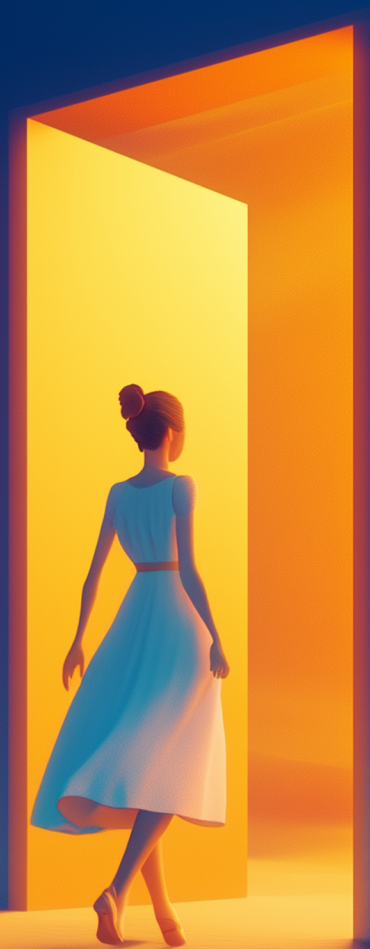


# Stepping Into the Story: **The Immersive Ask Playbook**

How to Craft Fundraising Asks That Make Donors  
Feel Like They Are a Key Part of the Story



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# Stepping Into the Story: The Immersive Ask Playbook

How to Craft Fundraising Asks That Make Donors Feel Like They Are a Key Part of the Story

At its core, fundraising is storytelling.

A great fundraising story isn't just about what happens. It's about who makes it happen - and, most importantly, how the donor changes the outcome.

Think about the most compelling stories: they pull you into the action, making you feel like you're living the moment. That's what immersive asks do - they transport donors directly into the scene, letting them see, feel, and experience the impact of their generosity.

## The Evolution of an Ask: From Traditional to Immersive to Immersive + Direct

Most nonprofit professionals are familiar with traditional fundraising asks - they clearly tell donors exactly what their gift will do.

An example of a traditional ask is:

"Your \$50 donation helps provide meals for hungry children."

Immersive asks build on the traditional ask and take it a step further. Instead of just explaining what a gift will do, they create a vivid, emotional moment that helps the donor see themselves inside the story before being *directly* asked to give.

An example of an immersive ask is:

"When you give \$50, you place a warm meal in front of a child who hasn't eaten all day."

In the two ask examples above, you'll notice that the immersive ask grew out of the traditional ask. The key steps in making an ask more immersive include:

- **Add "you"** – Directly involves the donor, making them the one taking action.



- **Focus on One Beneficiary** – Instead of referring to a group, the ask highlights a single person, making the impact feel more personal and immediate.
- **Change passive phrasing into an action** – Instead of the money helping provide meals, the donor places the meal in front of a child.
- **Increase immediacy** – The phrase “who hasn’t eaten all day” makes the situation more urgent and tangible.

Why does this matter?

Because when donors see themselves in that moment of help, they feel a stronger emotional connection—and are more likely to give.

**To make your ask even stronger, add a direct ask.**

An immersive ask is a soft ask - it draws the donor into the moment and helps them emotionally connect to the impact they can have. A direct ask is a clear next step, explicitly telling them how to take action.

Adding a short, direct ask after an immersive ask increases donations.

Start with an immersive ask to paint a vivid picture, helping the donor feel personally involved in solving the problem. Then, reinforce it with a direct ask that provides clarity on the specific action they need to take.

Example:

1. **Immersive Ask:** "Right now, a child is shivering in the cold. With your \$25 gift, you can hand them a blanket and stop them from shivering."
2. **Direct Ask:** "Will you please give \$25 now to provide a warm blanket?"

## **When & Where to Use Immersive Asks (and When a More Direct Ask is Better)**

Best Places to Use Immersive Asks:

- **Fundraising Appeals (Print & Email)** – These asks help donors emotionally engage before making a decision.
- **Social Media Posts** – Short, immersive asks work well in posts, especially paired with images or videos.
- **Donation Pages** – A strong, immersive ask near the top of the page can increase engagement.

- **Event Fundraising Scripts** – Helps bring the audience into the moment and feel their impact.
- **Video Fundraising Appeals** – Works well in voiceovers or captions, making the ask feel personal.

#### When a More Direct Ask is Better:

In some situations, clarity and speed are more important than immersion. While immersive asks help donors feel emotionally connected, a traditional or direct ask may be the better choice when donors need to make a quick decision.

- **Reply Devices & Donation Forms** – Donors scanning for quick decisions need clarity (e.g., "Yes, I'll give \$50 to provide meals").
- **Matching Gift or Challenge Campaigns** – If the urgency is about doubling donations, clarity is more important than immersion.
- **Some Major Donor Asks** – Some major donors may want straightforward impact metrics rather than emotional storytelling.

## Formulas for Immersive Asks

One key to making an ask more immersive is adding a physical action for the donor to see themselves doing.

Instead of just telling the donor what their gift will accomplish, immersive asks help them visualize themselves actively taking part in delivering the solution. The following formulas incorporate this principle to make your fundraising asks more engaging.

Use these plug-and-play formulas to make your asks instantly more engaging:

### 1. "When you [give \$X], you [take action] for [beneficiary]."

Example: "When you give \$50, you place a warm meal in front of a hungry child tonight."

### 2. "Your gift of [\$X] lets you [specific impact in real-time]."

Example: "Your \$100 gift lets you reach out to a mother in crisis and say, 'You're safe now.'"

### 3. "Imagine standing beside [beneficiary] as you [take action]."

Example: "Imagine standing beside Sarah as you hand her the keys to a safe home."

**4. “Right now, [describe urgent moment]. With your [\$X] gift, you can [take action] and [immediate impact].”**

Example: "Right now, a child is shivering in the cold. With your \$25 gift, you can hand them a coat and stop them from shivering "

**5. “You’re not just giving, you’re [action that directly helps].”**

Example: "You’re not just donating; you’re putting life-saving medicine into a child’s hands."

## Before & After Transformations

Traditional Ask (Before)	Immersive Ask (After)
Donate today to support our food bank.	Tonight, you can hand a warm meal to a mother who hasn’t eaten in two days.
\$25 helps provide blankets for the homeless.	Right now, a child is shivering in the cold. With your \$25 gift, you can hand them a blanket and stop them from shivering
Your donation supports literacy programs.	Right now, you can place a book into a child’s hands - opening a world of possibility.
\$50 helps us fight hunger.	When you give \$50, you’ll serve a warm plate of food to a hungry neighbor.
Your donation provides emergency shelter.	Tonight, you can take a frightened family by the hand and lead them through the door of a loving home—away from violence and into safety.

## Addressing a Common Concern

### *Will Donors Think They Have to Be There in Person?*

It’s natural to wonder: If I use immersive language, will donors think they have to physically hand the meal, blanket, or medicine to the beneficiary?

The answer is no. Donors understand that their gift makes the action possible, even if they aren’t there in person. Immersive asks simply help connect donors more deeply to the impact of their gift by making them feel like an active participant.

If you ever feel the need to clarify, you can add a brief reinforcement:

- “You won’t be there in person, but your generosity will be.”
- “Your gift makes this possible, even though you can’t be there.”

But in most cases, donors instinctively understand that immersive language is about emotional connection, not literal involvement.

## **Taking Your Fundraising to the Next Level**

Mastering immersive asks is just one piece of creating compelling donor communications.

At the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference, you’ll learn proven storytelling techniques that deepen donor engagement, increase giving, and make your fundraising messages unforgettable.

To learn more, go to <https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com>

### **Storytelling isn’t just about what you say - it’s about how you make donors feel.**

Imagine learning how to structure stories that make donors feel so connected that giving becomes instinctive. That’s what you’ll get at the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference.

Join us at the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference—the premier event for fundraisers who want to master the art of compelling storytelling. Learn from top experts, discover real-world case studies, and walk away with actionable techniques to engage donors and raise more money.

To learn more, go to <https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com>

**Get help raising more money. Come to the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference.  
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