

It's Not What You Know...

As the saying goes, *'it's not what you know, it's who you know'* and, while I'm not suggesting that knowledge is useless, in the world of fundraising, relationships are top dog.

So who do you know?

Clients come to me to help with their fundraising (obviously, that's what I do after all!) but often they also expect me to bring 'my networks' along with me. Do I have networks? Yes, absolutely. Can I bring them to support a particular charity? Sometimes, perhaps, yes – it depends on whether they have an affinity or not. But the point is, I'm a consultant working with a charity for a short space of time. The best networks are those you already have.

When I work with boards and ask the question *'who are in your networks?'* I'm often met with a room of blank faces and comments like *'we don't know anyone'*. I get it, I really do.

More often than not, board members think that they don't know anyone. Or they don't want to hit on their friends for money.

And 9 times out of 10, that's because they're thinking they don't know the big hitters. The well-known entrepreneurs or the philanthropists widely acknowledged to support nonprofits like yours.

But the reality is that, when you're looking at potential places/people who will give you money, you have to give consideration to your relationships.

That might be a scary thought if you're a small charity with a board that doesn't rub shoulders with the movers and shakers. But relationships don't just have to be about that.

You should also take into account who you know with the ability to introduce you to those people on your prospect 'hit list' - and not just to the prospects themselves either.

For example, you may not have a direct line to the donor of your dreams but, on closer investigation, do you have a relationship with someone who can introduce you to that person?

Now is the time to give consideration to your prospect list and how you're going to develop it:

- 1. Start by writing down your top 20 prospects** - ideally, you'll do this exercise with your board
- 2. Review this list and get it down to 10** who have an AFFINITY with your organisation and what you do; the CAPACITY to give at the level you need and the ABILITY to be reached by you.

If they don't meet all three of these criteria, take them off the list - or move them onto a lower priority list. For example, if they fit the first two but not the last, look at their networks and consider how you can reach them in the longer term. If they don't have the capacity, move them onto your second tier prospect list that you approach at a later date. But if they don't have the affinity consider them unlikely to give to you.

- 3. Once you have your top 10, start to work up an approach strategy for each** (with your board) based around both their affinity with your charity and the way that you are going to reach them. Ideally, if these are high level prospects, you want a board member to take responsibility or be involved in the approaches for at least 1 of them (depending on how many board members you have, of course).

You can easily adapt this approach for trusts, companies and individuals. With trusts, you might start off by bringing your top 20 – 30 prospects to the next board meeting including lists of trustees and key personnel for each trust. Do your board members know any of these people? You'd be surprised – and so might they – that they may know one or two, particularly if you have some local trusts in there or a national trust has a trustee from your area.