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How Do I Find New Donors?

Finding new donors is something every organization wants, always. It's the most common question I receive as a consultant. For new or early stage nonprofits, this question is particularly daunting. Traditional advice often emphasizes donor retention and growing from your current base. So what do you do when you're starting from scratch?

1) Define an "ideal profile" for new donors.

An "ideal profile" simply means that you've narrowed down the exact type of person or entity you feel will be the best and most likely to contribute. Take the time to build a detailed picture of who they are and what they care about. More on donor profiles here. The ABC framework is another helpful tool.

2) Consider strategies to reach your ideal donor.

If your organization serves people who can donate (think hospitals and universities), you'll find your ideal donor among your beneficiaries. Otherwise, there are three main ways to expand your donor base:

🗺️ **Prospect Mapping**: This strategy involves researching to identify potential donors who have a demonstrated interest in your cause. Once identified, map connections to these prospects through your existing network. This is a targeted, one-by-one approach, ideal for securing major gifts or foundation support.

🤝 **Strategic Networking**: In this approach, you leverage your network of family, friends, and supporters to both identify and connect with potential donors. Unlike Prospect Mapping, your network plays an active role in both the identification and introduction stages. This strategy is also a one-by-one method, best suited for major gifts or foundation grants.

📣 **Visibility Raising Activities**: This strategy focuses on building awareness and engagement through social media, thought leadership, and content marketing. The goal is to build a base of interested people who you will cultivate, engage and ask. This approach can eventually lead to major gifts, if you put in the effort to develop 1:1 relationships with those who are the most engaged and committed. Here, your network can amplify your content by sharing it with their own networks, but they aren't making direct connections like in the other two strategies.

3) Choose Optimal Strategy or Strategies

Choose the method that best matches your ideal donor profile and capitalizes on your organization's strengths and capacities. This tailored approach ensures more effective engagement and resource allocation.

💡Beware of Over-Diversification

In contrast to conventional wisdom, organizations that raise the most ($50M budgets) do so by raising the bulk of their money from a single type of funding. In other words, the orgs that raise the most money do so by concentrating their funding efforts rather than diversifying them. The insight here is that small-and mid-sized nonprofits seeking to grow can benefit from identifying a primary funding source early in their life cycle, which can be aligned with their program model and/or strengths of the team. It is a strategy that also avoids spreading resources thinly across a variety of funding opportunities. See Why More Nonprofits Are Getting Big and From Small to Scale.