



## Listening and Responding

1. Probe before responding.
2. Restate before responding.
3. Never argue, only explain or cite relevant facts.
4. Cite another donor with a similar objection but positive outcome.
5. When it's real, admit it and move on.
6. Convert a negative into a positive.
7. Where antagonism is present, pull it out of them. Use: "I sense some concerns..."

## **1. I have to think about it.**

Probe to clarify: is it the amount or the timing?

If they need more time:

- Important decisions take time and we are happy to hear that you will give this opportunity serious consideration.
- How can we help you while you make this important decision? Do you need any additional information from us?
- Right now, tell us how you feel about the gift opportunity we just described.
- We would like to contact you in two weeks. If you need more time that is perfectly understandable, but we would like to listen to your thoughts and answer your questions as you reflect on this important and exciting opportunity.

When it is the amount:

- We understand perfectly, and we are sure there are many factors you will want to consider. But right now, how do you feel about the gift opportunity we just described?
- We are not surprised at all that you need some time, because this may be a larger amount than you might have anticipated at this time. As you know, this is an extraordinary time for our organization, and we need to rely on a handful of treasured family like you to make this happen now.
- We know this may be a large investment but this project is so important that we hope you will give this ask your full consideration.
- We are asking our closest friends like you to stretch their giving a bit because we feel you share the dream that together we can accomplish great things for our beneficiaries.

## **2. I'm not as wealthy as those folks who make those huge gifts you always read about.**

- There should be no mistake about the fact that what you are considering is most generous and will have a profound impact. It's not really a matter of dollar level, rather the use of funds to impact human lives is what counts. In that respect, your gift is of particular significance.
- Gifts like this one are once in a lifetime opportunities. Knowing your strong ties with the organization, we had to come to you first. We would not be here today were it not for the strength and generosity of our many supporters, particularly you.

## **3. You couldn't have picked a worse time to ask. (My business is down/I just got laid-off/I lost a major investment.)**

- Thank you for being so honest with us. I'm sure that was not an easy thing to say.
- Obviously this is not a good time to discuss the gift idea so why don't we agree to keep in close contact to revisit this idea when things turn around.
- We are extremely grateful that you gave us the time to introduce you to this gift idea.

- Please know that all of us at the organization are on your side, and you are a very special friend to us.

#### **4. Concerns about the economy:**

- I know that the economic climate has not been the best for your business and if there is anything we can do, please let me know. Thank you for sharing these thoughts with me. I by no means want to sound insensitive to your concerns or that I have not heard your concerns. You and I have been discussing for quite some time your investment in this effort. While this may not be the ideal time, let us talk about how together we can make that happen either right now or in the very near future. Let me explain about the ideas I have.
- We understand and thank you so much for your honesty. It is really affecting a lot of people but we at the organization are optimistic that our loyal supporters will appreciate that we are dedicated to and focused on accomplishing the goals we just discussed that can have an impact as small as important as one life, and as global and transformational as one country. Together we will get there, so let's brainstorm some things you may be able to do now and revisit the larger picture very soon.
- We have had a few people with similar concerns and let us share with you how we worked with them so that they were comfortable in their current level of giving and the quarterly pledge agreement that alleviated their worries about giving too much of the amount up front.

#### **5. I don't think I can do this. I have family concerns. (My son wants to go to a private school next year and my wife and I are considering placing her mother in a nursing home.)**

- Selecting the right school is a big decision. Congratulations to you and your son.
- We try to think of our parents as the ones we can always count on, but there comes a time when they need us. That's a difficult decision to make, but knowing you, you'll make the right one.
- Aside from these concerns, may I ask, "If you could make a gift, would this be something you would be interested in?"
- Maybe making this gift can actually help, rather than interfere with some future financial commitments. Let's brainstorm about this for a minute.

#### **6. The ask is too high.**

Strategy: don't back off the ask amount too quickly, move back to why the money you are asking for is so important.

- We understand perfectly that this might be a very large amount, and believe us, we do not ask for this every day.
- You are but one of a handful of people we can turn to and ask for this very important gift.
- As a top supporter of the organization, you are one of the few people we can turn to for this extraordinary gift opportunity.

- We hope you take this as a compliment. Our intent was to make sure that you were among the first families to be offered this exciting transformational opportunity.
- I felt that way, too, but my wife and I discussed it and we decided we love this organization and made it our first priority. We really stretched to make a gift and I have to tell you...we feel really great about it!

**7. I need to discuss this with other people.**

- Absolutely, we want you to discuss this with important people in your life. We would be delighted to help you and your spouse make this important decision. Would our meeting with you two together be beneficial to reaching a joint decision?
- Before I made my gift I felt exactly like you that I needed to discuss this with my partner. Please take some time and I would be delighted to be present or to answer any questions that you have in person or by telephone or e-mail.

**8. I give to numerous organizations.**

- We understand perfectly. Many of our top supports give to more than one organization.
- There are many great groups to support. I have felt the way you do now, but after giving it much consideration, I simply had to make giving this larger gift a priority. We hope that you will think about this a bit and make it your priority as well.
- We do not want to mislead you. Our purpose here today is to introduce you to this exciting opportunity and to hear your thoughts about it. We are not looking for you to decide right away.
- How do you feel about the gift opportunity we just described?

**9. It's almost embarrassing for me to say, but you're asking me for \$1 million and I really feel like \$100,000 is all I can spare right now.**

Resist the urge to negotiate price. Sometimes the prospect makes an amazing transformation given a little time to consider everything. You can always come back at another time with other options at different giving levels. Let the prospect consider the opportunity, and you can then assess where you are during follow-up discussion. This may be a case of inadequate cultivation, but if we assume that this is not true this response would be merited:

- Please do not in any way be embarrassed because there is nothing for you to be embarrassed about. Whatever you decide, will be meaningful and deeply appreciated. However, because of the nature of the project and the degree to which we hold you in high esteem and consider you to be important to our organization, we would have felt remiss had we not illustrated for you this profound opportunity. That was really our only objective here today and why don't we give you some more time to consider everything. I want to again indicate we deeply appreciate your consideration and all that you have done for our shared enterprise. Whatever you decide upon will be greatly appreciated, I can assure you, and we look forward to our upcoming discussions.

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- Perhaps there are some creative ways we can present to you to help [ask for permission to present some ways for them to make a gift they will be proud of. For instance, a two part gift, extended time frame, combination of cash, stock and planned gift.]

**10. Prior to you coming, I already made out my check. It's on the table.**

- Thank you for this generous gift. Before we accept it, why don't we tell you more about this great opportunity? Then at the end of the meeting you can decide if you still would like to give it at this time.
- You are such a loyal donor; our organization is so lucky to have you. Think about what we just talked about. If you still would like us to take your gift, we would be happy to. But let's keep the door open to this opportunity we just described.
- If you decide you would like to make the gift we just described, we can use this as your first payment/credit toward that terrific opportunity.

**11. I'm really not interested in supporting this project.**

- From our previous conversations and your questions and comments about the project, we thought this gift idea would match your interest for this project. Can you tell us where your main interest lies in our organization? We want to hear more from you.
- From our previous conversations and your questions and comments about the project, we are so excited about your interest. Are there others you have spoken with about the project you could help to connect with us?
- Thank you for being so candid with us today. Our goal is to always know our friends like you as best we can.
- Since we are being perfectly frank here today, how do you feel about making a gift of this size that would ensure the success of the organization for years to come.