

The One + Three Simple Rules That Helped Raise A Billion Dollars

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Can you imagine what it would feel like to raise \$1 billion for your organization or cause? For most organizations, such a feeling is totally unimaginable. For Stanford University, it is reality.

A recently conducted survey reports that Stanford is the first university to ever raise \$1 billion in a single year...that's **ONE BILLION** dollars in **ONE** year. That's more than some countries' GDP and clearly beyond most (read "almost all") organizations' wildest imaginations. Amazingly, and in spite of a troubled economy, Stanford has been the top university campaign for the past 8 years. While there is no question that the wealth of their alumni is a major contributing factor to their success, Stanford has also built its success on a fundamental strategy that is within every organization's capacity and grasp.

According to Ann E. Kaplan, the director of the Council for Aid to Education's annual college fund-raising survey, Stanford reached this historic benchmark because it has "some very big ideas, and they're good at capturing people's imagination."

While donors want to help worthy causes, and will step forward in times of crises to keep the lights on or put food on the plates, we know that most donors ultimately want to feel that they are truly making a difference. Engaged donors want to be excited by what you are accomplishing. They want to know that their partnership is critical to your impact. Donors want imagination, excitement and vision.

Obviously, successful campaigns need well run fundraising operations and a culture of philanthropy, but to truly take your fundraising to the next level, you need to focus your energies on one primary concept that most inherently know, but relatively few actualize:

Successful fundraising organizations partner with their donors in a way that captures their donors' imagination and excites them with big, bold ideas.

Just as importantly, great fundraising organizations are able to communicate impact with a powerful and compelling story, and answer the following questions with an unequivocal **"YES"**:

- 1) Are your donors excited about what you are doing?
- 2) Do your donors truly feel they are your partners in making a real difference?
- 3) Can your donors explain to others how their contributions are making a difference?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions you now have a good explanation for why your fundraising is at its current level. In order to truly experience quantum leaps, now is the time to turn "no" into "yes", "yes" and "yes". When "yes" becomes your new fundraising reality and donors feel like full partners in your mission's success, then they, too will start to answer "yes" when asked.

It is then, and only then, that you will be on the road to raising your first billion dollars – or at least an amount that surely feels to you like a billion dollars. Just say "yes"!

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