



6 Tips for Making a Realistic *and* Useful Campaign Gift Pyramid

Tip #1: Go big at the top

The traditional approach, as shown above, is to seek a lead gift at 10 percent of the goal. The trouble with that is that you're left with a lot of money to raise from middle and lower gifts which puts tremendous pressure on you and your team. A 20 percent (or even 25 percent) lead gift is better.

Tip #2: Be cautious about the middle

Time and again campaigns struggle the hardest trying to get those middle gifts in the door. Campaigns are a lot like an annual giving program in which you typically see more of an hour-glass shape – with a good number of donors at the top and bottom of the gift table – than a traditional donor pyramid. Don't overestimate what's out there for you at the middle levels.

Tip #3: Don't rely on the bottom

A campaign truism is that you need to get the big gifts in first and work your way down through the life of the campaign. We've seen nonprofits ignore this best practice at their peril. It's a lot easier to raise a million dollars from one donor than to raise it by getting a million people to give you a dollar each.

The purpose of a lower level gifts campaign is to engage the community in your project. In some cases, a campaign may not be the best way to do that. In some cases, you should engage in a "top-of-the-pyramid" campaign and leave the lower level fundraising to the annual fund.

Tip #4: Use practical pledge amounts

Instead of plugging in numbers like \$2,500, \$5,000, \$10,000, etc., consider using amounts that align with the pledge period. If you're accepting pledge payments over three years (which is what our clients usually do), position the giving levels in easy-to-calculate increments such as \$3,000, \$6,000, \$15,000, etc.

It's a lot easier to say, "Will you consider \$1,000 a year for three years?" than it is to say, "Will you consider \$833.33 a year?"!

Plus, we find that it bumps people up to use these kinds of numbers. People who you might ask for \$25,000, you'll now be asking for \$30,000 which is a relatively minor difference for many donors, but gets you to your goal much more quickly.

And make sure you align your gift pyramid and campaign naming opportunities! For example, if you're offering naming rights to three conference rooms at \$15,000 each, make sure you include at least three \$15,000 gifts on your table.

Tip #5: Weight the number of prospects needed by giving level

Traditional gifts pyramids generally suggest that you need 3 or 4 prospects for every gift you'll receive. Actually, your success rate will likely be *higher* at the top of the pyramid than the bottom where you'll be doing more direct marketing, events and other forms of fundraising that have lower performance rates than major gift solicitation.

Tip #6: Customize, customize, customize

Play with your gift pyramid. Try plugging in as many actual prospect names as you can next to each giving level. Adjust the pyramid to match your prospect pool and your resources. Go back to it again and again until you think it's right.

Adapted from "Six Tips for a Better Campaign Gift Pyramid" Posted on: September 2nd, 2015 by Ann Goldman

<http://www.frontrangesource.com/six-tips-for-a-better-campaign-gift-table/>