

The Four-Quadrant Map Behind Every Donation

A simple tool to help you get more donors to say “Yes.”



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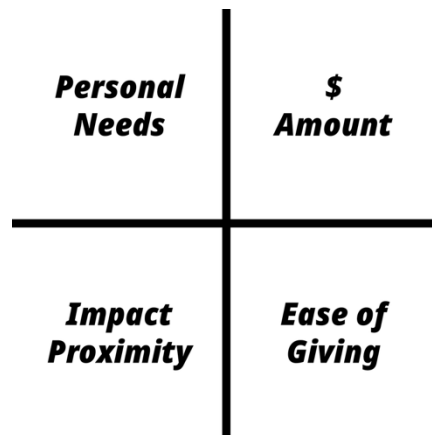
A simple tool to help you get more donors to say “Yes.”

Let me give you something that makes donor communication easier.

It’s a simple map—four quadrants—that explains almost every yes (and almost every no).

What’s great is that each quadrant is also a **lever**. If a message falls flat, you don’t have to guess why. You look at the quadrant, pull the lever, and the message gets better.

You can start using this right away.



QUADRANT 1: Personal Needs

Upper Left — Lever: Emotional relevance

This one is huge.

It answers the donor’s subconscious question:

“Why should I care about this?”

Not “Why should anyone care?”

Not “Why is this a big issue?”

This is about the donor and what resonates with them.

The donor connects when the beneficiary wants something the donor has wanted too.

Health.

Safety.

Comfort.

Belonging.

A chance.

Someone in their corner.

How to pull the lever:

Show one small, concrete moment that reveals what the beneficiary wants right now.

Examples of small moments:

- A child gripping the edge of a chair because he doesn't want to go home.
- A dog curled tight in a corner because he doesn't trust humans yet.
- A river so choked with pollution that it smells sweet and rotten at the same time.

"Small moments carry big human wants. They make the donor think, 'I know what that feels like.'"

That's emotional relevance.

Common fix:

If your message feels flat, add a small moment that reveals a want. One moment usually fixes the whole thing.

QUADRANT 2: Dollar Amount

Upper Right — Lever: Clarity and comfort

This quadrant answers another important donor question:

"Can I comfortably do the thing you're asking?"

A surprising amount of hesitation comes from unclear or overwhelming amounts.

What donors need here:

- A clear amount
- A simple explanation of what that amount does
- Comfort that the amount feels reasonable

You're not trying to defend your whole budget. You're helping the donor feel, *"I can fix this one thing. I can make this moment better."*

How to pull the lever:

Offer one specific amount tied to a clear outcome.

Instead of:

"Your gift will help support our program..."

Try:

"A gift of \$35 provides one night of safety for a child like Jenna."

Or:

"A gift of \$60 restores five feet of riverbank."

The donor now knows what their gift *does*.

Common fix:

If you're getting vague responses or small gifts, tighten the amount language. Make it concrete, simple, and tied to something real.

A Quick Note About "Small Gifts"

(This Will Save You Headaches)

You might be thinking, "If I only ask for \$35, I'm only going to get \$35. I need bigger gifts." Everyone feels that way. But here's the truth:

Donors give bigger only after they've committed to helping one clear thing first.

One child.

One meal.

One safe night.

One section of riverbank.

The donor needs to say yes to helping *one* thing before they can say yes to helping *more* of that thing. That's how giving actually scales.

Here's an example:

Let's say your donor usually gives about \$70. If one unit of help is \$35, your reply card might look like this:

- **\$70 helps 2 children**
- **\$140 helps 4 children**
- **\$210 helps 6 children**

The numbers grow, but nothing else changes. It's still the same unit of impact—just multiplied.

What matters most is this:

The donor sees one clear thing they can help... and then sees how helping more of that same thing grows their impact.

That's how you guide a donor from a single yes to a larger yes—without pressure, and without confusing them.

Why this works:

You're not pushing a larger gift. You're offering **more of something the donor already decided they care about.**

If you skip straight to a big ask without anchoring the donor in the "one unit," many donors won't scale. If you anchor them first, many of them will.

There's a lot more to say about pricing and gift amounts, but that's beyond the scope of this little guide. If you want deeper training on pricing strategy—and everything else that lifts donor response—head over to **npstorypro.com**. You'll find advanced tools and help there.

QUADRANT 3: Impact Proximity

Lower Left — Lever: Immediacy and urgency

This quadrant answers:

"Will my gift matter now... or someday?"

If your impact feels far away, donors wait to give. If your impact feels close, donors give now.

What donors need here:

- A sense that something is happening *now*
- A sense that they can change an outcome today
- A clear reason to act before they put it off

How to pull the lever:

Tighten the timeline.

“Tonight...”

“This week...”

“Right now...”

“As winter sets in...”

“As school starts tomorrow...”

Make the donor feel the moment.

Example:

“Right now, Jimmy’s shoes are held together with tape. School starts Monday, and he needs new shoes before he can go.”

Common fix:

If your ask feels soft, add a real-time moment. Pull the donor into the “now” of the situation.

QUADRANT 4: Ease of Giving

Lower Right — Lever: Simplicity and safety

This quadrant answers:

“Is this easy or is this work?”

Even when someone cares, they won’t push uphill. Friction kills gifts faster than anything else.

Friction looks like:

- Long paragraphs
- Complicated options
- Soft language like ‘please consider’ instead of a clear ask
- Forms to fill out that take thinking
- No clear next step
- Buried donation links
- Corporate sounding language

How to pull the lever:

Make the path clear and simple.

Examples:

- “Here’s the link to give \$40 and help a child tonight.”
- “Place your gift in the enclosed envelope.”
- “Tap the button below to give now.”

Common fix:

If your donor has to think, decide, or search... simplify. Strip away anything that makes giving a donation harder.

HOW TO USE THE QUADRANTS (A Practical 5-Minute Fix)

Take any donor message you’re working on—an appeal, an email, a report.

Run it through the quadrants like this:

1. Personal Needs

Do I show a small moment that reveals a want the donor recognizes?

2. Dollar Amount

Do I give a clear amount tied to a clear outcome?

3. Impact Proximity

Does the donor feel something happens *soon* because of them?

4. Ease of Giving

Is the path to making a donation simple and clear?

By running your donor communications through these four quadrants, you'll instantly see which quadrant is weak. Fix the quadrant(s), and your response rates get better.

See How the Four Quadrants Fix a Weak Message

Weak Version:

"Your support helps our programs continue. Please consider giving."

Quadrant Fixes:

1. *Personal Needs*: Add a small moment
2. *Dollar Amount*: Add a clear amount and outcome
3. *Impact Proximity*: Add "today" or "this week"
4. *Ease of Giving*: Make donating a clear step

Strong Version: (with quadrant callouts):

Personal Needs: "Maria is in our lobby right now with her two kids. They don't know where they'll sleep tonight."

Dollar Amount + Impact Proximity: "Will you give them one safe night tonight with a gift of \$40 today?"

Ease of Giving: "Click this link to donate."

Every quadrant is doing its job.

Try This for One Week

Run this quadrant check on every piece you send out—big or small.

After a week, you'll start to see your own patterns. You'll know which quadrant you strengthen naturally...and which one you forget when you're tired or busy.

This map becomes second nature fast.

You now know the four quadrants that shape every "yes."

If these four quadrants made things feel clearer and easier for you, just know this is only the beginning. At the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference, we spend three days going deeper into tools like this—practical, simple, "you can use this tomorrow" tools that make more donors say yes.

Visit <https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com> to learn more and save your seat!

If you found this booklet helpful, please forward it to a friend who could also benefit from it.

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