PRINCIPLES OF PERSUASION FOR NONPROFIT FUNDRAISERS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the country facing economic hardships not experienced since The Great Depression, not-for-profit cultural organizations are dealing with considerable declines in charitable giving. Indeed, the Association of Fundraising Professionals reported at the 46th International Conference on Fundraising in New Orleans, LA, that "Less than half of charities raised more money in 2008 than in 2007, and fundraising gains dropped significantly across the board," (AFPnet.org). The report goes on to say:

Fundraising decreases were seen across the board, regardless of cause, size or geography. In addition, each fundraising technique measured in the survey (direct mail, telemarketing, major gifts, planned giving, online fundraising, special events and corporate/foundation grants) saw significant decreases compared to 2007. The percentage of organizations raising more money using major gifts, traditionally one of the strongest and most resilient methods of fundraising, fell from 63 percent in 2008 to 43 percent in 2007. (AFPnet.org)
When conference participants were asked to list the four most pressing fundraising challenges they had faced in the previous year (2008), the economy was the challenge most commonly identified. The Association of Fundraising Professionals report indicates that, "Almost eighty percent rated the economy as one of the top four challenges they faced in 2008, and 57 percent rated it as the top challenge” (AFPnet.org).

Major economic players began filing for bankruptcy in notable numbers in 2007, beginning with Bear Stearns in August. Only slightly more than a year later, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, “the two largest U.S. financial institutions as measured by the size of their balance sheets” (MSNBC.com) were taken over by the government, and Lehman Bros. filed for bankruptcy. The Federal Reserve bailed out AIG; Washington Mutual collapsed (MSNBC.com); and, closer to home in Cleveland, regional powerhouse—and major arts funder—National City Bank was purchased by an out-of-town conglomerate, Pittsburgh neighbor PNC.

Because of this sweeping economic collapse, cultural institutions large and small, fledgling and established, began working and reworking their budgets at a frantic pace. As a member of the development staff at Opera Cleveland, I witnessed this stress and strain as a visible and viable part of day-to-day operations. Finally, the crisis hit home: on June 5th, 2009, I became one of the myriad Americans without a job, laid off because of lack of work. There is not much need for a Development Analyst when donations dry up and certainly no need for a Special Event Coordinator when even the wealthy are reluctant to pay for high-ticket special events. In fact, many organizations like Opera
Cleveland instituted even more severe cost-saving measures, if they were able to keep functioning at all. For example:

Santa Ana, California, November 4, 2008 -- Opera Pacific’s Board of Directors has cancelled the remainder of its 2008-9 Season, announced Robert C. Jones, President and CEO of the company. This action has resulted in a substantial reduction in staff. Due to the downturn in contributions to the organization that is a direct reflection of the challenging financial times the world is facing, Opera Pacific is forced to cancel *The Grapes of Wrath* January 21, 25, 29 and 31, 2009, and *Salome* March 21, 25, 29 and 31. (Operapacific.org)

In addition, results of a Foundation Center study predicted that “The number and size of foundation grants will likely decrease this year, and grants for upstart organizations will be hard to come by…..,” (AFPnet.org). Further, “Online fundraising grew in 2008 thanks to an increase in the number of gifts, but the average gift size among all organizations decreased $15 from 2007” (AFPnet.org). For example, two of Opera Cleveland’s most consistently dependable foundations, The Murphy Foundation and The Kulas Foundation, decreased their donations. Murphy had traditionally given $50,000 per fiscal year. For 2010, The Foundation, Corporation, and Government Relations Manager requested $60,000. Opera Cleveland was awarded $15,000. Kulas, traditionally granting $50,000 per fiscal year, awarded only half that amount—$25,000—for the 2010 fiscal year.
Government donations are diminishing as well. For Opera Cleveland, a traditionally reliable gift from a major government agency—The Ohio Arts Council—has also decreased. The OAC originally pledged $89,000 for general operating funds for fiscal year 2009. It then reduced the pledge by 10% and then again by yet another 10%. Its projected donation for year 2010 has diminished to $48,000—only slightly more than half of the agency’s usual grant.

Finally, the most recent report from the Association of Fundraising Professionals has this to say:

According to the *Index of National Fundraising Performance* published by Target Analytics, first quarter 2009 saw the first overall decline in revenue per donor since the study began in 2002. Revenue per donor declines was experienced by two-thirds of the organizations in the index. As each donor gives less, the problem is compounded by falling donor numbers in the U.S. that have taken place for more than three years (since the Gulf Coast hurricanes of 2005). The study indicates that in the last quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009, this gradual fall in donor numbers has increased in magnitude, suggesting that the recession is accelerating the rate of decrease in donor numbers. Declines in the number of donors overall are due primarily to declines in new donors, which are falling faster than overall donor numbers, particularly since the recession began. In fact, over the past five years, new donor numbers have fallen a median 13.8 percent, or 2.6 percent annually over that period. (AFPnet.org)
This is but a sample of examples to show that times are almost uniquely difficult in the fundraising profession in the United States as we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century. With this challenge in mind, it is essential for fundraisers to recognize the importance of expanding their knowledge about the science and practice of persuasion relative to raising money for their organizations, specifically in regard to major gift acquisition.
There are several types of fundraising that cultural organizations traditionally employ. The broadest and most overarching is the annual campaign. When it is successful, an annual campaign provides a predictable base of support and also a pool from which to select donors for other campaigns.

The annual campaign is one that takes place every year, and its purpose is to offset general operating expenses. This campaign generates money in order to obtain unrestricted funding, to raise awareness of the organization in the community, to develop a base of current donors to insure their continuing and increasing support, and to cultivate future donors.

Another form of fundraising is the direct mail campaign. The direct mail campaign may fall under the umbrella of the annual campaign. Mal Warwick, founder and chairman of Mal Warwick Associates, a fundraising agency specializing in direct response fundraising and marketing that has served nonprofit organizations since 1979,
notes that even in the digital age, “Fundraising letters are—by far—the single biggest means used by nonprofits to recruit new donors. Time and again, surveys reveal that letters provide the means for the majority of donors to make the first gift or become a member of a nonprofit organization” (Warwick, malwarwick.com). Although direct mail can be time-consuming, it is generally cost-effective, as it allows organizations to spend less time and money on typically lower-end donors, saving a substantial portion of time and money to be used on individual donors who tend to donate more per ask. Direct mail also offers a good way to keep in contact with donors and to serve as a reminder of the organization. It is easily targeted to specific people or demographics, it places a message in the home and in the hand of the potential donor, it can be personalized with little effort, and effectiveness is simple to analyze.

Special events fundraising campaigns are one more way organizations raise funds. Often an opportunity for the elite of a region to socialize and be seen, the special event fundraiser is an excellent opportunity to “friend-raise” as well. This is important, as the cost of a special event fundraiser can mount quickly, and an event can strengthen ties to the philanthropic community and attract new blood (with the capacity to give) to the organization. They are typically the threshold experience newcomers experience with a company—people go to events because their friends are going, but may be so impressed by the event, the organization, or its mission, that they become funders. Also, event fundraisers are useful for varieties of reasons that are indirectly related to immediate fund accumulation, such as marketing, public relations, and volunteer recruitment.
In addition to the aforementioned fundraising campaigns is the capital campaign. Because these campaigns are launched to raise money for specific and often costly projects, they often include the cultivation of large pledges paid off over time, frequently requiring the donor to access monies from stocks or property. A capital campaign is usually designed around purchasing a building, renovating an organization’s space, or beginning an endowment. These campaigns present very attractive naming opportunities—offering permanent signage on the walls, bricks emblazoned with donors’ names on sidewalks, and even whole wings of buildings named after families—that are a solid and continuous reminder of a donor’s philanthropic spirit, as opposed to the more ephemeral quality of printing names in programs. Another attractive quality of capital campaigns is that they have a definite end to them: the building purchased, the space renovated, or the endowment fattened. Unlike annual campaigns, which cycle every year, capital campaigns are over once the goal has been attained.

Finally, there is the estate planning side of fundraising. While the mechanics of creating financial instruments that are involved in estate planning should be handled by the donors’ financial planners and legal counsel, nonprofit organizations can reap great rewards from involving themselves in this type of planning. In fact, it is estimated that $972 billion will be transferred through U.S. citizens’ estates over the next fifty years (crainsdetroit.com). This opportunity for fundraising presents itself when donors begin planning for a transition, or end stage, of a life. As such, it is best handled in both a sensitive and timely manner by the individual in the organization with the longest or strongest relationship with the donor.
As the relationships between donors and fundraisers are as complex as they are varied, so too must be the compliance-gaining strategies used in order to secure funding. A selection of techniques will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER III

WHY PEOPLE GIVE

People give to nonprofit organizations for a wide variety of reasons—some feel a need to give back to the community; some do it for recognition and social status; some for a fondness for a particular cause. And some do it simply for the tax write-off. Whatever the reason, it is necessary for the fundraising professional to have at his or her side a veritable arsenal of persuasion tactics in order to get potential donors to part with their funds. In particular, the current economic climate demands that fundraisers be especially aware of, and skilled, in compliance-gaining strategies.

Persuasion is a communicative phenomenon practiced the world over by nearly everyone in every culture. In their article from *Psychology and Marketing*, Marian Friestad and Peter Wright said:

Persuasion knowledge is one of the more important knowledge domains of everyday life. It is an especially important interpretive belief system because it tells people about situations where an intelligent purposeful outside agent is
skillfully trying to alter their inner self (their beliefs, their emotions, their attitudes, their decisions, their thought processes) and thereby alter the course of their lives. (Friestad and Wright, Everyday persuasion knowledge 2)

In the case of the fundraiser, the goal is to loosen a donor’s grip on his wallet.

The two most widely-accepted models of persuasion are the Elaboration Likelihood Model, or ELM, and the Heuristic-Systematic Model, or HSM. Both models claim that there are two routes to persuasion. The Elaboration Likelihood Model discussed by Morris, Woo, and Singh describes two routes to attitude change: central and peripheral.

The central route emphasizes a high relevance of the message to the individual. In the peripheral route, the individual concentrates on heuristic cues like attractive expert sources and number rather than the content of arguments employed by the message to process the message. (“Elaboration likelihood model: A missing intrinsic emotional implication” 79)

The Heuristic-Systematic Model presented by Zuckerman, Adam, and Chaiken proposes that:

The systematic processing mode is a comprehensive, analytic orientation in which perceivers access, scrutinize, and integrate all useful information...In contrast, the heuristic-processing mode involves the use of learned knowledge structures in the form of simple decision rules, or cognitive heuristics, to reach judgments. (“A Heuristic Systematic Processing Analysis of the Effectiveness of Product Warning Labels” 622)
In other words, if the persuasive message is deemed of high importance to the target, the target will use the central processing (or systematic) route—the one that requires careful consideration of the arguments presented (in this case, by the fundraiser). If the message is of low relevance to the target, the target will most likely use the peripheral processing route, or heuristics (experience-based techniques that aid in problem-solving), focusing more on attractiveness, likeability, and similarity of themselves to the fundraiser.

It is important to note that people are flexible and can move back and forth between the two routes. The way people process persuasive information is not a static thing, nor is it indicative of intelligence. Situational factors can influence which processing route is employed; although people do tend to have preference—a “go to” route that they normally use.

Even more important to acknowledge is the fact that influence achieved through the central route is more persistent over time and is more predictive of future behavior than influence achieved through peripheral route of processing. In other words, if one is required to think carefully about a decision, as opposed to making a snap judgment, or follow a more logical train of thought instead of using a rule of thumb to come to a conclusion, the influence achieved is stronger, longer lasting, and easier to reproduce. This is not to say that the patron using a peripheral processing route can’t be persuaded to give again, nor does this fact discount the importance of using peripheral cues to reach to the ultimate goal of obtaining donations. But it is generally acknowledged that a donor that takes the time to carefully process the persuasive communication, using
systematic analysis of the information provided, is more likely to become a donor who
gives larger gifts over a longer period of time.

Clearly, persuasion tools will have different effects on the donor based upon
which route of thinking he or she is using, and it is in the fundraiser’s best interest to
determine at which level the donor is functioning and employ the appropriate persuasion
principle. The three principles of persuasion presented in this paper will be liking, the
rule of reciprocity, and sequential request. I will then examine, through the lens of a
cultural fundraiser, the above-mentioned principles in relation to donors’ preferred
method of processing information and at which stage in the relationship-building process
these principles are most effective.
CHAPTER IV

THE PRINCIPLES OF PERSUASION

LIKING

It is common knowledge that people comply with the requests of those they like. If you ask something of someone—a commitment of time, money, or resources, he is far more likely to agree to the request of someone he knows and likes, than he is with a stranger or someone he dislikes. This everyday principle seems simplistic in its premise—and it is—but it is a highly effectual tool for the cultural fundraiser. Therefore, if a donor knows and likes the fundraiser, it is that much more likely that the donor will contribute to the fundraiser’s organization.

One of the most commonly accepted factors that influence liking is attractiveness. A study by Cialdini published in Influence: Science and Practice in 2001, states: “It is generally acknowledged that good-looking people have an advantage in social interaction (and) research indicates that the advantage may be greater than supposed” (148). Good-looking people, on the whole, do have an edge over their less-attractive counterparts: an indication of our society’s shallowness, perhaps, but an undeniable truth nonetheless. For
example, a study of the 1974 Canadian federal elections found that attractive candidates received more than two and a half times as many votes as unattractive candidates (Efran and Patterson).

Consider the Nixon-Kennedy debate of 1960, a commonly cited example of how youth, vigor, and attractiveness triumphed over less desirable physical qualities. According to journalist David Halberston, Nixon, “heading into the most critical media event of his life…looked exhausted, underweight, and wan…better suited for going to a funeral, perhaps his own, than to a debate.” (Schroeder, Presidential Debates: Fifty Years of High-Risk T.V. 1) On the other hand, journalist Howard K. Smith, who moderated the first debate, compared Kennedy to an “athlete come to receive his wreath of laurel” (Schroeder 1) Nixon’s perceived “defeat” on a televised debate was not nearly so much based on content as it was on appearance. While it would be simplistic to believe that “star quality” was the only or even the major factor in Kennedy’s ultimate victory, there is little doubt that it played a significant role.

Reflecting on the most recent presidential election, it is clear that attractiveness once again influenced the nation. Democratic candidate Barack Obama, was young, vibrant, and full of energy. John McCain was physically attractive in a distinguished, experienced way. However, his choice for running-mate, Sarah Palin, then-governor of Alaska, only highlighted the physical difference between the two candidates. Next to Palin, whose state has license plates reading “Coldest State, Hottest Governor,” McCain looked older and wearier, her youth and vigor underscoring his age. If Nixon’s debate
loss to Kennedy was influenced by physical attractiveness, then McCain’s loss to Obama was indeed swayed by the same principle.

Not only do attractive political candidates tend to fare better than their less comely opponents, attractive people are also looked upon more favorably in hiring situations (Shannon and Stark). Economic data indicate that in the U.S. and Canada, attractive individuals get paid an average of 12-14 percent more than their unattractive coworkers (Hammermesh and Biddle).

But how does one define physical attractiveness? Facial symmetry is considered to be one of the most influential aspects when assessing attractiveness. In fact, “symmetry has been scientifically proven to be inherently attractive to the human eye. It has been defined not with proportions, but rather with similarity between the left and right sides of the face” (Feng).

In addition, the rationale behind symmetry preference in both humans and animals is that symmetric individuals have a higher mate-value; scientists believe that this symmetry is equated with a strong immune system. Thus, beauty is indicative of more robust genes, improving the likelihood that an individual's offspring will survive. This evolutionary theory is supported by research showing that standards of attractiveness are similar across cultures. (Feng)

From choosing a political candidate to hiring new employees, physical attractiveness plays a significant role. As politically incorrect as it is to admit, research in the area unequivocally deems it to be true. That being said, however, it seems what we
Attractiveness can be highly effective when it comes to inducing liking, and therefore the likelihood of gaining compliance, because of halo effects. Halo effects is a term coined by social psychologists to explain the phenomenon of attributing positive characteristics to a person based on that person’s possession of another positive characteristic, such as attractiveness. In fact, “research has shown that we automatically assign to good-looking individuals such favorable traits as talent, kindness, honesty, and intelligence” (R. B. Cialdini 148).

We can even be persuaded into thinking a person is more attractive—and therefore likeable—than he or she really is. This is done by creating a sense of familiarity by repeated exposure to the person in question. Although it has been said that familiarity breeds contempt, it does not seem to be the case in persuasive communication, as our attitudes toward people and things can be influenced by how many times we have been exposed to it. For example, in one experiment, the results of which were published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, the faces of several individuals were flashed on a screen so quickly that, later on, the subjects who were exposed to the faces in this manner couldn’t recall having seen any of them before. Yet, the more frequently a person’s face flashed on the screen, the more these subjects came to like that person when they met in a subsequent interaction. And because greater liking leads to greater social influence, these subjects were also more persuaded by the opinions and statements of the
individuals whose faces had appeared on the screen most frequently (Bornstein, Leone and Galley).

The more familiar a fundraiser’s face is to the donor, the more likely the donor is to like the fundraiser, just by mere exposure. Of course, it helps immensely if the exposure and contact between the donor and fundraiser is a positive experience. Therefore, it is imperative that the fundraiser exude an upbeat personality and facilitate as favorable an experience possible in every meeting with every donor. Again, this is a fairly basic principle, but when applied properly it enhances the fundraiser’s opportunity to secure a major donation.

It is important to note that when using liking as persuasion tool, it is more likely to be effective when the request is on behalf of a cause with which the donor has only casual knowledge, i.e., when the donor is employing either the peripheral or heuristic route of persuasive communication processing. It is also most effective at the early stages of the donor’s relationship with the organization and the fundraiser, again because of the processing route generally used in early stages of relationships and initial requests. As Goie et al. state in “The Mediating Roles of Liking and Obligation on the Relationship Between Favors and Compliance,” “we comply more with those we like to create and maintain positive feelings in the relationship. Agreeing with requests, even small ones, creates and maintains positive feelings” (Goei, Massi Lindsey and Boster 179).

While liking and the many forms by which it is enhanced may lead to a first-time donation, it begs the question: how does the fundraiser get the donor to give again?
RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity is a state of mutual dependence, action, or influence. It is also one of the most effectual tools used by fundraisers to acquire donations. The concept of reciprocity has been around for ages and transcends “great cultural differences, long distances…many years, and immediate self-interest” (R. B. Cialdini 21) In fact, famed archaeologist Richard Leakey, who, in 1984, discovered one of the most complete *homo erectus* skeletons ever found, attributes the essence of humanity to the process of reciprocity. He claims that we are human because our ancestors learned to share food and skills in an honored network of obligation (Leakey and Lewin). Indeed, cultural anthropologists view this web of indebtedness as a unique adaptive mechanism of human beings, allowing for the division of labor, the exchange of diverse forms of goods and different services, and the creation of interdependencies that bind individuals together into highly efficient units (Ridley; Tiger and Fox).

So deeply ingrained into the human experience is the norm of reciprocity that to ignore the rule is to risk being ostracized from the social group. We are conditioned from earliest memory to recognize the rule and obey it to the fullest extent, even if abiding by the rule creates an ultimately unequal exchange of goods or services. The talented fundraiser knows this, and will use the rule to his or her advantage, cheerfully leading the donor down a path that invites him not just to reciprocate, but in some instances to over-reciprocate, conceding to a larger gift request.
Matthew F. Abrahms and Robert A. Bell state in their article, *Encouraging Charitable Contributions: An Examination of Three Models of Door-in-the-Face Compliance*, “It is generally accepted that doing a favor for someone increases the likelihood that they will comply with a subsequent request from the individual who provided the favor…two explanations are commonly posited to describe increased compliance after a favor: obligation and liking” (178). Liking, as previously discussed, can be a powerful tool for the fundraiser, but it is the obligation to return the favor—whatever it may be—that highlights the effectiveness of reciprocity as a principle of persuasion. In fact, liking doesn’t even have to be present for the feeling of obligation to take hold and demand reciprocation.

Cultural institutions bring the rule of reciprocity into play for their teams all the time. The Easter Seals organization, for example, sends sheets of personally addressed return mailing labels, hoping the recipient will return the favor with a gift of his or her own—a donation. In addition,

The American Disabled Veterans organization reports that its simple mail appeal for donations produces a response rate of about 18 percent. But when the mailing also includes an unsolicited gift (gummed, individualized address labels), the success rate nearly doubles to 35 percent. (R. B. Cialdini 30)

This “gift before asking to be gifted” or “preemptive present,” as it were, is found to be effective for organizations wanting not only cash in return but the opinion of constituents. For example, survey researchers have found that sending a monetary
gift...in an envelope with a mailed questionnaire greatly increases survey completion rates (Church; Warriner).

Since “practically all life in all society includes and implies reciprocities, and reciprocity has been seen as the basic glue that makes people constitute groups or societies,” (Gerard-Varet, Kolm and Ythier 115) it is no wonder that fundraisers spend so much time courting their prospective donors. Of course the relationship-building aspect is crucial, and as discussed previously, even simple exposure can enhance the liking the donor feels toward the fundraiser, thus potentially upping the ante on the prospective gift. But where even liking can’t take the fundraiser, the rule of reciprocity can. It is simply so fundamentally ensconced in our psyches as human beings that to go against the rule can cause extreme mental discomfort. We, as members of a highly-evolved society--one that exists, according to some anthropologists, because of the rule of reciprocity--are bound not just by convention but, some may argue, evolution to repay our debts.

This principle of persuasion aids the fundraiser in several ways. By offering a good or service not requested (but accepted) by the donor, the fundraiser automatically engages the rule of reciprocity in their favor. One way fundraisers can trigger reciprocity is to simply offer to treat a prospective donor to lunch. Once the offer is accepted, the rule of reciprocity implies that the donor will feel obligated to return the favor. It may take more than one outing to bring the donation to fruition. In addition, bringing along a board member with whom the donor has a good relationship can tip the scales further in favor of the fundraiser by activating the Liking principle.
Special invitation-only offers are another way to engage the rule of reciprocity. Sneak-previews of shows, attending dress rehearsals, and meet-and-greet evenings with artists all cultivate the condition of reciprocity. Elite-access passes to events that don’t have a specific monetary value can be either the trigger to give for the first time or part of the stewardship that keeps a donor contributing.

While the term “reciprocity” connotes benefits for the well-being of all, or at least the sharing of indebtedness, reciprocity factors highly in the third component of this paper: that of reciprocal concessions.

**RECIPROCAL CONCESSIONS**

Yet another tool the fundraiser may choose to employ is that of reciprocal concessions, also referred to as the Door in the Face approach and Foot in the Door approach (henceforth known as DITF and FITD, respectively).

The DITF effect happens when a fundraiser initially asks for an ideal gift that is much larger than his or her actual goal, bargaining toward a realistic gift. For example, a fundraiser might take a prospective donor out, wine and dine him (employing the power of reciprocity) being as charming as possible (using his likeability) and ask for an ideal sum, known as the initial request, of $8,000. In a perfect situation, the donor would agree to this ideal gift immediately. However, the fundraiser must also keep a realistic gift in mind (for example, $5,000) in case of rejection. If the donor denies the initial ideal request, the fundraiser then asks for his realistic gift. This is known as the critical request. The donor (hopefully) concedes to the lesser amount, due to the concession made by the
fundraiser. According to a study published in *Human Communication Research*, DITF led to an average increase in compliance of approximately 17%, relative to control subjects who received only a critical request (Dillard, Hunter and Burgoon).

Perceptual contrast (the rule by which a thing seems smaller, lighter, cheaper, etc. when compared to another thing that is larger, heavier, or more expensive, respectively) plays an important role in DITF. A fundraiser’s critical request of $5,000 appears much smaller in comparison to the initial request of $8,000. As Matthew F. Abrahams and Robert A. Bell note in their article, “Encouraging Charitable Contributions, An Examination of Three Models of Door-in-the-Face Compliance,”

The perceptual contrast model describes a cognitive process that occurs at the point at which the second request is construed and then either assimilated or contrasted. The concession model becomes relevant only after this comparison of requests takes place and a compromise is perceived. (132)

Interestingly, the second request does not have to be small itself, it just has to be smaller than the original ask. However, it is important to note that initial requests in DITF must not be so large as to be judged as unreasonable or absurd (Wang, Brownstein and Katzev). This is easily accomplished by doing simple research—into the donor’s history with the organization, other charitable contributions, etc. A prudent fundraiser will conduct such important background checks before going in for the ask.

Yet another factor that influences the success of reciprocal concessions is that of self-presentation. ‘The self-presentation account posits that individuals’ rejection of the
initial request leads to a concern that they will be judged negatively by the solicitor. Thus compliance with the second request is motivated by the desire to redeem oneself in the eyes of the solicitor” (Abrahms and Bell 135). Self-presentation concerns are further heightened if there is anticipated future interaction between the fundraiser and the donor. Thus, anticipated interaction heightens people’s concerns about future scrutiny from their communication partner, and thereby focuses attention on the correctness of behavior (Duval and Wicklund). For example, Slusher, Roering, and Rose found in their 1974 study that anticipated interaction increases the probability of cooperative behavior, (Slusher, Roering and Rose) and Pallak, Mueller, Dollar, and Pallak found that anticipated interaction also increases the preference for agreement. (Pallak, Mueller and Dollar). Simply put, we care about the opinions of others and wish to remain in good standing in others’ eyes.

FITD, like DITF, is also highly influenced by self-perception. If donors concede to an initial request, especially when the request is from a charitable organization, they are likely to view themselves as a helpful, charitable person. In an analysis of existing literature, Dillard, Hunter, and Burgoon found that both reciprocal concession techniques are useful when it comes to prosocial—“behavior that occurs when someone acts to help another person, particularly when they have no goal other than to help a fellow human” (Changingminds.org)—appeals, in that they are more likely to work when dealing with environmental or civic organizations than with private marketing firms (1984). The donor who offers time or money to a cultural organization is then bound by a need for consistency in his or her self-perception and has made him or herself more vulnerable to
persuasion by that very fact. In other words, people who donate tend to act in concert with the way they view themselves and the desire to uphold these beliefs, making it more likely that they will continue to support or even increase their level of support.

In their article, “Fifteen Years of Foot-in-the-Door Research, A Meta-Analysis,” Beaman, Cole, Preston, Klentz and Mehrkens Steblay state “The larger the size of the request to which a person agrees, the greater the probability of subsequent compliance, since the person may have a perception that he or she is very helpful” (Beaman, Cole and Preston 189). The need for maintaining consistency in one’s self-perception is an exceptionally potent motivator. The fundraiser who is aware of this tendency increases the likelihood of becoming a formidable fundraiser. Reinforcing a donor’s views of himself as a charitable individual is a simple matter of reminding him how much he has given to the organization; and, therefore, how much the organization has profited by having such munificent donor. An example of how a practical use of this trait can be found in donor appeals created by Opera Cleveland. In nearly every appeal the opera company sends to its donors, the donor’s previous donation is listed at the bottom of the letter to remind them just how much they gave before and so underscore the fact that they are indeed a generous person, tweaking their perception of themselves as charitable. An additional motivation might be to publicly acknowledge in programs or annual reports, not only the level of donor commitment but also years of continuous support.

Once a donor’s view of him or herself is made salient by this reminder, it is hard to turn a blind eye to it. To do so is to cause stress between the donor’s views and actions,
and such an undesired outcome prompts the donor to act in order to bring his views and reality back into balance.

If perception is reality, then perception will over-shadow truth. Research from physics, philosophy, sociology, literary criticism, and other fields has helped to shape various theories of reality. One such belief is that there is simply no reality beyond the perceptions or beliefs individuals have about reality. This view of reality appears to hold true in regard to compliance gaining strategies—that whatever the actuality of a donor’s persona, if a fundraiser gets that person to see himself as helpful and generous, even just one time, that donor is likely to continue to give.

Most people like to think of themselves as magnanimous, upright citizens, who care about a community and take the time to do what is best for it. Supporting cultural organizations is an effective way to do this. Playing up these internal ideals, and thereby accentuating what donors hold to be true about themselves, is a powerful tool in the quest for cash. For lapsed donors, appealing to self-images apparent from previous giving is an excellent way to bring them back into the fold.

The feeling of mutual gain by both parties is one of the central reasons why reciprocal concessions yield such a high rate of response. In fact, people who are persuaded by reciprocal concessions have “feelings of greater responsibility for and satisfaction with the arrangement” (R. B. Cialdini 45). When donors feel that they themselves have determined the actual outcome of the ask, they are likely to be more satisfied with the result. As the part they played in reaching the concession was pivotal—
at least in their minds—they may feel a greater sense of responsibility, which helps ensure they will, in fact, go through with the gift. And as feelings of responsibility (in a positive situation) and satisfaction also enhance feelings of well-being and liking for the fundraiser and the organization, the donor is even more likely to give again in the future.

As with the aforementioned persuasion principles—Liking and Reciprocity—it is vital that the fundraiser use reciprocal concessions as part of an open and honest relationship-building process. Concessions must appear to be thoughtful compromises on the part of the fundraiser.
CHAPTER V

THE PRINCIPLES OF PERSUASION IN PRACTICAL USE

The following presents a theoretical account of donors, their preferred method of processing persuasive communication, and the relationship between the donor and fundraiser at the time of the ask. Each of these donors has been affected by the downturn of the economy. Each donor employs either the Heuristic-Systematic model of processing persuasive communication or the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Differing stages of relationship between the donor and fundraiser will be discussed, and finally, conclusions made about which principle works best in regard to relationship stages and processing preferences.

LIKING

As previously stated, good-looking people have an advantage in social interactions. It follows, then, that a physically attractive fundraiser ought to have an advantage when it comes to raising funds for his organization. If a prospective donor is a known appreciator of a pretty face, good looks can be a useful tool for the fundraiser.
Familiarity with the donor and simple background research can give the fundraiser insight into whether or not this happens to be the case. Attractiveness is especially effective when dealing with a donor that tends to process persuasive communication through the peripheral or heuristic route. And if a donor has a history of pledging or signing checks to the more attractive members of the development staff, according to the ELM and HSM, he most likely is processing information through those routes, as opposed to the central or systematic routes.

As a theoretical example, take an attractive member of the development staff of a cultural institution and put him in the position of asking for a gift from a previous donor who is known to acquiesce to more attractive looking people. If the donor is indeed operating under the peripheral route, relying on heuristic cues as opposed to central or systematic processing of persuasive communication, then the ask and consent to the request should be a fairly easy process.

This is assuming, of course, that the donor’s preferred method of processing information is being employed. As previously stated, however, one’s method of processing persuasive communication isn’t a static thing, and people can switch back and forth between the two routes. It is always advisable, then, to have a more complex approach at the ready, an approach that focuses on more substantive issues or multiple avenues of connection between the fundraiser and donor. In other words, the fundraiser must also come equipped with tactics that rely less on the superficiality of beauty and more on the weightiness of the subject. Ultimately, however, the best bet to use attractiveness as a compliance-gaining strategy is to send the most physically appealing
member of the development staff out to secure the gift…along with a cache of other reasons as to why the donor should give.

Yet the fundraiser need not be the next Heidi Klum or George Clooney in the looks department in order to secure donations. There are other ways people are considered to be attractive, thus other ways to engender liking. According to R. B. Zajonc in his 1968 article, “Attitudinal effects of mere exposure,” familiarity also factors into what we consider attractive.

“In terms of…familiarity, much research has shown that previous or repeated exposure to a stimulus increases the positive affective response to that stimulus” (1). Known as the mere exposure effect, this process has been demonstrated to occur across a wide range of stimuli, including faces.

Take, for example, a fundraiser and donor who have both been a part of an organization for years. According to research previously cited (Bornstein, Leone and Galley) opinions on attractiveness levels rise simply by repeated exposure to a stimulus. In this case, the stimulus would be a fundraiser, and the hoped-for response would be a donation from the donor. If the donor is operating under a peripheral/heuristic route of processing information, and finds the fundraiser more attractive because of this repeated exposure, then it is likely the donor will give to him, according to this principle. Again, it is imperative to have a list of reasons why the donor should give and not simply rely on the assumed perceived attractiveness that has been generated by repeat exposure.

Finally, in order to facilitate and enhance liking, a fundraiser can play the similarity card. By capitalizing on the perceived similarities—such as dress, style of
speech, shared experiences—between the fundraiser and the donor, liking is enhanced. And as liking leads to a greater likelihood of consent, the more probable the favorable response to the request becomes. Yet again, this relies on the donor who tends to process persuasive communication through a more peripheral/heuristic route. As perceived similarity is often a very superficial thing and has the possibility of dissolution as time goes by and the fundraiser and donor gets to know each other more intimately, dissimilarities may arise. This may eventually lead to less liking, on the part of the donor, but playing up perceived likenesses in order to attain a goal has ever been a human—and useful—trait.

To summarize, I believe that using liking as a tool of persuasion does have its merits. Especially in this economy, when donation dollars often fall short of projections. It does, however, have its pitfalls, as I believe that it more often than not relies on peripheral and or heuristic cues to obtain consent to donation requests, which, as stated earlier, have lesser effects on long-term attitude change. This is not to say that making use of a donor’s liking for the solicitor is not a worthwhile effort. However, it may not be the most conducive persuasion principle to foster future gifts. In fact, using liking as a tool to gain compliance may best be used at the very beginning of a donor’s relationship with an organization and/or fundraiser, as liking may be the most cursory of the principles discussed in this paper. Still, every dollar counts these days, and getting a donor to give once opens the door for further solicitation.
As reciprocity is such a fundamental part of being human, and as a result, such a cornerstone of humanity, deciding to apply this principle to raise money for cultural institutions requires little thought. In fact, to disregard this principle as a fundraising tool is to disregard one of the very tenets of civilization, i.e., we as people will not only go out of our way to repay a debt, but in some instances will even go above and beyond what is the expected repayment, simply to rid ourselves of obligation. It is a matter of following the rules, and these rules were put into place since the inception of society and long before the practice of fundraising began.

When a fundraiser calls a donor and offers to take him to dinner, the rule of reciprocity has already been enacted, simply by the initial phone call and subsequent invitation. Offering to take a donor out immediately puts the donor in a state of obligation--obligation to accept, and ultimately, obligation to repay the favor by contributing funds. Since reciprocity is such a deep-rooted part of the human psyche, a donor taken to dinner by a fundraiser may feel so instantly obliged as to acquiesce to his initial request (although reciprocal concessions may need to be employed and will be further discussed in the following subchapter). A donor complying with this initial request would surely be operating under the peripheral or heuristic route of processing, and no further persuasion tactics need be applied to get him to support the organization. But what about the donor who requires more persuasion than what is necessary to simply enact this phenomenon? The donor who processes information more along a central or systematic route?
For that type of donor, I suggest employing the reciprocity rule in the form of public recognition. Many cultural institutions offer public recognition for their donors—listings in programs, plaques on walls of theatres, bricks with names of donors in the very foundation of arts buildings—where they can be seen, of course. Because with some donors, especially with those that tend to think a bit deeper about the rule of reciprocity, it’s all about being publicly acknowledged.

To summarize, a donor who is easily influenced by the reciprocity principle of persuasion might very well be the donor who tends to process persuasive communication along the peripheral or heuristic route, as it is such basic principle of society. However, for the donor who tends toward processing information on a central or systematic route, more effort might be required to enact reciprocity, and a fundraiser may need to be willing to offer a bit more from the organization in advance of the donor himself giving. I believe this principle is most effectively employed at the beginning to middle-stages of fundraiser/donor relationship—where the two are familiar enough with one another to be past the initial knee-jerk reaction of the complicity that comes with liking, but still in the stages of relationship with the organization that the donor is influenced by what he gets out of giving to it. Some donors may never make it past this stage, and reciprocity is an excellent tool to use with such a donor in order to gain compliance. In my opinion, reciprocity is the go-to principle of persuasion to use for the widest variety of donors, and also the widest variety of relationship between donor and fundraiser.
As Seungwoo Kwon and Laurie R. Weingart state in their article published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, “Unilateral Concessions from the Other Party: Concession Behavior, Attributions, and Negotiation Judgements,” “Negotiators concede because they believe that concessions will…encourage the other party to make reciprocal concessions” (263). As evidenced previously, reciprocal concessions are an impactful way to bring about compliance. The three most important factors, when employing the reciprocal concessions approach, are perceptual contrast, self presentation, and guilt.

The perceptual contrast model would likely be the most effective when used to influence donors who generally operate along a central or systematic route of processing persuasive communication. As it requires a careful comparison and contrasting of initial and subsequent requests, and therefore a more precise scrutiny of the donor’s options, this model goes beyond the initial response of reciprocity and might best be used to persuade donors who tend to shy away from the peripheral or heuristic route of processing.

Self-presentation factors into the success of the reciprocal concessions principle of persuasion as well. In their article, “Self-Presentation and the Door-in-the-Face Technique for Inducing Compliance,” published in *Personality and Social Psychology*, Mark G. Pendleton and C. Daniel Batson state:

people actively “manage” the impressions that others form about them. Assuming that people wish to be seen as helpful and concerned, especially with worthwhile
causes, refusing a request for help with such a cause would be inconsistent with this self-presentation. This inconsistency could lead to additional motivation to comply with a subsequent request. (77)

Bringing self-presentation into play is best used on the donor processing persuasive messages along the central or systematic route. As with perceptual contrast, donors who are forced to consider how they appear to others have moved beyond a peripheral or heuristic route of processing and into the realm that requires more careful inspection of how their actions are interpreted by others.

Finally, guilt actually serves to further highlight the other two factors—that of perceptual contrast and self-presentation—quite nicely and should never be underestimated in the fight for funding. Feelings of guilt can be brought about using the perceptual contrast model as such: as a fundraiser gradually reduces the amount of this request, the donor is likely to feel the weight of this guilt mounting as he recognizes the considerable concessions on the part of the fundraiser. If the fundraiser was prudent in his research and decided upon a higher (but not ridiculously so) initial request, while leaving enough room for negotiation between that amount and the critical request, he is free to give the donor several opportunities to deny his ask. This is to his benefit, as saying “no” too many times activates the donor’s feelings of guilt and ultimately makes it more likely that he will eventually respond in the affirmative.

When issues of self-presentation are brought to the forefront by reciprocal concessions, guilt is the hammer that drives home the request of the fundraiser and brings about compliance. Indeed, “Increased compliance after refusing an initial request may be
the result of the respondent’s desire to avoid being perceived as... unhelpful, inconsiderate (Pendleton and Batson 77). As is the case with reciprocity, the desire to be seen in others’ eyes as agreeable and helpful is a universal trait, and people will go to great lengths to maintain not only the image they hope to project to others, but just as importantly, if not more so, the image they hold of themselves. To deny a request too many times is to jeopardize those images and is capable of creating such cognitive dissonance as to necessitate compliance with the solicitor.

To summarize, reciprocal concessions—either DITF or FITD—are most likely to influence a donor who tends to process persuasive communication along a central or systematic route. This method of gaining compliance, in my opinion, is best reserved for the donor and fundraiser who share a history with each other, and the organization. As bargaining in such a manner is not for the novice, be it the development professional or the patron, this principle is most beneficial to both parties when they are both seasoned in gift acquisition and giving.

With donations dwindling from corporations, the government, and individuals, fundraisers need as many approaches as possible in order to acquire funds. The preceding compliance-gaining strategies, coupled with knowledge of the donor and his or her preferred route of processing persuasive communication, will aid the fundraiser in securing funding for his organization.

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