

The Personal Brand Playbook for Fundraisers

Show up with clarity, confidence, and
emotional protection every time you ask.



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Your Vibe is Your Donor Experience

Fundraising isn't just about what you say—it's about **how you show up**.

Before you share a single word, your presence tells a story. Are you confident? Apologetic? Warm? Distracted? Donors feel that instantly. And here's the truth: donors don't just give because of facts. They give because of **how you make them feel**.

Most fundraisers never define who they want to be in the donor's world. They just wing it. But when you do define who you want to be, everything changes. You show up stronger. You create better moments. And those moments lead to more giving—with less second-guessing.

In the next few pages, you'll:

- ✓ Define your **fundraising identity**—so you show up on purpose, not by accident.
- ✓ Build a **confidence shield** that protects you when rejection stings.
- ✓ Learn how to make asking feel better for both you and your donors.

Pro Tip: This is even better with friends. Grab coffee, print copies, and do this together. Share your answers. Ask, *"What's the first word that comes to mind when you think of me as a fundraiser?"* Laugh. Learn. Leave stronger.

How to Use This Playbook

1. **Give yourself 20 minutes.**
This is a quick, powerful reset for your fundraising confidence.
2. **Answer honestly.**
This is about who you want to be—not what you think donors or your boss expect.
3. **Optional but powerful: Do this as a group.**
You'll learn as much about yourself as you do from your peers.
4. **Keep it visible.**
Post your Identity Statement by your desk. Glance at it before every donor email, call, or meeting.

Ready? Let's build your brand.

Step 1 – Pick Your Three Vibe Words

Why this matters:

Your vibe is the first thing donors experience—before you share a single fact. Choosing your Vibe Words helps you show up with **intention instead of accident**. These words describe **how you want to come across in every donor interaction**—calls, emails, meetings, even thank-yous.

Ask yourself:

When a donor talks about me behind my back (in a good way), what three words do I want them to use?

Choose three (or write your own):

Warm	Bold	Grounded
Joyful	Magnetic	Calm
Fierce	Clear	Trusted
Inviting	Energizing	Compassionate
Professional	Inspiring	Steady
Hopeful	Other: _____	

Pro Tip: Pair one strong word (Bold, Fierce) with two softer words (Warm, Grounded) for balance.

See It in Action: How Vibe Shapes Tone

Before her Playbook, Kim's emails were overly formal. Her Vibe Words—**Warm, Clear, Inviting**—changed everything.

Before:

Dear Mr. Taylor,
Attached is the quarterly report from our organization, which outlines all program activities and expenditures for the last three months.

After:

Dear Mr. Taylor,
I wanted you to see what your generosity made possible this quarter—because it's incredible. Here's the quick snapshot: [bullet list of wins].

What Changed?

- The tone is **warm and inviting** (matching her words).
- Still delivers clarity without stiffness.

Step 2 – Decide How You Want Donors to Feel

Donors don't just give because of logic—they give because of emotion. If you want more yeses, you need to design every interaction around the feelings you want the donor to experience.

Important: This is NOT about how they feel about you. It's about how they feel about **the act of giving and being part of your mission**.

Ask yourself:

When a donor leaves an event, reads my email, or finishes a call, what two feelings do I want lingering in their heart?

Choose two (or write your own):

Proud	Connected	Inspired
Safe	Appreciated	Joyful
Significant	Respected	Hopeful
Valued	Motivated	Confident
Seen	Uplifted	Other:

Pro Tip: These feelings are the foundation for your messaging. If you want donors to feel proud, talk about the specific difference they made—not your organization's needs.

See It in Action: Feelings Drive Language

Before her Playbook, Dana's updates were full of stats. Her donor feelings—**Proud and Connected**—transformed her tone.

Before:

Our program distributed 4,500 meals last quarter, a 10% increase over last year.

After:

Because of you, 4,500 neighbors sat down to a hot meal this winter—families who might have gone hungry without your care. That's the power of your generosity.

What Changed?

- Focus shifted from numbers to **donor impact**.
- Language sparks the feelings Dana chose (pride, connection).

Step 3 – Choose Your Signature Moves

Why this matters:

Your brand isn't just words. It's what you *do* that makes donors experience those words in real life. Signature Moves are the habits and touches that express your identity every time you communicate.

Ask yourself:

If someone recorded my next donor call, what actions would make them say, *"That sounded like [your name]"*?

Examples of Signature Moves:

- Start every donor conversation with a personal thank-you.
- Share one vivid detail in every story.
- Use "you" language, not "we" language, in emails.
- Pause after you ask—give space for yes.
- End meetings by affirming the donor's impact.

My Signature Moves:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Pro Tip: If you're stuck, ask a colleague: *"What do I do that makes me memorable in a good way?"* Build on that.

See It in Action: Signature Moves in Email

Andrea picked **"start with gratitude"** and **"include one vivid detail"** as her moves.

Before:

Thank you for supporting our mission. Your contributions help us deliver essential services to families in need.

After:

When Carlos walked into his new apartment this week, he said, “I finally feel safe again.” That moment happened because of you. Thank you for making safety possible for families like his.

What Changed?

- Starts with gratitude.
 - Includes a vivid human detail.
 - Uses “you” language, not “we.”
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Step 4 – Set Your No-Go Zones

Why this matters:

Boundaries protect your brand—and your confidence. Knowing what you *won't* do keeps you from sliding into habits that make donors feel uncomfortable or make you feel inauthentic.

Ask yourself:

What behaviors, tones, or phrases don't align with the fundraiser I want to be?

Examples:

- Avoid guilt trips.
- Avoid jargon and insider language.
- Avoid apologizing for asking (“Sorry to bother you...”).
- Avoid sounding rushed or distracted.
- Avoid making it about “our needs” instead of the donor's impact.

My No-Go Zones:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Pro Tip: Look at your last donor email. Circle one phrase that feels off-brand. Add it to your No-Go list.

See It in Action: Live Ask Before & After

Before her Playbook, Megan often apologized when asking.

Before:

“Thanks for meeting. I know you’re busy, and I hate to take too much of your time. We’d be grateful for anything you can do.”

After:

“Thank you for making time. I wanted to share a quick update on what your past support made possible—and an opportunity to create even more impact this year.”

What Changed?

- No apologizing.
 - Clear purpose.
 - Donor-centered tone.
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Step 5 – Write Your Identity Statement (and Make It Work for You)

This isn’t just a feel-good line. It’s your **anchor and your guide**—the quick reference that brings you back to center when nerves hit. Think of it as the headline for your brand and a filter for your actions.

Part 1: Core Identity Statement

“I am a [Vibe Word], [Vibe Word], and [Vibe Word] fundraiser who helps donors feel [Feeling Word] and [Feeling Word].”

Example:

“I am a warm, clear, and grounded fundraiser who helps donors feel proud and connected.”

Part 2: Action Behaviors

Your **Action Behaviors** are the specific things you *do or say* that bring your personal brand to life. These are habits, phrases, or touches that help your Vibe Words and Donor Feelings show up in the real world.

Think of them as your **brand in motion**.

Ask yourself:

- What does a [Vibe Word] fundraiser actually *do* in an email or meeting?
- How would someone *feel* the words I picked—without me saying them?

Examples:

Let's say your Identity Statement is:

"I am a warm, clear, and confident fundraiser who helps donors feel appreciated and proud."

Your Action Behaviors might be:

- I always start my emails with a personal thank-you.
- I keep my language simple and free of jargon.
- I share one vivid story detail in every update.

These are small, repeatable choices that reinforce your brand every time you connect with a donor.

Now write your own:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Pro Tip: If you're stuck, go back to your Vibe Words and Donor Feelings. Pick one and ask, "How would I *show* this, not just say it?"

Part 3: Voice Check

Before hitting "send" or walking into a meeting, ask:
"Does this sound like the fundraiser I want to be?"

See It in Action: Email Example

Sarah's Identity:

"I am a warm, clear, and confident fundraiser who helps donors feel valued and proud."

Before:

We've served 1,200 families this quarter.

After:

I keep thinking about the smile on Maria's face when she said, "I finally feel safe again."
That's because of you.

See It in Action: Live Ask Example

James's Identity:

"I am a bold, calm, and clear fundraiser who helps donors feel confident and inspired."

Before:

"I hate to take too much of your time..."

After:

"Here's why I asked to meet: 60 students are waiting for the same chance you gave Jasmine. With \$10,000, you can make that happen this year. Would you be open to doing that?"

Now Put It to Work

- ✓ Before every email or call, read your Identity Statement out loud.
- ✓ Audit your last appeal: Does it sound like your brand?
- ✓ Keep your Playbook where you can see it.

Ready for Your Next Level?

Your personal brand is your voice. Now give it something unforgettable to say.

At the **Nonprofit Storytelling Conference**, you'll learn how to pair this confidence with powerful stories that make donors lean in and say yes.

[Join us → nonprofitstorytellingconference.com](https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com)

For three days, you'll:

- ✓ Find stories that move people to action.
- ✓ Tell them in ways that make asking easier—and joyful.
- ✓ Create donor moments that feel as good as your brand promises.

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