

The Conversation Strategy That Gets Donors to Tell Their Story

- No Questions Required -



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You're going to love this way of discovering donors' stories.

Traditional fundraising conversations rely heavily on asking donors questions to learn more about them. But questions - even well-intentioned ones - can create hesitation. The brain instinctively evaluates a question before answering: Why are they asking? What do they want? This slight pause can create an invisible barrier.

Elicitation, a technique used by intelligence agencies and expert negotiators, bypasses this issue.

Instead of asking questions, you make statements designed to invite a response. These statements feel more natural, creating an environment where donors feel comfortable sharing.

The result?

Donors reveal more about their motivations, interests, and hesitations - without feeling like they're in an interview.

And when donors share their motivations, they're telling you their story.

The key to powerful fundraising isn't just presenting facts or making a logical case - it's connecting through story. This approach helps you uncover the story that already exists inside the donor's mind.

Techniques to Get Donors to Share Their Story Naturally

Here's how to apply this method in your next donor meeting:

1. Assumptive Statements

Instead of asking, "What inspired you to give to this cause?", say:

- "You must have a great story about why this cause matters to you."
- "I bet there's a specific moment when you knew this was important to you."
- "People like you usually have a personal connection to this work."

These statements nudge the donor to fill in the details, leading to a richer conversation.

2. Strategic Self-Disclosure

Instead of asking, "Have you ever visited our programs?", say:

- "The first time I visited, I was blown away by what I saw. I imagine you had a similar experience."
- "I remember meeting a beneficiary and realizing the real impact of this work. I bet you've had moments like that too."

By sharing a small personal insight, you encourage the donor to respond with their own experience.

3. Flattery with an Open Loop

Instead of asking, "Why do you give so generously?", say:

- "You have such a thoughtful approach to philanthropy - I'd love to know what shaped your perspective."
- "You always seem to know exactly where your giving will have the most impact. That's not common."

These statements create an open loop, where the donor naturally wants to explain their reasoning.

4. Highlighting an Unspoken Rule

Instead of asking, "What do you think about this project?", say:

- "People who care about X often have strong opinions about this kind of initiative."
- "A lot of our most engaged donors tell me this issue keeps them up at night. I'm guessing you might feel the same way."

By implying that there's a common perspective among people like them, you invite the donor to confirm or clarify their own thoughts.

5. Mentioning an Obstacle

Instead of asking, "Do you have any concerns about supporting this?", say:

- "A lot of donors tell me they wrestle with deciding between multiple causes they care about."
- "Some people feel like their gift might not make a big enough impact. I wonder if that's ever crossed your mind."

By normalizing a common concern, you create a safe space for the donor to share their real thoughts.

Swipe File: Ready-to-Use Statements to Get Donors Talking

Use these statements in your next major donor conversation:

To Learn About Their Passion:

- "Most people who give at this level have a story behind why this matters to them."
- "I'd love to hear what first sparked your interest in this work."

To Deepen Connection:

- "I can tell you really care about this issue - there must be a reason it resonates so strongly with you."
- "I bet there's a moment that made you realize this was important to you."

To Surface Hesitations:

- "Some donors tell me they wonder if their gift will truly make a difference."
- "I know other donors have wrestled with deciding how much to give - especially when so many causes need support."

To Open the Door for Future Gifts:

- "A lot of donors start with a smaller gift to test the waters, then deepen their commitment once they see the impact."
- "Some of our most engaged supporters started with one project and then found themselves drawn into other aspects of our work."

Final Thought: Storytelling Is at the Heart of Fundraising

This method works because it removes the pressure of direct questions and allows the donor to share at their own pace. By using carefully crafted statements, you create an environment where donors feel like they're simply having a conversation with a trusted friend. And in doing so, you uncover their story - their motivations, their fears, their hopes for the world.

Storytelling is the most powerful tool in fundraising. The best fundraisers aren't just good at asking for money; they're masters at drawing out stories and weaving them into compelling invitations to give.

If you want to go deeper into storytelling and learn how to create donor communications that

engage, inspire, and raise more money, join us at the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference. You'll get hands-on training from experts who have mastered the art of donor storytelling.

Visit <https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com> to learn more and secure your spot!

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