



Tougher Times = Opportunitites to Improve and Grow

Asking for charitable gifts is never an easy business—especially if you do not operate in a business-like manner. It is particularly challenging in tough economic times. Why?

- Uncertainty makes people more cautious
- Asset values are greatly reduced and larger gifts harder to come by—very hard when most non-profits depend on a minority of supporters for most of their dollars
- People reexamine their giving priorities and patterns
- Volunteers, staff have to work harder and smarter just to hold their base.

Your mission is no less important. The need for funds is as great, if not more so. So what can you do?

1. Talk to your supporters and listen
 - Ask them how they are doing
 - Remind them about the mission, share successes
 - Tell them how your organization is adjusting and reacting
 - Ask their advice – what would they do?
2. Examine your successes of the past few years
 - Are you doing all that made you so successful? Could you do more?
 - What are you doing that just does not seem to be paying off?
3. Look inward – Rigorously examine message, programs, strategies and staff
 - Is your message clearly understood by your audience? Are you perceived as effective stewards? Do you know?
 - Do you have firm priorities for growth? Are they measurable?
 - Is there potential in your current donor base? Is this the time to work on building a base of smaller first time donors? Perhaps now is a good time to incorporate a program for incremental gifts (e.g. ask select donors for increases of 5% to 10%).
 - Is staff doing the best with what they have? Does everyone have clear benchmarks for performance? Are they evaluated frequently enough?
 - Consider involving some of your best supporters in this entire review. It can reinvigorate you and them.