

Inspiring Donors to Give More by Understanding What Motivates Them

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Patient stories may play a role

Having worked in marketing and business development for much of my career, I have come to realize that there's never ONE magic bullet or strategy that packs the greatest marketing punch. Effective marketing involves a variety of messages and mediums, delivered consistently over time. I believe the same is true in fundraising.

According to Giving USA, Americans gave \$410.02 billion to charity in 2017, crossing over the \$400 billion mark for the first time. What motivates people to offer such generous gifts to non-profit organizations?

The reasons vary from an altruistic desire, commitment to make a difference, personal experience and familiarity with the institution, to oneness with the organization's mission. Other reasons include social recognition, personal satisfaction, upbringing or family traditions, religious beliefs and the fringe benefit of tax discounts.

What are some of the ways to make donation appeal more palatable to philanthropists? Here are some ideas.

Let donors get to know the patients via stories

Perhaps one of the greatest ways to inspire donors is through the personal stories of the individuals who are benefitting from their generous contributions. People are more willing to shell out when they feel a deeper connection to the cause- and that happens when they see the human side of it, rather than data and statistics.

Each hospital and healthcare organization has its plethora of inspiring stories about patients who defied the odds, and those whose road to recovery is more optimistic due to modern technology and medicine made possible by the generosity of philanthropists. Many fundraisers even tap into these patients and their extended families as potential donors because they have directly experienced the institution's care and may feel a sense of personal connection to it.

Donating is an emotional act and people empathize more to these personal stories than statistics and data points. Putting a patient's face to a cause is more impactful, as donors can see how their contributions are directly affecting human life. Sharing success stories with your donors helps them to connect with the hospital's work on a deeper and more personal level.

Stand in your major donors' shoes

You have a mission: raise funds for your cause. Your donors have a vision: make a difference by supporting and committing to something they believe in.

Where is the alignment of your mission and their vision? Discuss what impactful change they want to make before you discuss dollars. People want to contribute to what they believe in and to feel that their money is going to a worthy cause.

Fully engage your philanthropist's total self

All marketing professionals know this: get to know your niche before starting any campaign. Consider your potential donor's knowledge, values, world views, beliefs, talents, awareness and skills- not just their wealth. The more personally you can connect with the totality of your donor's being, the more he feels that you understand his passions and dreams- the greater the chances you'll win his generous support.

Emphasize their individual impact through their contributions

For many wealthy philanthropists, giving is the culmination of their life's journey. They want to leave a legacy and be defined by what they give back to society. It's a way their money ultimately carries their true intentions.

Share specifics with them and be as transparent as possible

Donors feel empowered when they know that their contribution has a direct impact on improving the situation. Share specifics with your donors about how their gifts support and help patients. Providing detailed information about what you're accomplishing and how close you are to your target, as a direct result of donations, boost donors' confidence in your healthcare service.

Vary your communication with them

Reach out to donors throughout the year, not only when you're raising funds for a particular initiative. Send an update on a campaign and congratulate them for its success. Always let them know that none of it could have been possible without them.

Customize the way you recognize your donors in ways that are meaningful to them

If you are unsure how donors would like to be acknowledged, simply ask them. Ask them about their motivation for contributing and how they may want to be thanked in the future.

Many individuals may contribute to a particular hospital due to a personal reason, such as having a family member confined or treated there during a serious illness and they feel an intimate desire to give back. Knowing their motivation for giving helps you tailor your messages accordingly.

Invite major donors to partner with you

Clearly, money is a key component of the philanthropic landscape, but many of today's innovative philanthropists want to do more. Apart from money, giving of their time can also offer great satisfaction. Plus, their physical presence and extra helping hands can be a tremendous help to your healthcare organization when you run initiatives.

Today's philanthropists want to dig deeper into underlying root causes of healthcare problems within the society. They want to be problem solvers-not only with money but with their skills, as well.

Highly successful philanthropists can bring their business acumen and deep list of connections with high net worth to the table, lead a fundraising project or committee, or be your hospital's spokesperson. The most dedicated philanthropists see their gifts as a unique opportunity to give back and make a lasting impact.

As humans, we are multidimensional and philanthropists often want to play a bigger role than what money alone can provide. Allow them to help.

Major donors care most about the impact of their gift

Always begin with the end in mind- provide the potential donor with a clear picture of what his gift can bring to the hospital and patients in need. When you are selling something, it is best to share the results a product or service brings-not the cost (high or low) or technical features.

If a donor likes the idea and 'benefits' of giving to the cause, they might ask "what kind of contributions do you need?" Allowing them to ask the question after their interest is piqued provides you an opportunity to confidently share with the potential donor, knowing that they are already onboard of the idea. At the end of the day, donors just want to be assured that their contribution will make a meaningful impact.

When communicating with donors, the key is to always go back to what matters most to them. Tailor your spiel to their motivation, interests and sensibilities. Remember to ask if they'd like to be involved in other ways, beyond financial support. When donors are more engaged in all aspects of your hospital's requirements, initiatives would be more effective and can go a long way towards achieving positive results for the healthcare institution and the patients you serve.

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