

Open to Opportunity

With greater trust, donors will move closer to your charity and are more willing to be partners and change-makers.

My 8 tips for building authentic donor relationships.

- Cultivate an active listening stance, set aside personal or group assumptions about the donor or their giving.
- Engage in conversations and track nuances (such as change of interest), ask open-ended questions, and gently prod - don't probe.
- Lean into hard conversations about the mission, even if they challenge you (or the donor); they expect honesty.
- As fundraisers, we need to be able to discuss the community need and charity's impact (your donor steps into the space between with giving). But we mustn't be ignorant of the root causes of the problems; if you're not able to respond to the donor frankly, trust may erode.
- Not every donor wants to become more deeply engaged with your charity but those who do will signal their intentions. Offer many and varied access points.
- Typical metrics don't work for every donor; consider more meaningful KPIs for your charity and use them alongside or rather than the typical.
- Ensure cultivation and stewardship basics are solid (revel in doing them well!) and don't miss opportunities by skimping on them.
- Even if board members haven't offered up connections to wealth or influence within your community, be sure to double check regarding new or newly engaged donors; train board members in the theory and practice of Relationship Fundraising and engage them in thanking and cultivation.

Remember

Fundraisers can always find short-term wins. Building a solid connection creates deeper, more trusting relationships, and inspires donors to give again and again.

Fundraisers are Editors

As fundraisers, we are helping donors write their life stories and finding their true selves through giving. You have the power to guide donors.



I'm a catalyst for philanthropy - and you can be, too!

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Philanthropy is a sacred proposition based on trust and there are no shortcuts to trust.

Barbara G. Stowe

Ken Burnett's "9 Keys to Building a Relationship with Donors"

- Be honest - trust is a key component of philanthropy.
- Be sincere and let your commitment show - let donors and prospects see that you care about your charity, too.
- Be prompt - reply quickly and efficiently to any request.
- Be regular - keep in regular communication with donors.
- Be Interesting and memorable - charities have access to compelling materials and stories - use them!
- Be involving - don't allow donors to take a passive role.
- Be cheerful and helpful - never let donors feel that asking you a question is a trouble.
- Be faithful - always stick to your promises.
- Be cost effective - don't be lavish; donors expect financial diligence and transparency from nonprofits.



Lead conversations with donors beyond the practiced short-hand stories we all share

- "How did your family do charity when you were growing up?"
- "Why did you first give to us?"
- "I notice you designate your gift to..."
- "Why does this cause matter to you?"
- "What do you tell others about us?"
- "What did you want to be when you were young?"
- "When you think about the work of our charity, and the impacts, which ones make your heart sing?"
- "Tell me about your top 3 charities - how did they become your favorites?"
- "Would now be a good time to discuss your gift to our campaign?"
- "When you sit down to consider which charities to support, how do you choose - and do you feel comfortable sharing with me?"
- "What's the most important thing our community needs now?"
- "When you consider your life, how do you wish to be remembered?"

When asking for an emergency gift

Major gift decisions are not decisions that can be made quickly. When you've created an authentic connection between the donor and the impact, trust grows. Inspiration can move donors to want to act quickly and generously.



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[Hop on a call with me to grow your fundraising.](#)