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Digital Content Creation
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Summer 2020

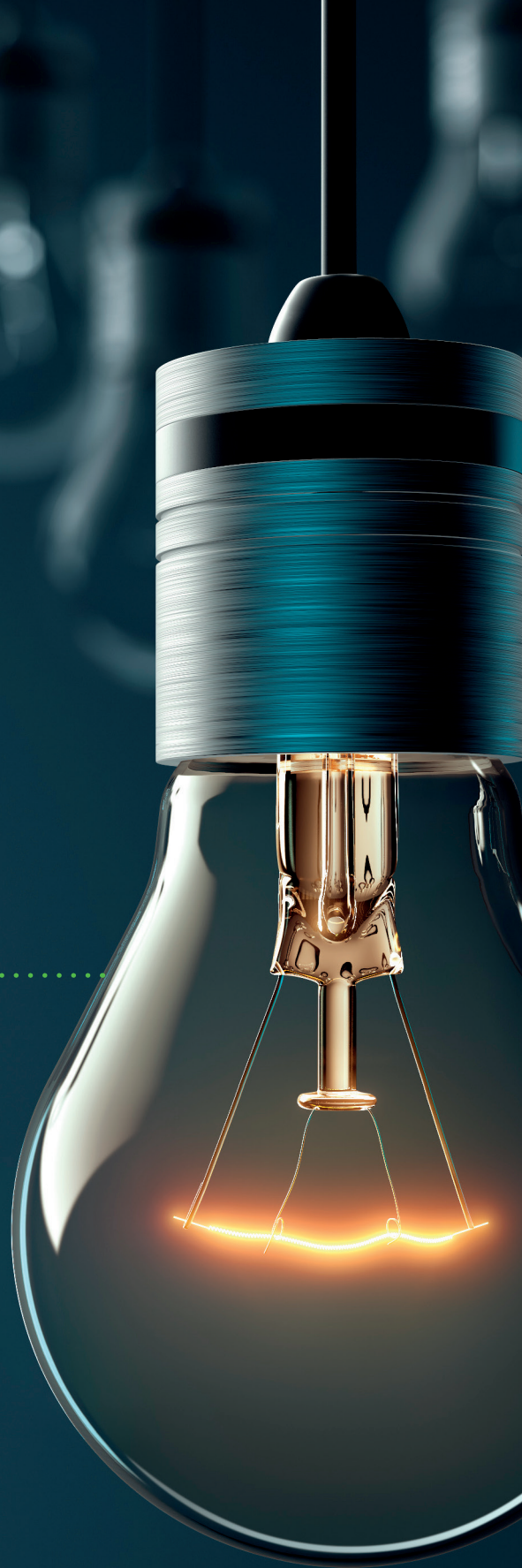
From Ron Rescigno

Leadership Edition

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Rescigno's
Fundraising Professionals



My Promise to You

There's no greater way to build trust with a friend, family member, colleague, board member or donor than keeping a promise you make.

- "At our next board meeting, **I promise** to share with you how my meeting with Mr. Big Bucks went."
- "**I promise** to share with you exactly how we used your money to help impact the kids our mission serves."
- "**I promise** to follow up with you soon. I want to investigate the matter you've brought to my attention."

For fundraisers in a leadership position, this is powerful stuff. Making and keeping a promise builds trust and loyalty that can lead to truly amazing relationships.

If you've ever been promised something by someone you respect and admire (even love) and then not have that person follow through, you know how that hurts.


When you keep a promise to your donors, connecting with them becomes an easier task.

Here are some suggestions for easy-to-keep promises that will help to deepen relationships with your donors:

- o Make the promise personal—a handwritten note attached to your next newsletter stating, "I promised to send you our latest news. I'll call you late next week to make sure you received it."
- o Make sure you control the promise—Saying that your administrative assistant will contact the donor isn't the same as you following through (and if your admin doesn't follow through, you've broken the promise and the trust you're trying to build).
- o Be very specific with the promises you make—"I'll call you around 5pm one day next week" is a weak promise. Be specific. What day? What time, exactly?

If there's a possibility that you won't be able to keep a promise, don't make it.

My promise to you is that if you use the above suggestions on keeping promises you will deepen your relationships with your donors.



Ron Rescigno

Wealth Screening

Rescigno's once asked an executive director whether his organization had wealth screened its database. The individual hemmed and hawed a bit before saying, "We don't wealth screen because we believe we should treat everyone the same. We believe that our wealthier donors will step up and give more." Huh?

We offered the following as rebuttal: Nonprofits usually spend years recruiting donors. They keep their records in databases; data that is used in many ways. This data represents time, energy, investment and commitment.

Doesn't the organization have a responsibility to use all the information it gathers in really smart ways that will result in more effective fundraising results? Isn't this what donors who support your cause expect of you?

These are people who expect to be "sold to" in sophisticated and personalized ways.

Why shouldn't your nonprofit be doing what for profit companies do? After all, online an ad appears for a retailer they bought from last week and then content is presented that closely resembles the clicks that were made the day before.

If your organization isn't following suit, why not? When you wealth screen your database, what you're really doing is making use of public information on an individual's wealth and interests. At the very least, asks should be designed to match an individual's ability to give. Wouldn't you agree? Wouldn't it be very helpful to you if you knew one of your donors has given a big gift to a cause very similar to yours?

Finally, it's probably a safe bet to assume that very wealthy donors would prefer that you personally approach them for a meaningful and impactful major gift, rather than asking them for \$100 or \$500 a few times a year.

If you really want to build long-term relationships with your supporters, knowledge of their philanthropic interests is vital, professional and just good old common sense.

Email Stacey@Rescignos.com to set-up an appointment to discuss your wealth screening!

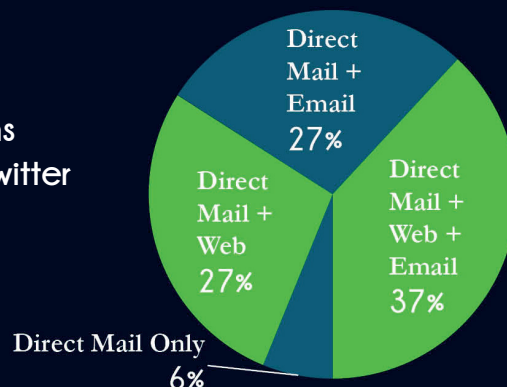


We can optimize your Annual Appeal campaign through PRINT and DIGITAL platforms. Our writing experts can help share your story.

Rescigno's can:

- Assist with Copywriting and Copyediting
- Provide In-House Print and Mail Fulfillment
- Develop Content for Direct Mail and E-Communications
- Create Social Media Posts for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter

50% more donors respond to direct mail when receiving the same call-to-action across multiple channels.



Soliciting Your Board and High-Level Positions

You probably feel squeamish when it comes time to ask a board member or key leadership individual for a gift to the annual fund, right? Unfortunately, annual giving expectations aren't always made clear before an individual joins the board or makes a financial pledge.

Regardless of whether the expectations were made clear or not, your advancement team still needs to solicit (or at least remind) these individuals that it's time to make their gift.

Probably the most efficient way to handle this is to exclude them from your general mail appeal because their appeals really do require special thought and personalization. If a mailed appeal is the first time a board member is getting a request for annual giving—that's cold, impersonal, and the opposite of what relationship building is all about. In fact, you should be addressing how the annual fund is making a difference, what the results are in

terms of revenue and participation have been, and the overall impact it's making at your organization.

Here are 5 simple tactics to help your team when it comes to maximizing trustee annual fund solicitations:

1. *Put time aside to meet with your chief advancement person*—the purpose of these conversations should be so that there is agreement in terms of how the ask is to be communicated and that there is a plan in place to produce the appeal and to prep the board member that it will soon be sent.

2. *Determine the right ask* – generate a list of your trustees, including basic biographical information along with giving history, over the past few years. Be sure to be aware of total giving or commitments that have been made to annual support.

3. *Figure out who the appropriate person will be to sign the appeal*—ideally, this should be a fellow board member or some well-respected person at your nonprofit. A staff leader or the president, since they are accountable to the board, probably are not ideal choices to sign these high-level appeals.

4. *Composing the appeal* –Be sure to describe impact and include critical facts that will support the ask that you're making, i.e., percentage of annual fund support that has come from trustees in the past and the goal for the current year. And be sure to emphasize how the annual fund differs from other types of support like the endowment, capital investments, or planned gifts.

5. *Get the letter out* – Make sure you know what's going on during the production process. For these "most important letters," in-house production is much more preferable to using a vendor unless you trust that vendor (like Rescigno's) to handle these letters. Consider any additional little personal touches like hand-written notes, priority mail, larger envelopes, or anything else that will make these letters even more important.

Asking for support from your organization's key volunteers is one of the most important things an annual fund can and should do. When done well, these solicitations of board members will make a great difference on your annual giving program!

Time for an Annual Fund Audit?



Is your annual fund living up to its full potential? If not, you could be leaving thousands, if not millions, of dollars on the table. An audit is an objective review of your program that helps to identify strengths and weaknesses and point out where there is room for improvement. If you're not sure whether or not your annual fund is performing at peak efficiency, here are some questions for you to answer "yes" or "no" to:

- Have your annual fund results been in decline for 2+ years?
- Does your annual fund have clearly stated goals and priorities?
- Has your annual fund strategy changed in the last 5 years?
- Are you in or preparing for a campaign?
- Has there been a lot of turnover in your annual giving staff?
- Are you planning to hire/have you recently hired a new annual fund director?

If you've answered "yes" to two or more of these questions, it's an indicator that you may be in need of an Annual Fund Audit. If you'd like to discuss Rescigno's doing an Annual Fund Audit and how it will help to get your program in the best possible shape, **call Ron at 708-974-2600, 105 or email him at ron@rescignos.com.**

Fewer Gifts for a While

When a nonprofit leader such as yourself works for a good cause, you believe in your heart that you'll be successful. You're passionate about your work and how it can benefit others, aren't you? Sadly, I have found that the audience you reach out to sometimes thinks differently.

What can you do about it? Take heart in the fact that many other leaders have faced this same dilemma. For example, a number of years ago, the very popular Livestrong Foundation experienced three straight years of annual income decline. The dollar amount they were bringing in was still very impressive, but declining, nonetheless.

Much of the time, if declines in annual income are reflective of a dismal national economy, it's best to stick with it, follow any leads you have for new donors or, as far as major campaigns go, even pause efforts until you can restart at a better time.

According to USA Today, nonprofits across the board saw less interest during the height of the Great Recession, but experienced great growth in late 2011 as the economy stabilized.

And today's economy will stabilize; it always does. That said, it could take a number of years to get back to pre-Covid giving levels.

Taking Care of Your Annual Fund During a Crisis

When a crisis like this pandemic hits, its impact on your ability to raise funds is significant. The decisions you make in response have a direct result on your bottom-line numbers. You're probably already seeing the impact of decisions you made back in March and April. There were so many questions that had to be addressed.

For example:

- Should you even send your spring appeal? (*Send!!*)
- If you delay asking, what will that mean? (*You'll be missing out on donors who want to help*)
- When you do send your appeal, what should you say? (*Describe how you've responded since the crisis began*)
- Should you mention Covid-19? (*You can't ignore it!*)
- What should you do with your high-value donors? (*Seek them out, inquire as to their welfare*)

At Rescigno's, we helped our clients develop clear and thoughtful messaging that spoke to their donors in as close to real time as possible. As you begin the process of gearing up for the all-important "season of giving" beginning in the fall, be thinking about explaining what your needs are presently, what you anticipate them to be as conditions improve in the next 1-2 years, and then be sure to tie that into how your mission must continue to be met further into the future.

The Making of a Great Advancement Leader

Imagine the following scenario: a veteran development professional walks into a room of young, eager-to-bring-in-the-money development rookies. The well-known and accomplished veteran has enjoyed quite a career. She is there to address these newcomers to the field of advancement.

During the course of her presentation, she says, “If you want to make your mark in this profession, there’s no doubt about it; you must close major gifts.”

I wonder if you think a statement like that does more harm than it does good.

I’d like to suggest that it could. Here’s why: it implies that one person, any one person, is solely responsible for bringing in a big gift. If it’s true (and I certainly believe that it is) that fundraising is a team effort, a donor’s decision to make a major gift usually is the result of many conversations over a period of years involving at least several people at various levels and in different roles at a nonprofit.

More importantly, when you think about it, the statement from the accomplished advancement professional suggests that if you’re looking for success in your field, a major gift is the one and only measuring stick that will be used to determine whether you move up into a leadership position.

At Rescigno’s, it’s been our experience that great advancement leaders don’t just become great because of bringing in big gifts. There’s so much more involved. A great leader is also someone who knows how to focus and set goals that align with the organization’s overall goals.

A great leader, we have found:

- is excellent at problem solving, identifying obstacles to success, and figuring out solutions to overcome them.
- is excellent at identifying industry trends that may impact fundraising efforts in the near future.
- teaches and motivates staff, volunteers, and others about the organization’s impact.
- celebrates the organization’s accomplishments second and those of the donors first, foremost, and every day.

Being able to bring in major gifts is important, no doubt. However, the skill of fundraising involves a whole lot more than “just” that. The truly successful leaders we have known bring so much more to the table. Having skills as strategists, problem solvers, coaches, and advocates is what makes advancement leaders we’ve known successful.





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Check out our **brightideas** ahead!



Rescigno's is a team of fundraising experts, but what does that really mean?

It means the Rescigno's team is distinctly equipped to handle any non-profit organization's annual fund program, from start to finish, completely in-house.

Our services include:

Fundraising Consulting • Letter Copywriting and Editing • Digital Content Creation
Creative Graphic Design • Data Analysis • Print Production • Mail Fulfillment



Exciting New Service at Rescigno's

We are thrilled to launch a new service of ***Content Creation for Your Digital Marketing Channels***. Rescigno's can now optimize your Annual Appeal campaign through PRINT and DIGITAL platforms. Our writing experts can help share your story.

2020 has been the year to change gears, so let us help shift your strategy to expand your reach and improve your outcome. Contact Stacey Mallo at **Stacey@rescignos.com** to discuss your Annual Appeal goals today!