Fundraising: A Summary for SSC Specialist Groups
Updated 2012

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Introduction
Securing financial resources to carry out priority activities requires aggressive and creative approaches to both traditional and non-traditional sources of funding. It is also important to ensure that a fundraising plan incorporates coordination and accountability.

1. Coordination
There are currently some 120 SSC Specialist Groups, five other IUCN Commissions, nearly 40 IUCN Regional and Country Offices, and another 14 IUCN programmes. All are in need of, and are pursuing, funds.

Coordination is essential
Donors do not want to receive multiple uncoordinated queries and proposals from the same institution. They are sometimes willing, however, to consider more than one request from IUCN if the process has been well coordinated.

Specialist Groups are therefore requested to please contact their assigned IUCN Programme Officer prior to approaching any donors. Most such approaches will be cleared quickly. However, a few might require discussions with other IUCN entities, and the development of joint strategies.
2. Accountability and Legal Status
Specialist Groups must be accountable for any funds raised. Though SSC Specialist Groups are not legal entities, it is possible for them to apply for funds and establish auditable accounts either through their own affiliated NGOs or IUCN member organizations. Management of such funds is frequently offered by NGOs as a contribution to SSC. In some cases IUCN Species Programme can help as well. For more information on approaches to working with NGOs and more generally on legal status, please contact either staff in Species Programme or the SSC Chairs Office.

Specialist Groups must also keep donors informed about project progress and expenditure of funds. Always provide donor with all required reports, both narrative and financial, by the due date. When a grant is received, be sure to provide a financial reporting schedule and requirements to the financial manager for your account.

3. Elements of Successful Fundraising
Raising funds for Specialist Group operations, Action Plan development, or Action Plan implementation requires careful thought and planning.

To successfully secure funds, the following elements must be present:

a) A clearly-defined programme  
b) Potential funders  
c) Clear, concise solicitation materials  
d) Strategies for solicitation  
e) Ongoing communications with donors

a. A clearly-defined programme
A clearly-defined programme is basic to successful fundraising. The goals and objectives of the Specialist Group, defined within the context of IUCN and the Species Survival Commission, are essential. Objectives must be measurable. When developing goals and objectives for your Specialist Group, or for a specific project, think about answers to the following questions:

• What problem(s) are we addressing and what do we intend to accomplish?
• Who are our constituents or users, and what do they need from us?
• What makes us unique in the conservation community and well-suited to address the described problem?
• What conservation need(s) are we meeting that would otherwise not be addressed?
• What are our (clearly defined and measurable) outputs going to be?

b. Potential funders
There are two main types of funders:

• **Natural constituents**: Might be direct beneficiaries of your programme (e.g., a government agency or NGO in need of the information your NGO is producing) or indirect beneficiaries (e.g., an industry with an interest in protecting a particular species).

• **Philanthropic donors**: These either have personal interest in your work
(i.e., individual donors), a mandate to support the type of work you do (i.e., independent foundations), or an interest in assisting the community or communities in which you do your work (i.e., corporate foundations).

Government and multi-lateral agencies might fall into either category.

c. Clear, concise solicitation materials
Solicitation materials will need to be tailored to fit the interests of the individual donors, although the following are recommended for inclusion:
• Talking points - information about your project that is important for the donor to know;
• Cover letter;
• Formal proposal;
• Letters of support from recognized experts;
• Conservation Action Plans;
• SSC and IUCN brochures; and
• Journal articles or other printed materials to further understanding of the importance of the request.

d. Strategies for solicitation
Donors need to be "cultivated" through informal conversations, meetings and general communication about your programme. It is important to put the strongest case forward by the person(s) with the strongest relationship with the prospective donor, and at the most appropriate time.

i. Develop a relationship with the potential donor: Include members of the Specialist Group, or other individuals that support your programme, who know the donor. Talk with the donor about your needs. Donors often provide the best guidance about what information they need from you in order to respond positively to your request.

ii. Cite other donors to your programme: Knowing that another donor has expressed confidence in your work can help to legitimize your programme in the eyes of a donor.

iii. Thank the donor: If the donor grants your request, formal acknowledgement (in writing) and informal acknowledgement (in conversation) are both essential to maintaining a positive relationship with the donor.

iv. Do not end communication if a donor turns down a request: A follow-up call might reveal that there was considerable interest in your proposal but insufficient funds during that grant cycle. Explore with the donor future funding potential.

e. Ongoing communication with donors
A successful grant application is only the beginning of a relationship with a funding source. The importance of keeping donors informed of the programme's progress cannot be over-emphasized. Similar to cultivating a relationship before you formally request funds, ongoing communication with the donor continues to build the relationship. Send news, journal and newsletter articles with a short note, or phone about an exciting accomplishment. If the project design or budget needs to be altered,
inform the donor immediately. Few projects are so predictable that changes do not occur. Make sure that adequate accountability is built into your project. Donors want to know how their money was used. If the donor has been kept well informed, is pleased with the outcome(s) and has confidence in your ability to deliver a product (with clearly defined and measurable results), it is likely that he/she/they will donate again.

4. Specialist Group Approaches to Fundraising

SSC Specialist Groups are taking a number of approaches towards fundraising. Some are fundraising mostly through foundations and individuals while others are working with NGO’s and governments that have historically supported them. For many, rather than focusing fundraising efforts on general support which can be difficult to attain, they build operational costs into their project budgets and are able to raise some flexible funding that way. Some other Specialist Groups (for example, the African Elephant and African Rhino Specialist Groups) receive requests for support from governments who contract them to undertake particular research / studies and write analysis documents which results in bilateral support. Much of this activity is facilitated through their engagement in conventions such as CITES and through cultivating relationships with bilateral donors over time. Some Specialist Groups are taking a multi-faceted approach to fundraising which can be the most robust tactic – so seeking funds through the general public, governments, industry, zoos, NGOs, member contacts, etc. Some Specialist Groups in particular have made strong ties with zoos in terms of undertaking and / or contributing in-situ research to complement ex-situ zoo work, and have received funding in this way – examples are the Freshwater Fish Specialist Group and Tapir Specialist Group.

For more information on examples of ways that Specialist Groups fundraise, see here.

We encourage Specialist Group Chairs to speak to each other as much as possible to share experiences and approaches to fundraising, in particular sharing which general strategies have been best for attaining funds. Species Programme and the SSC Chairs office are here to help as much as possible – we will continue to collect information on robust fundraising approaches to add to this document and send out information regularly on opportunities. More information and tips on the various approaches to fundraising are in the pages following.

5. Hard to Fund Activities

One of the ways that both Global Species Programme and Specialist Groups have been able to fundraise for hard to fund activities such as meetings, salary time, websites and day-to-day activities is through raising funds for projects and products and building salary and meetings costs into these budgets. The Marine Turtle Specialist Group has noted that ensuring that meetings have visible and significant products (e.g. peer-reviewed publications combined with media outreach) can help tremendously in terms of fundraising this way. The African Rhino Specialist Group notes that their Specialist Group’s reporting role at CITES (e.g. in terms of being contracted by governments to undertake particular studies) and their work to produce comprehensive proceedings
helps with generating interest from donors for sponsoring research and meetings. The Crocodile Specialist Group holds meetings that are hosted by relevant organizations.

Again, we encourage Specialist Group Chairs to speak to each other as much as possible to share experiences and approaches to fundraising for hard to fund activities. Some of the information below on various funding approaches focuses on hard to fund activities. We will continue to collect information on robust fundraising approaches to add to this document and send out information regularly on opportunities.

6. Sources of Funding

a. Foundations and Organizations
Foundations come in various sizes and types but their grants can be important and substantial – many SSC Specialist Groups and Species Programme as well have received funding from foundations (for example, the MacArthur Foundation, Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, MAVA Foundation, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund). Organizations may also be considered in this category, such as the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) which funds training opportunities, demonstration tours, participation in conferences and workshops, preparation of technical papers. Some organizations such as TWAS specifically fund attendance at meetings. IUCN Species Programme emails information regularly (every few months) to SSC Chairs on deadlines for foundations that fund species conservation work. One of the best sources of information for funding opportunities relating to species conservation work is: Terraviva Grants at www.terravivagrants.org/. We will also circulate a comprehensive fundraising spreadsheet soon to all SSC Chairs that will give an overview of all relevant foundations that could be targeted for fundraising throughout the year – this will be updated and circulated at least every year.

Much more information on fundraising from foundations (e.g. in terms of writing a good Letter of Intent and proposal and developing a solid budget) can be found in an accompanying document to this one called “A Guide to Seeking Funding from Foundations”.

b. Zoos, Aquaria, Botanical Gardens and Museums
These types of institutions are already working closely with and, in some cases, sponsoring some Specialist Group activities in an effort to collaborate on species conservation activities. Often, funding has arisen from an existing strong relationship between a Specialist Group and a particular institution (e.g. through working on joint projects) but in other cases, these relationships can be nurtured through exploring institutions that house relevant species in ex-situ facilities and through increased engagement with species-relevant staff in these institutions (e.g. Taxonomic Advisory Groups with the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums or EAZA). Examples of Specialist Groups that are already working closely with zoos are the Tapir and Freshwater Fish Specialist Groups.
An initiative has now been established to try to facilitate stronger relationships between these types of institutions and SSC Specialist Groups – if you are interested in this approach and would like more information, please contact IUCN Species Programme or the SSC Chair’s Office.

Some zoos, aquaria, botanical gardens and related associations already have regular funds that they disperse for species conservation work, for example: Royal Botanic Gardens Kew Small Grants, SeaWorld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund, John Ball Zoological Society Wildlife Conservation Grants, Association of Zoos and Aquariums Conservation Endowment Fund, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo Scott Neotropical Fund. Opportunities such as these are being sent to the SSC on a regular basis through SSC Chair updates.

Similarly, some museums may be willing to work with SSC Specialist Groups and possibly contribute to species conservation in-situ work, particularly those that have large collections of species and natural history exhibits. Species Programme has been told by museum staff that they are interested in collaborating with IUCN and SSC, so this could be an avenue for exploration.

c. Individuals and Online Donation Buttons
Individuals are the largest source of funding for nonprofit organizations according to Giving USA, which reported that total charitable giving in the U.S.A. reached more than $303 billion in 2009. Of that amount 75% came from individuals.

One of the ways that donations from individuals can be facilitated is through a donation button on a Specialist Group website, which people can be directed to through press releases and stories in the media. Specialist Groups that are currently using an online donation button on their websites are: Afrotheria; Amphibian; African Elephant; Anteater, Sloth & Armadillo; Asian Elephant; Asian Wild Cattle; Canid; Tapir.

Information about fundraising with online donation buttons
The American Express Charitable Gift Survey of 2007 found that, of people who gave to charity in 2007, one in 10 did so online. However, it is the fastest growing area of fundraising. According to an article in ComputerWorld, online giving by individuals in the U.S. was estimated at $10.4 billion in 2007. Blackbaud, a vendor in online giving space, reported that results from more than 2,000 nonprofits using their systems experienced steady growth in their online giving through the end of 2008. The average online gift was $152.

There are some drawbacks to online giving. Donations tend to be smaller, typically less than the average donation of $100 or less but online donors tend to be younger, thereby opening up the door to a new set of contributors. It is rare, experts say, to receive major donations via the Internet. That is because major donors usually have a personal connection to a nonprofit, prefer to meet with representatives of a charity before donating, and want to make sure they receive the proper paperwork for tax deductions.
However, certain actions facilitate the growth of online giving. According to the American Express study, 28% of people who gave offline said they couldn't locate a donation website, didn't know that they could make a gift online, or didn't think of it. So advertising the ability to take online donations, making a donation button prominent and including your website address in every communication with donors and press releases is important. The study found that three factors motivate donors to give online: convenience, speed, and the ability to react quickly to some urgent need.

Nonprofits must, researchers conclude, get online, stay there, and offer as many donation options as possible. Donors want control of how, when, to whom, and how much they donate.

**Considerations for creating online donation buttons**

i. Get legal with your online fundraising - Just as with other types of fundraising, online solicitations must be registered with the appropriate officials. Find out the requirements in your country before starting.

ii. Market your online fundraising program - It is not enough to just put a “donate now” button on your website and wait for the money to roll in. Promote your online capacity in your newsletters and include your website address on all of your materials.

iii. Explore all your options for online fundraising - Expand your thinking about online fundraising to include social networking sites, so popular with the Millennial generation. For your own site, do you want to set up your own system and be able to process credit card transactions? Or do you want to engage a company that provides that service for you? Do you want to use another site to collect your online donations?

iv. Make sure your website invites online donations - You don’t need a flashy website, but you do need an attractive one that is easy to understand and navigate. Consider too the various generations that will be using your site. Design it in a way that will please all ages.

v. Make sure that your website donation button is big and prominent - Your visitors should be able to figure out how to donate immediately.

vi. Show real donors and specify how donations will help - Include testimonials and photos of donors. Provide photos of people. Be liberal with success stories and use plenty of inspirational photographs. Provide information about how a specific level of donation will work.

vii. Websites that work best with online donation buttons - Jakob Nielsen, a web page usability expert, has found that people want, most of all, to see an organization's mission, goals, objectives, and work on their websites. Secondly they want to know how a charity uses their donations and contributions.
d. Social Media and Fundraising
According to the 2011 Cygnus Donor Survey:
- There are mixed signals about social media and how it influences donors. While 69% of respondents said they have one or more social media accounts, the majority do not follow any charities. But, among those who do follow charities, 65% do so because they consider the charity to be an expert in its field, and 62% do so because the charity posts relevant updates on its work.
- 17% of social media account holders have made a first-time gift after following a nonprofit and 17% have been influenced to give again to one they already support and follow.
- The value of social media for fundraising is minimal for now but if nonprofits establish their presence and visibility on social media now, they can capitalize on younger donors, who tend to be most active in social media, becoming more able to donate.

e. Companies
Companies give in order to get ... exposure, publicity, community respect, market share. Corporate funding can be a good source of support for new initiatives, special programs and special events but may take time to facilitate. Look for opportunities to form partnerships for sponsorship and cause-related marketing. There are a number of ways to engage with companies including:

**Corporate philanthropy**
Corporate philanthropy takes place through a company’s direct monetary gift to a nonprofit. It is often made through the corporation's own foundation. These donations are usually for a particular program that the nonprofit will run and can be of short or long duration. An example of this is the MAVA Foundation or Mitsubishi Corporation Foundation for the Americas Conservation and Environment Fund.

**Cause-related marketing**
Cause-related marketing is an agreement between a business entity and a nonprofit to raise money for a particular cause. The business entity expects to profit by this arrangement by selling more products and by enjoying the "halo" affect of being associated with a respected nonprofit or cause. A cause-related marketing program lets the public know that a corporation is socially responsible and interested in the same causes that its consumers are. The nonprofit benefits both financially and through a higher public profile as a result of its partner's marketing efforts. An example of this is the premise upon which the Save Our Species initiative operates, by encouraging corporate donors to contribute to the fund.

Cause-related marketing campaigns have blossomed over the last few years and can appear in a variety of forms. Jocelyne Daw, in her book *Cause Marketing for Nonprofits*, lists some of the more popular ones:

- Product sales - think of the (Red) campaign which has brought together many companies to sell specially branded products (a red Gap T-shirt or a red iPod) with a portion of the selling price going to the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS prevention.
• Licensing of the nonprofit's logo, brand, and assets - licensing runs the gamut from products that are extensions of the nonprofit's mission to using its logo on promotional items such as t-shirts and mugs to having the nonprofit provide a certification or commendation of particular products.

• Cobranded events and programs - probably the best known example of a cobranded event is the Susan G. Komen "race for the cure." A cobranded program is exemplified by a London Children's Museum that teamed up with the 3M company to build and outfit a science gallery for children. The involvement of the corporation in this program is deeper than the usual "sponsorship" with scientists from the company helping with the work.

**Company sponsorship**

Company sponsorship is a part of cause-related marketing since the company (e.g. zoo) gives the nonprofit money to hold an event (e.g. a workshop) or other time-limited activity. Right now, during an economic downturn, does not seem the best time for corporate sponsorships. But there is a flip side to that problem. Businesses want to get their names out to the public and to sell their products. At the same time, consumers, more than ever, want their spending to also do some good.

Organizations that become good corporate sponsorship partners realize that sponsorship is a business deal, not a donation.

Some advice on corporate sponsorships is in the book *Succeeding With Sponsorship*, by Patricia Martin, an experienced corporate sponsorship specialist.

Sponsorship is a two way street between a charity and business. The organization gets help with the expenses of an event and the business gets exposure. The more a charity can offer the benefits that motivate companies to sponsor, the more successful it will be in gaining event sponsorships.

The usual things that motivate most corporate sponsorship deals are:

- Highlighting community responsibility or corporate social responsibility
- Enhancing a company’s credibility and educating the public about products and services
- Creating company or product awareness and visibility
- Changing/ strengthening brand image
- Driving retail traffic or sales

Don’t despair if your organization is small, local, and your staff is mostly volunteer. You can still get sponsors for your event. Just plan to work the neighborhood. Think of concentric circles of influence in your city (or the city where the event will take place) or network. Start with the people you know well, work out where you have physical proximity to businesses and then tackle the larger circle composed of companies that you don’t know personally ... yet.

To obtain a corporate sponsorship for a small organization, you need to consider:
i. Budget – Develop a budget for your event. How much will the venue cost? Physical set up? Printing, food? Will you charge a per person fee? How much of the income will help support the event and how much will go to your cause? Once you figure out how much more money you need to raise for the event, you can set up sponsorship levels for the businesses you will solicit. Set up several sponsorships at low levels that will attract small businesses, a mid-size sponsorship for a larger company, and perhaps a large sponsorship for a lead company. Assign to each sponsorship level a list of how you will promote the sponsor before and during the event. These can be logos in the program, significant signage, press releases announcing the sponsorship, etc.

ii. Prepare your audience - Before your ask companies to sponsor your event, think through the audiences that your event will reach. Once you have a list of possible audiences, make a list of types of businesses that might also be interested in those audiences.

iii. Use your inner circle to find the best leads for potential sponsors - Ask your volunteers if they have a connection with a local company. Would they feel comfortable either making a pitch to the company for support or at least providing an introduction to the decision-maker there? Offer to attend a meeting with the volunteer. Follow up on all of these leads.

iv. Contact the company - When a letter is sent, it must be specific to a particular company and be followed up by phone call or other contact method. Use phone calls, visits, mail and email interchangeably according to the circumstances. Just one contact method will not work ... use an integrated approach, and be systematic and persistent. Companies get hundreds of requests a year. Most go nowhere simply because the nonprofit did not keep following up. Even if you don't score a sponsorship this time around, you will be able to educate the company about who you are and what your charity does. That will set the stage for involvement at a later time. Keep detailed records of these contacts so you know what you did and what you should do next. When you get discouraged, remember that you are building steps to a future relationship. None of this activity will be wasted if you consistently think in this way.

v. Formalize sponsorship agreements and cultivate the relationship - Once you reach a sponsorship agreement with a business, send a thank you letter that reiterates what each party will provide and when. Send another thank you note when the contribution is received. Send them updates on event planning during the period running up to the event. Make sure they receive your newsletters and other communications.

vi. After the event, provide sponsors with plenty of documentation - Take lots of photos of the event, particularly showing the sponsor signage, participants and activities that the sponsor’s contribution made possible. Send reports about attendance, money raised, and what that money was used for.

f. Federal, State, and Local Governments
Governments at all levels grant nonprofit programs. A number of SSC Specialist Groups are working with governments to assist them in key species conservation work, in particular by providing objective, peer-reviewed data and expertise. Examples include
the Shark, Elephant and Rhino Specialist Groups which work with a number of Parties to CITES, to advise them on species issues. Specialist groups are often contracted by governments to undertake these types of studies and, as a result, this can form a core part of some groups' funding.

Other opportunities with governments come in the form of designated government funding programs such as with the US Fish and Wildlife Service that regularly provides funding for various species (e.g. marine turtles, tigers, etc.) but also for various regions and critically endangered animals. In the USA, Grants.gov provides a directory of federal grants.

g. High Wealth Individuals
Some information on fundraising with high wealth individuals has been captured by Simon Burne of Child Helpline International below. Tips and advice on contacting individuals is provided in the sections following. We will try to provide more suggestions on this as they become available.

Rules of thumb
- Ten suspects will yield one prospect
- Seven prospects will yield one gift
- 50% of major donors will give again

People to target:
- Have the right levels of wealth
- Have evidence of philanthropy
- Have some connection to the cause
- Are active in fields other than their work
- Have business interests whose brands fit with you

**Start with your database of funders and your network to see if suggestions can be made – they already know you and work with you. As names come up, ask your existing supporters if they know them.

How to meet them?
- Go where they go
- Hold an event that they would like
- Use celebrities
- Ask for a meeting
- Invite them to a project visit

7. Approaches to Fundraising

a. Advice for the “ask”

The book Ask Without Fear: A Simple guide to Connecting Donors with What Matters to Them Most by Marc A. Pitman focuses on providing advice for the process of
approaching and asking donors for funds. Pitman is a fundraising consultant and maestro of FundraisingCoach.com.

i. **The Field of Dreams Fiasco** - This is a version of the Field of Dreams refrain, "If you build it, they will come." The nonprofit version is "If you send it, they will give." Chickens that we are, we often fall back on a written solicitation rather than a real, face-to-face ask. Don't do that.

ii. **The Mickey D’s Syndrome** - This is when nonprofits indulge in "poverty thinking." Don't focus so much on stretching your resources that you forget about quality. So when you cultivate donors, do it right.

iii. **The Cheez-It Treatment** - You know when you stand in the grocery store and can't make up your mind what flavor to buy of that snack? Well, don't overwhelm your donors with too many choices. Pitman says to remember to put yourself in their shoes.

iv. **The Spell-Check-Will-Catch-It** - Oh, this one we all know well. Learn to proofread your long-labored-over fundraising letters and acknowledgments, and have someone else look at them too.

v. **The You're-Good-Enough-To-Go-It-Alone Blunder** - Pairing up to make an ask is more effective than going it alone. If you are staff, go with your volunteer.

vi. **The Highway Fallacy** - Yep, this is about "My way or the highway!" Pitman says that in fundraising, the asker sometimes ignores all the clues the donor is giving off and just blunders ahead to a quick death. Don't.

b. Writing Direct Letters to Potential Funders (e.g. individuals, governments, companies, organizations)

The following is a list of top tips for writing a fundraising letter to a potential donor from Mal Warwick's How to Write Successful Fundraising Letters.

i. **Base your appeal on benefits, not needs** - Donors give in order to get something in return, sometimes from helping others but also because of some tangible benefit they will receive from you. Tangibles could be information that will be useful to a company or government or the positive exposure that a company or zoo would gain for providing support to, for example, an in-situ species conservation field project or important meeting.

ii. **Ask for funds, not for support** - Be explicit when asking for money – for example: We are seeking 10,000 USD to fully assess all species in this geographical range or to enable us to attend a key meeting where we can share our expertise and data on this species. Be clear and repeat some variation of the message throughout the letter.

iii. **Write a package, not a letter** - The letter is the most important piece of your package but it is only a part of a multi-piece unit that must all work together seamlessly. At the very least, your package will contain an outer envelope, a reply envelope / reply option (e.g. email address) as well as a letter. Other additions
could be a newsletter, information on a Specialist Group website, publications, etc. Think about how each of these will help persuade donors to take action now.

iv. **Write in simple, straightforward language** - Your words should be powerful and your sentences short and punchy. Avoid foreign phrases and overly large words. Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly, and avoid abbreviations or acronyms. Spell out names. Repeat and even underline key words and phrases. Readers skim, so make it easy to find the meat of your message without reading the entire letter.

v. **Format your letter so it is easy to read** - The eye needs to rest, so leave plenty of white space around your copy by:
   - Indenting each paragraph
   - Avoiding paragraphs that are more than seven lines long
   - Using bullets rather than listing items within sentences
   - Using subheadings
   - Underlining sparingly to call attention to key words and phrases

vi. **Give readers a reason to fund you** - Create a sense of urgency / timeliness by citing a deadline for a matching grant or tie your request to a deadline.

Other tips come from Brad Dunn, a freelance writer and marketing consultant who has helped numerous organizations promote themselves and communicate more effectively. After 15 years as a staff writer, he started [Vantage Consulting](#).

- **Ensure the message matches the needs of the target audience.**
  Does your offer of products and/ or services match the needs of the recipient?

- **Get to the point.**
  If you begin your letter with general, hazy information - you risk losing the reader. It’s critical you make your point in those first few lines.

- **Be clear and concise.**
  "Brevity is the soul of wit" - William Shakespeare.

- **Use letters to generate leads - not funds.**
  The goal of a direct-mail letter is to generate a response, whether it be a return email or phone call. The purpose is to open doors – obtaining funding is the next separate and distinct step in the process.

- **For companies or others, write at a grade-school level.**
  Studies have shown that most of us read at an eighth-grade level. Avoid big words to make the letter easily understood. You can be technical if you choose, but simplify your language as much as possible.

- **Keep it to one page.**
  Most presidents and other decision makers are very busy people. Make your point, sell the benefits, make it easy to read and keep it to one page.

- **Include testimonials.**
  Nothing speaks louder than other satisfied governments, companies, etc. in terms of your work.
c. After a donation

According to the 2011 Cygnus Donor Survey, the following are clues to donor attrition or loyalty:

- 86% of the survey respondents said they have supported at least one cause for five years or longer. Why? Reputation and trustworthiness ranked first as characteristics of charities that garner loyalty.
- 53% of these loyal respondents said that "achieving and communicating measurable results" are very important in gaining their long term support.

Recommendation: Pay special attention to follow-up communications with donors. Those should be well written and emphasize measurable results. Think of thank you letters and emails but also feature them on your website and in newsletters. Recognition provides energy to supporters/fundraisers. Set up and manage a group email list of fundraisers to keep them involved and up-to-date, but also send personal emails to thank individuals. Feature a "Fundraisers of the Month" or some other similar feature on your blog. Share those posts on Facebook, Twitter and in your electronic communications.

d. Some Essential Principles for Fundraising Success

The book *Essential Principles for Fundraising Success: An Answer Manual for the Everyday Challenges of Raising Money* by G. Douglass Alexander and Kristina Carlson outlines a number of principles that can help with fundraising, as follows:

- Connect to donors (DEVELOPMENT) first, ask LATER
- 80% of giving is individual
- Focus on personalized, face to face wherever possible
- MAKE YOUR CASE - "Need" is NOT a case, "Impact" is...
- November-December are the hot months for end of year deductible giving
- [Philanthropy 400](#) is a key reference for US-based grant making