessed and identify with their plight. Then they have to see a solution that they trust. This is the vision. You need to help people see the before and after your ministry is designed to produce. Also, make sure you report results back to your donors. Increasingly, donors want to know specifically how they helped others through your work.
6. **Get the wife in the meeting if you are meeting with a man.** Generally, women are more in touch with their emotions and can usually better imagine the life of the people you want to reach. Most men need help with key aspects of discerning what to support. They can hide behind strategy questions and avoid the emotion that will drive the giving. If you are meeting with a committee, get women in the room.

## **Making the Ask**

- 1. Listen twice as much as you talk.** Ask good questions and really listen. Don't just engage in small talk to set up an ask. Really try to get to know the people you are meeting with if they will let you. Some won't and will let you know they want you to get to the point. Follow their lead. You raise funds with your ears more than your mouth. Until you know what the person across from you values, you won't know how to connect with them. Your job is not to find money, it is to help people who love God find a way to engage with God's work in a way that fits their values and sense of calling. You are not really doing fundraising; you are doing friend/partner-raising. You are raising up people. The power is in connecting the donor's values and dreams to your mission. You have to know people in order to do that. Get to know your potential supporters well. Find out as much as you can about them before you meet, and then even more when you do meet. Find out what lights them up and touches their heart. Then, see if there is a connection between what they care about and what you are doing. If not, you are probably better off helping them find the right ministry to support than trying to talk them into supporting your work. That really adds to your credibility and can come back to help you in ways you can't yet imagine. But, if there is a link, present what you are doing in a way that highlights that link. Use your intuition. If the potential donor doesn't seem interested, is distracted, or is looking at their watch frequently, make the meeting short. On the other hand, if they want to talk, give them the freedom to talk as long as they want. Oftentimes people become more interested in your vision, the more that THEY talk. That is a good sign. Don't interrupt them.
- 2. Be bold and unapologetic.** If you don't believe in what you are doing, no one else will. What you are doing is important and deserves to be done well. Don't shoot for the least you can get buy on. Dream big, ask boldly, and be grateful for what you receive, even if it is only encouragement or time.
- 3. MAKE THE ASK after you have set up the problem and your vision!** Be specific. Don't talk around the issue. Tell people how they can be part of what you are doing. Help them see exactly how their gift will make a difference.
- 4. When you have made the ask, be quiet and wait on the answer.** Don't interrupt the awkward silence. People need time to think. That silence is working for you. Don't mess it up. You've probably overwhelmed them some. They may have questions. Give short direct answers. If you don't know the answer, say so. Don't be afraid to say, "We will have to learn that on the field." Don't bluff. Be real. Practice before you go. Make an ask, then sit quietly, waiting for the answer. With practice, it will become more comfortable.

5. **Stop selling when they buy.** Once you get a yes, say thank you and stop making the case. Don't tell them they won't regret this. Say thank you with great sincerity and express excitement over that partnership. But don't overdo it. Make sure to nail down some logistics about the gift and communication. For example, "What are next steps you need to partner with us?" Make sure they know how to give and always encourage monthly giving over a one-time gift. Your expenses are ongoing, so you need for your income to be ongoing as well.
6. **Never ever use guilt or shame in any way.** No one owes you anything. No matter what answer you get, say thank you and bless the people on the way out. People will not remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel. If you make them feel valued, loved, and respected, regardless, they will look forward to seeing you again and speak well of you. If you make them feel judged, pressured, or used, they will avoid you and warn others about you if your name comes up. And who knows, one day in the future, they may change their minds.
7. **Desperation usually backfires and destroys confidence.** If you can't get support from others, people will wonder why. What are they not seeing? Desperation makes your work look like a high risk and likely a poor exercise of stewardship. Trust God to supply and display that confidence. You are not responsible for raising the money – only for telling the story.
8. **Tell people how they can impact the world for Jesus.** Don't ask them to support you. They don't necessarily want to support YOU. But they DO want to make a difference in the world. Listen for what is most important to them. Read Phil. 4:10-20 and adopt the attitude of Paul. Be focused on partnership, not funds.