

HOW TO OVERCOME YOUR FEAR: TIPS FOR ASKING FOR DONATIONS

Most people are afraid or nervous about asking people for money. This is normal. You are going to be nervous the first time. You will probably be nervous the first ten – twenty? thirty? more? – times. It's okay. The more you ask, the easier it'll get.

Why is asking such a stressful thing to do?

- Fear of failure and rejection.
- Talking about money is a taboo in many cultures. It's not considered polite.
- Anxiety about affecting your relationship with the person you are asking.
- We feel like we are begging.
- Inequality about who has money and who doesn't, who's asking and who's being asked. This can be uncomfortable, especially if the "asker" has struggled in her life and is asking someone to give who is very wealthy. Classism and racism affect who has money and it affects fundraising. Talk about this within your organization.

How can you overcome your fears? Keep these thoughts in mind...

- Your job is just to ask. The prospect's job is to say one of three things: yes, no, or yes, but not that much. Success in fundraising should be measured partly by how many people you ask, not how many people say "yes." You have to ask way more people than you need to raise the money you want. There's a philosophy that if no one has said "no," then you aren't asking enough people.
- Don't take it personally. This isn't about you. People are going to say "no," for many reasons. It has nothing to do with you. And "no" often means "no, not now," not "no, never."
- Believe in your cause. Think about what would be possible if you could raise the money you need. What do you want to do but can't because of money? What projects are on hold until the funding comes through? Think about why you are doing this. Is your belief in your cause bigger than your fear of asking?
- Don't ask anyone who you really don't want to ask. Don't ask anyone as a personal favor. Ask only people who have a connection to your cause and a relationship with the organization.
- Put yourself in the donor's shoes. Think about why *you* give to groups and how it feels when *you* donate to something you care about. That's the opportunity that you are offering to people.
- Practice makes perfect. It will get easier. We all have to start somewhere. Start with someone easy who you know will say "yes."
- Remember – people are going to give. The question is – are they going to give to you? If you don't ask, they will give to the next group that does.