

Eskin Fundraising Training Lesson: Friendships Over Relationships

Friendships stand the test of time and grow closer and closer with each party deriving more joy and satisfaction.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- It seems that every job in both the for- and non-profit sectors places a premium on

building relationships. While that might sound good on job descriptions, in the competitive environment of fundraising it is not only trite but falls short of the mark.



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Sustainable donor bases are built on two-way friendships. This is not about one-time transactions but instead a lifetime bond nurturing ever-increasing exchange of gifts of time, talent and treasure.”

Jim Eskin

In the 2009 romantic comedy film, *He's Just Not That Into You*, there is a memorable line defining relationships “as something you have until something better comes along.”

Successful non-profits are keenly aware that short-term transactional mindsets fail to culminate in meaningful partnerships with donor prospects that produce precious gifts of time, talent and treasure. Deep and sustained loyalty is earned by a relentless commitment to forging a personal and emotional bond based on shared values, priorities and needs that bind non-profits and donors

closer and closer together over time. This powerful bond is based most importantly on a shared vision of joining together to touch, improve and save more lives, especially helping those who are struggling.

The most successful fundraisers think in terms of growing lifetime friendships with donors that might start modestly, but grow closer and deeper over time as passion, trust and capacity develop. Consider the inspiring recent example that began with \$100 gift to the Annual Fund in 1978 and culminated in a historic \$100 million bequest from alumnus John W. Durstin to Georgia Tech Institute of Technology. That is the beauty of friendship-based philanthropy.

Based on the experience of sponsoring more than 250 workshops, webinars, webcasts, podcasts and board training sessions, here are 10 building blocks for non-profits to elevate relationship to friendship status.

1. The right thing to do is the smart thing to do: Think in terms of lifetime donor value instead of single gift transactions. The average donor retention rate across non-profits is approximately 45% to 50%. If you don't keep donors engaged for a second year, dreams of sustaining loyalty — including continuing and upgrading gifts — are forfeited. Simply put, friendships pay handsome dividends.

2. Emphasize continuity: It's difficult to place a value on donors knowing liking and trusting nonprofit representatives. This is referred to as "trust capital." Do everything possible to retain professional and volunteer leaders who donors are so comfortable with.

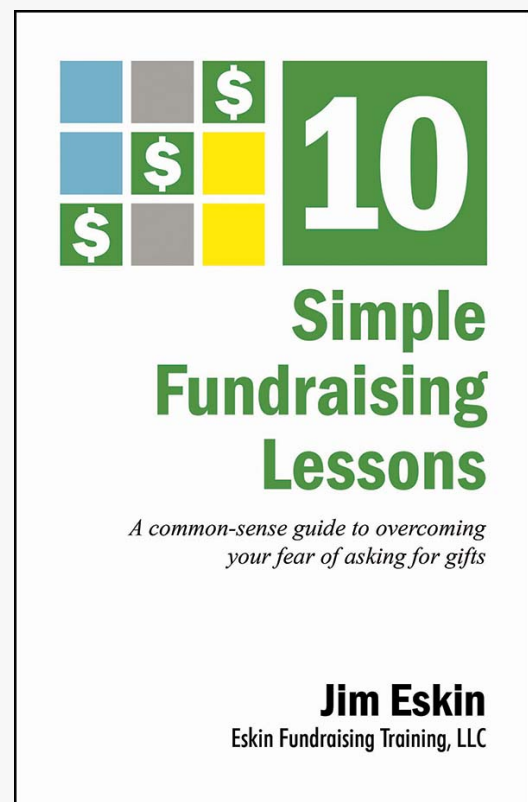
3. Be a power listener: The first step in building genuine friendships is learning everything possible about donor prospects. Ask probing questions to learn their personal stories, motivations and visions of what a better world looks like. One of the nation's most respected fundraising authorities, Laura Fredricks, defines a productive meeting in which the donor speaks 75% of the time and the nonprofit representative 25%.

4. Bonding happens when not asking for gifts: The most common complaint of donors is that they only hear from organizations when they are being solicited. So, instead of asking for money make it a habit to ask for advice on strategic, operational and other issues influencing the future course of the organization.

5. Friendships are two-way streets: Discover and deliver on ways you can enhance the donor's quality of life. This can range from everything from



Jim Eskin, Founder, Eskin Fundraising Training, LLC



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providing advice on adapting to new technology to providing updates and connections to mutual friends in the community.

6. Create sense of community in non-profit family: A powerful sign in moving beyond purely business relationships is when family members are introduced and made part of the circle. Keep on enlarging circles. Supporters of non-profits share much in common. They will enjoy being brought together and given the opportunity to forge friendships among themselves.

7. Personalize communications: The good news is that there is growing array of different ways to communicate when unable to meet in person — videoconference, e-mail, text and social media to name just a few. Recommended is use of the cell phone based on its immediacy and convenience. Further, the handwritten note sent via snail mail will powerfully stand out and set you apart from everyone else.

8. You can never convey gratitude enough: A good rule of thumb is 7X or thanking donors seven times during the year and in different ways for their gifts. Convey the impact of gift dollars through personal testimonials from beneficiaries.

9. Celebrate “donor-versaries”: For sure, remember birthdays. But go further by remembering milestones in the donor’s support such as sending cards celebrating how long they’ve been contributors.

10. Place bumps in road in perspective: It is unrealistic to donors to respond favorably to every appeal. The negative response might only mean not this time. But maintaining the long game

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Jim Eskin

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The non-profit sector has men, women and youth who are ready to lead

perspective requires remaining friends during changes in the weather. Never stop furnishing timely and compelling updates on progress championing the mission and earning the strongest possible returns on the investment of philanthropic dollars.

Great non-profits are in the forever business. Successful fundraisers prioritize lifetime donor value and ignore anything remotely resembling a one-time transaction. Philanthropy is driven by friendships that bring out the best in donors, non-profits and beneficiaries in a wondrous loop of joy and social progress.

About Eskin Fundraising Training

After a successful career leading advancement for three institutions of higher education, Jim Eskin's consulting practice, Eskin Fundraising Training, launched in 2018, builds on the success of more than 250 fundraising workshops, webinars, webcasts, podcasts and board sessions, and provides the training, coaching and support services to equip non-profit leaders to replace fear of fundraising with comfort and confidence. He has authored more than 150 guest columns that have appeared in daily newspapers, business journals and blogs across the country. He publishes Stratagems, a monthly e-newsletter exploring timely issues and trends in philanthropy. [Sign up here for a free subscription.](#) You will also receive invitations to free virtual learning community programs. He is author of [10 Simple Fundraising Lessons](#), an 82-page common sense guide to understanding the art and science of fundraising, and [How to Score Your First or Next Million-Dollar Gift](#), 104 pages filled with strategies, best practices and homework assignments to unlock exciting opportunities that elevate organizational impact to the next level. Both are available in print and digital formats through Pathway, the book distributor, and Amazon. Quantity discounts are available to non-profits who want to share books with teams of management, development staff, board and volunteers. Eskin is also available for customized virtual training for boards, staff, and fundraising committees. His newest customized service, Fundraising Urgent Care, offers 48-hour turnaround in addressing general strategy and tactical challenges that require immediate responses.

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