



## Telling your story during a recession: You can be more effective with less

CT Assn of Nonprofits, Feb. 9 workshop

- **Why tough times can be an opportunity for organizations**
  - o People continue to give to the organizations closest to their hearts
  - o Since 1966 the United States has experienced six economic recession: 1969-70; 1973-75, 1980, 1981-82, 1990-91 and 2001
  - o Although growth in giving slows in years of recession and spikes when the stock market soars, the US has never experience a philanthropic recession
  - o Studies show a steady 3.3 percent rate of real growth in philanthropy since 1950 – Report by Giving USA, 2007
- **Messaging**
  - o Understanding what your target audience values
    - Security?
    - Stability
    - Way to donate that gives them a way out – ie. Hyundai
  - o We are a good, solid place to give – stable and responsible
  - o Transparent in how you use the money. The more you tell people about how the money is used and underscore that they have a choice in how they support their favorite cause, the more you'll align with today's values
  - o Transparents and the telling and building trust with target audience
  - o Trust is in short supply right now

### Advice from Giving USA

- **We must continue fundraising**
  - o Keep fundraising activities going as our mission must continue and our needs will require as much if not more attending during this time period PEOPLE GIVE WHEN THEY ARE ASKED
- **Be realistic with expectations and selective with your outreach**
  - o During economic downturns, people feel poorer and more unstable. Major donors give from their assets not from their income. Therefore leaders are often less optimistic about what others can do and thus hesitant to ask for gifts. WE may need to recalibrate our expectations, especially as they relate to annual giving and in select cases, with major gifts
- **Do your research**
  - o Research is critical to our efforts and we must know who is up and who is down. Remember the the market doesn't always correspond to earnings – the market may be down, but a hedge fund may be experiencing a rise in earnings
- **Devise creative cultivation/engagement strategies**
  - o Now, more than ever, it's important to be creative with your cultivation and dn engagement





strategies. Understand our constituency and the best methods of communication, education and follow-up. Be bold and stay confident

- o Example
  - Small turkey drives
  - Less effort
  - Seems more do-able
  - Allows us to bring in more friends
  - Toolkit on site

### **Keep Basics in Mind**

- **Never underestimate the generosity of the American people**
  - o During hard times American responds in extraordinary ways. This doesn't suggest business as usual. On the contrary, plan for changes, but don't be surprised if there are instance of extraordinary giving. When there is a need and people have the capacity to help, they respond generously
- **In an economic decline people and businesses usually continue to support their main causes but are more reticent to take on many new things**
  - o Consistent donors should be reminded how essential their support is. We new prospect you may need to finesse your timing or approach
- **It is essential to keep activity high**
  - o While not always asking, continue to tell a compelling story, keep prospective donors engaged and informed and selectively make gift requests. During tough economic time sit is sometimes appropriate to keep campaigns a bit quieter – maybe not so public. But keep activity high and interest higher. Ask who you can. Keep other engaged and informed
- **Reevaluate those plans once a year**
  - o Things change

### **Introductory comments**

- **People still need to hear from you**
- **Donors are looking for causes that emphasize that they are careful about their expenditures in a time of economic stress**
- **It's about setting and being a role model**





## **Don't forget all your publics**

- **Not just donors**
- **Former donors**
- **Recipients of service**
- **People who benefit**
- **Everyone's a potential donor**
- **Employees**
- **Volunteers**
- **The key components of a solid communications program – are you missing any**
- **Identifying your top communications needs and opportunities**
- **Leveraging the Big Four communications must-dos**
  - o Making your website a marketing workhorse
    - Bringing people to the site
  - o Building relationships through the media
  - o Building and using your in-house mailing/e-mail lists
    - Email outreach
    - Establishing a conversation
      - Get email list
      - If you think you have one do a reality check
      - Open the list
      - Share with key staff members
      - Establish a regular routine of updating – preferably once per month
      - Develop a protocol for
        - o Who goes on the list
        - o Do you include casual contacts
        - o Person who sent you a check
    - Everybody who has a role in the organization of building relationship should be adding to your list
      - Clarify who you want
      - Categorize by different stakeholders so you speak to what they want
      - Don't send everyone everything or people will routinely delete you
      - Make sure they can opt-out easily
      - Only deliver information they want and can use
    - People are busy and see this as adding work
      - Need to understand this is a vital part of engaging and retaining donors
      - Nurture them – Foodshare calls and notes
  - o Encouraging volunteers and board to be community ambassadors





### **Grassroots marketing**

- Ask people to participate – specifically tell them to pass this along to at least 10 friends
- Like having a conversation
- o Revisit who you are, where you're going, whether current program relevant in today's economy

### **Foodshare exceeded goal**

Challenge grants. Stay on message. Be they ask – 5:00 a.m.

### **Media**

- You're going to do it
- Media contacts are here today and gone tomorrow
  - o New Britain bureau – phone disconnected – closed six weeks ago
  - o Have to update list and keep an eye on news
    - Example – Imprint papers – some dead, some reborn in the Valley Press
    - Call and ask
    - Make it someone's job to update your media list – emailing releases is a sure fire way
  - o Publish it yourself
  - o Don't forget HBJ – new non-profit emphasis
  - o Don't forget iTowns
    - Submit stories yourself
    - Submit photos yourself
    - Get to know your iTowns Webhost – some like Ken Byron write blogs

### **Breakout**

- Breakout
  - o Re-thinking the aged campaign
  - o For example black tie
  - o Questions to ask
    - Is it still relevant
    - How should it be changed vis a vis economy
    - How are you going to promote it and communicate why it's been done the way it's done

### **Order of the morning**

Introductions. Why are you here.. Presentation – 60 min. Break – 10 min

Groups – 90 min

- Explain – 5
- Group work – 45
- Reporting – 30
- Commenting – 10

Questions - 20

