

How to fundraise without fear

by Jenny Llakmani

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Marc Pitman realizes that most people don't enjoy asking for money. Although he uses words like "electric" and "fun" to describe the joys of fundraising, Pitman, a professional fundraising coach and a member of the Rotary Club of Waterville, Maine, USA, acknowledges that not everyone feels the same way.

"I think 'asking for money' even outranks 'public speaking' and 'untimely death' on the list of things people are most afraid of," he writes in a slim volume titled *Ask without Fear: A Simple Guide to Connecting Donors with What Matters to Them Most*.

In the book, he offers up a simple philosophy to get over that fear. Members of a nonprofit such as Rotary, he tells *The Rotarian*, know there is a need to raise money. "We usually put it off because of our dislike of asking," he says. "We procrastinate until it's a crisis. I wanted to give people some practical tools to tell their stories in a natural way, so when it comes to asking, it's not so daunting."

To be successful at fundraising, he says, you don't have to change your personality. "I want people to feel that they could do this the way they are. They don't have to become some sort of huckster or carnival barker."

Pitman, whose club raises \$100,000 every year through events such as a radio auction, notes that Rotarians must also assess what will work in their own community. "It's important for clubs to know their members – and the members they want to attract," he says. "Stuff that worked 50 years ago might not work now. If you're trying to attract younger members, it may work to have an online component to a radio auction."

People intimidated by the idea of fundraising, Pitman says, should keep in mind that the exciting part is what the fundraising leads to. "There are two dangers for nonprofits," he says. "One is that they go down the road of not funding their mission, and then they can't accomplish anything and

they fall apart. The other is that they become this fundraising machine and get so good at fundraising that they forget their mission.”

As the Rotary Club of Waterville was gearing up for its annual auction, the president asked members to write what they love most about Rotary on a Post-it note and share them with one another. Responses included community involvement, international service, and the chance to hang out with fellow Rotarians. “It was so neat to see,” Pitman says. “I’d rather connect people with the passion of their cause. When you ask people to give, you resell yourself on your cause. You realize, ‘I’m supporting a really important thing in the community and the world.’”

2 Comments:

At 9:58AM on 14 May 2009, **Ms. Radha Gokhale** wrote:

I do agree with Pitman's thoughts. When we did our mege fund raising project in 2005, I and my President motivated whole club to bring corporate sponsorships. We had to convince our members a lot about it. We designed our service projects plan. Once you are clear about how you are going to utilize your money for the noble cause, then it becomes easy for you to present your self to your sponsor. We all enjoyed the process and did fimd raising of US\$ 8000. Since then particularly I could overcome the fear of asking for Money. Now I have become absouutely comfortable in asking for money for my club's projects.

At 3:25PM on 7 January 2009, **chris zitzow** wrote:

Good article. Once you do, you will be more comfortable.

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