

## Avoiding Common Pitfalls in Donor Relationships

Organisational development is all about relationships. The people we partner with are key to the success of our mission! But what are some of the common pitfalls and mistakes we can fall into as we seek to cultivate strong relationships with strategic donors? In this session, we'll explore some of the most common mistakes we make, and, most importantly, we'll let donors speak for themselves, and learn from their wisdom and experience.

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### Introduction

1. Reflect back on the last few days...
  - a. What have you learned?
  - b. What questions do you still have? What hasn't made sense?
  - c. What will you do differently when you go back home? Write it down.

### The Founding of Jill's House – Man's Failure and God's Faithfulness

1. The origin story of Jill's House (play video)
2. What did they do right?
3. What did they do wrong?
4. What would we do differently if we had it to do over again?

### Reflecting on Our Own Mistakes – Group Sharing

1. What are some mistakes you've made in fundraising/organizational leadership over the years?
2. What are mistakes you've seen others make?

### Common Pitfalls (an inexhaustive list in no particular order)

1. I didn't give before I asked (Matthew 6:21)
  - a. Generosity starts inside an organization
  - b. Internal momentum leads to external investment
  - c. Donors smell insincerity a mile away
2. Took someone's giving for granted
  - a. What behaviors might we display if we presume someone is going to give no matter what?
  - b. "Asked for a gift right away without trying to earn my support."
  - c. "Didn't follow up to thank or report on impact."
  - d. "Didn't give me a good reason why I should give a gift other than I had given gifts in the past"
3. Only engaged one spouse
  - a. Most couples (not all!) make financial decisions as a couple

- b. Who is—statistically speaking—more generous, men or women?
  - c. Who—statistically speaking—lives longer, men or women?
- 4. Asked again too soon
  - a. “I got an appeal in the mail right after I had given a big gift.”
  - b. What is the top reason people stop giving to organizations? They don’t understand the impact of their previous gift. “What difference did it make!?”
  - c. “Why should I give again?”
- 5. Poor Organizational Planning
  - a. Emergencies happen, and donors understand that.
  - b. But consistent emergencies are usually a sign of poor planning and execution.
  - c. “Dollars never catch up with needs, but they will chase vision.”
  - d. Thoughtful budgets, clear and compelling plans, and demonstrated impact will—more often than not—win more support over the longterm.
- 6. Being boring
  - a. Let your passion show.
  - b. Let the beneficiaries of your ministry speak for themselves (e.g., Jill’s House parents—show Lee White video).
  - c. You have amazing stories to tell. Tell them! “Stories are the currency of Jill’s House.”
- 7. Never asked!
  - a. “Don’t dance around it. Be bold!”
  - b. The story of the elderly woman in the hospital...
- 8. Depended on too few people, i.e. “keyman dependence.”
  - a. Strategic donors are animated by what they can do personally, but they want to know that others are doing the same. That will inspire confidence.
  - b. Ask for referrals to others! (Board referrals)
- 9. Didn’t try to see things from the donor’s perspective
  - a. What does their current financial situation look like?
  - b. What other organizations might be talking with them?
  - c. What motivates their giving?
  - d. What demotivates them?
  - e. Didn’t see beyond the short-term.
- 10. Didn’t ask for their opinion
  - a. Don’t present a finalized menu...show them the ingredients and present ideas.
  - b. “If you ask for a gift, I might just give you feedback. If you ask for feedback, I’ll almost certainly give a gift.”
  - c. Let your donors co-create. It will lead to better planning and greater investment.
  - d. Some of your best ideas will come from your donors. They’ve got expertise, and they want to use it. Let them be a part of your team!

### Next Steps and Takeaways

- 1. What is one thing you can do differently as a result of this discussion. Write it down.
- 2. Questions?
- 3. I’m available most of the day tomorrow, and I’d be happy to meet with you.