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## ***Tips for Navigating the Fundraising Maze – Part I***

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Americans, for the most part, are compassionate. They give generously – over \$335 billion in 2013, according to *GivingUSA* - to thousands of nonprofit organizations that do incredible things with those donations. But sponsors, donors, and nonprofit organizations submit that more could be done if there were more resources available. Sponsors and donors are concerned that their giving is not making a real difference. Yet nonprofit organizations that truly make a difference for people and causes struggle to find enough money to fund their efforts.



Good corporate citizens and community members have come to rely on nonprofit organizations to increasingly respond to the country's most critical social problems. They have become the safety net of last resort, the nation's collective conscience, the entities that care for the people, places, and things that really matter to our society. Even so, nonprofit organizations are finding it harder to fund their programs.

The main reason for this challenge is that sponsors and donors are inundated with giving requests, and many organizations do not do a good job of differentiating themselves. Nonprofit professionals still have few valuable tools at their disposal that effectively drive funds to their organizations. Here are a few tips to help you navigate the fundraising maze:

### **Tip #1: Provide the right type of information**

Sponsors and donors want to understand the full story of an organization including:

- The financial picture, including how an organization spends its money
- That a nonprofit organization is legitimate
- The basics of the organization — its mission, approach, and their vision
- The breadth and depth of the cause
- The overall impact of the nonprofit organization in measurable context

### **Tip #2: Keep your presentation simple**

Just as important as the information that sponsors and donors desire is how they want information presented:

- Easy-to-digest reports (similar to *Consumer Reports*)
- Simplicity and thoroughness
- Objectivity (allowing each person to make his/ her own decision)

**Tip #3: Use trusted information sources**

Sponsors and donors also have clear and consistent preferences on the source of information on nonprofit organizations, and where they prefer to find this information. Both use nonprofit information portals and rating agencies, but the vast majority of research is done through direct contact with the nonprofit organization via its:

- Leadership and staff
- Website
- Materials
- Reputation

**Tip #4: Communicate your performance**

Sponsors and donors care about the performance of nonprofit organizations. They want a complete picture presented in a clear, focused, and easy-to-understand way. Collecting and communicating the information they care about does not need to be difficult or expensive. Be sure to include tangible details about your:

- Approach
- Expected results
- Effectiveness
- Past performance

**Tip #5: Focus on impact**

Focusing on impact will benefit your nonprofit organization in many tangible ways. The main benefit comes from clarity and alignment. The key is to chart your impact. It will help you clarify what you do and how you do it, and find the clearest, most succinct language to articulate that information:

- Focus on impact. Sponsors and donors want to understand how well you are achieving your goals.
- Chart your impact. Answer key questions that will bring you and your sponsor/donors clarity on your approach and accomplishments.

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