



First Things First



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from the standing-desk of
David H. King | President & CEO

7 Sins That Kill Your Fundraising

Try as we might to always do the right thing, we are all sinners. In our everyday life, it might be as simple as sneaking a grape in the fruit department at the grocery, or exaggerating the size of a fish you caught; not admitting to eating the last cookie or not coming to a full stop at a stop sign.

Those may be small infractions that won't amount to much in the long run; however, the sins you commit in your fundraising endeavors could mean the difference between fulfilling your mission or shutting off the lights.

Here are seven sins we don't want you to commit.

1. Asking for money before engaging the donor.

Engage in a sincere and meaningful conversation with your top donors before asking for anything. Remember that asking for a gift is only one step in the "development process" and it usually is not the first step. You need to "develop" the relationship first and find the shared goals of your institution and the prospective donor.

2. Treating all donors the same.

You may not like it, but not all donors are the same. Small donors are perfectly comfortable responding to a snail mail or email request. Major donors require major investments of time and energy and a personal relationship and request.

3. Thinking that donors to other organizations will not give to you.

People give wherever they feel they can have an impact and most donors contribute to five or more organizations. Even a donor who is supporting many other organizations may have a very real interest in the area that you are serving and want to support you, especially if they are an alum or current parent.

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What Do Donors Want?



By Nancy E. Peterman, Partner

Penelope Burk's second edition of Donor-Centered Fundraising was released this fall, coincidentally, the same year that Crazy Rich Asians, a movie based on the book by Kevin Kwan, hit the big screen.

Burk quotes from Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else by Chrystia Freeland that in 1975, the top 1% of Americans earned 8% of all income. However, 35 years later, the top 1% takes more than 22% of the income pie.

It's no surprise that while total giving to most institutions continues to rise, the number of donors is shrinking. Many organizations work diligently to acquire new donors, only to see them lapse after the first year.

Burk's latest edition updates the research that she and her research firm started more than 20 years ago. Then, as now, donors continue to state that their needs (in my opinion) are fairly simple and must be met before they are asked to make another gift.

According to her research, donors still want to be thanked promptly. They don't want the thank-you letter to be a listing of the latest accolades or accomplishments of the organization, and strictly forbidden is an overt or veiled request for more funding.

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