

MAJOR GIFTS 101

To run an effective major gifts campaign, you must develop a plan that includes – a goal for how much you want to raise, how many gifts are needed to reach that goal, who you are going to ask, and how much you are going to ask each person for.

The Gift Range Chart

Given that not everyone has the same amount of money, giving patterns look something like a pyramid. A few people (the ones at the top of the pyramid) can give a lot, some more people can give mid-level gifts (the middle of the pyramid), and lots of people can give smaller donations (the base of the pyramid).

On average:

- 50-70% of a group's income comes from 10% of its donors
- 15-25% of income comes from 20% of donors
- The remaining 15-25% comes from 70% of donors

Additionally:

- One leadership gift usually accounts for 10% of the goal to raise
- The next two gifts account for the next 10% of the goal
- The 3-5 gifts after that are the next 10% and so on...

Sample Gift Range Chart

Goal = \$50,000 (\$30,000 in "major gifts")

Gift Amount	# of Gifts	# of Prospects Needed	Total	Cumulative Total
\$5,000	1 (10%)	4	\$5,000	\$5,000
\$2,500	2 (10%)	8	\$5,000	\$10,000
\$1,000	5 (10%)	20	\$5,000	\$15,000
\$500	10	30	\$5,000	\$20,000
\$250	20	60	\$5,000	\$25,000
\$100	50	150	\$5,000	\$30,000
TOTALS	88 gifts/donors	272 prospects	\$30,000 raised	
\$25-\$99	about 175	varies	\$10,000	\$40,000
\$1-\$50	about 600	varies	\$10,000	\$50,000

The gift range chart is meant as a planning guide. It will be adjusted, numbers will be changed, and the ranges will move up and down depending on the goal, the size of the group, the extent of the campaign, etc.

Who to Ask and for How Much

Once you have your gift range chart, you need people to ask!

Donors don't typically give large donations until an organization has earned their trust. A nonprofit generally can track that trust in the relationship through donor loyalty. Look at your supporters and ask these kinds of questions.

- Has the donor given smaller gifts consistently, year after year?
- Does the donor give many times in the same year?
- Is the donor currently one of your largest contributors?
- Does the donor give gifts that are larger than average for your organization?
- Does the donor introduce new friends to your organization and bring people to your events?
- Does the donor volunteer with you?
- Does the donor communicate frequently with you?

Those who come to mind and stand out when thinking about these questions are top prospects to increase their giving.

How an institution handles these smaller gifts and interacts with its donors can greatly affect the frequency and amount of future gifts. By seeing all donors as the value they could bring to your nonprofit over their lifetime beyond the \$25 or \$50 donation they are able to make today, organizations cultivate long-term relationships.

Donors who give consistently and frequently are often ready to make a major gift. They just need to be presented with a reason to give more and the right opportunity to do so.