

PG Tip from Leave A Legacy® - A Perfect World!

Dear Leave A Legacy® Partner,

In a perfect world, every prospect we spoke with would give.

Everyone would look forward to our newsletters, personal notes, and would return our voice mail messages immediately. We'd be at the top of everyone's priority list, be recognized as a giant in the fundraising community, and would be sought-after by the best organizations in the nation. We'd also live to be 100, appear on Oprah, and every purchased lotto ticket would be a winner. We'd have the Midas touch. In a perfect world, that is.

Unfortunately, the people we talk to do say "no." And it happens a lot, if we're busy enough. Our newsletters get tossed unread and our messages go unreturned, sometimes repeatedly. Our lottery tickets are confetti and Oprah doesn't know us from Adam.

In the real world – where we live – it takes hard work to be successful.

As such, attention is sometimes given to fundraising techniques, which often are just sales techniques rescripted in a 'kinder, gentler' language that (presumably) is more appropriate for non-profits. And while there can be value in understanding these techniques, they will never, ever replace a genuine dialog with a prospect. Furthermore, it can be enormously helpful to recognize that, sometimes, for a given person – at that moment in time – "no" is simply the best decision. And no technique can alter this truth.

If we live in a pressure-filled world where every 'no' we hear is a defeat, we will press, we will try to control the conversation, and we'll look for anything that might persuade a person to do something – anything – we can claim as a victory. But if we live in a world of grace, where we respect ourselves and our donors, we can recognize and accept the times when a 'no' is the person's best option.

Ironically, how we handle these moments can be the single most powerful step in our cultivation efforts. Handling a 'no' respectfully can build enormous goodwill, sometimes setting the stage for a bigger 'yes' in the future. Obviously, not every no becomes a yes, but it's impossible to know in advance which ones will. Extending grace is powerful way to strengthen any relationship.

Returning to our pressure-filled worlds – where we have goals, expectations, managers and boards, programs to fund – what should we do? Quite simply, we talk to more people. Few non-profits have fully exhausted their lists, exploring the total giving potential of every donor or prospect they know. If one person says "no," express your understanding. Genuinely. Life is filled with competing demands and we all make

difficult choices. Respect those choices in your donor, make a solid connection in that moment, and then contact the next person.

And the next person. And the next. Pursue conversations that have promise, honor those that don't, and work hard. In the real world, hard work will always bring results.

The Leave A Legacy® website has tools available to help foster conversations with donors and prospects. Use them. Be creative. Find ways to introduce Planned Giving and talk to lots of people. For many, the idea of an estate gift will be of little interest right now. For a few, though, it will be something to consider. If you talk to enough people, you will find them.

Best of luck in all of your efforts.

Sincerely,

Your Leave A Legacy® Committee  
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