



How to Define Your Ideal Donor's Giving Motivations **Suggested Prospect Interview Questionnaire** *by Bristol Strategy Group*

Wondering what motivates your best donors to give? Interview a few of them. First, review the suggested questions you'll find here. Modify them to fit your purposes and choose the four or five you think are most important. Then, select about ten current donors, the ones you are sure will be happy to get together with you. Then ask for their advice!

HOW TO SET UP YOUR FIRST INTERVIEWS (Without feeling like an idiot)

1. Choose donors or other constituents you are MOST COMFORTABLE with to ask for the interview. It doesn't matter if they give you a lot of money. It's more important that you have great rapport with them, and there's a friendly relationship.
2. Contact the person by phone or email and ASK FOR THE FAVOR OF A 30-MINUTE CONVERSATION. (Zoom and phone calls are great ways to conduct interviews, especially if the interviewee is a busy person. If you are more comfortable face to face, that's fine too – just try to avoid taking too much time, or asking for a gift too soon.)
3. Tell the person you are taking a class in fundraising and marketing (or you are working with a consultant to improve your outcomes) and you need to interview a few of your favorite donors (or grantors, corporate sponsors, or even board members).
4. Make sure to say you are asking for a favor, and you are NOT going to ask for a donation.
5. Keep your eye on the clock. When it's getting close to 30 minutes, remind the interviewee, "I asked for half an hour of your time, and I see we're getting close to that." If the interviewee wants to continue the conversation, let them do so; otherwise respect the time you asked for.
6. SCHEDULE the call for a future time unless the individual says, "let's do it right now."

FOR MAJOR DONORS

Questions about donor's motivations:

- Please share your charitable philosophy with me. What motivates you to donate your money and time to any charity? What types of charities are you most likely to support?
- How do you go about deciding which charity or cause interests you?

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- What life experiences have led you to becoming the person/philanthropist you are today?
- When you think about giving money to charity, what is most likely to motivate you to do so? Is it the mission, the programs, the population served or something else?
- What motivates you in terms of your personal interests? For example, is it important to you to become known for your philanthropy, to get to know other like-minded people, to improve your social status?
- If our organization were to succeed in its mission beyond your wildest dreams, what do you think would happen? Why would that be important to you?
- Let's think about the reverse situation. Let's say for some reason our organization was not able to succeed at all, and we had to close our doors. What do you think might happen then? Why would that be noteworthy or troubling or important to you?
- You mentioned these ideas/things/concepts as being important to you (list the main points the interviewee has mentioned). Can you help me put them in your order of priority? If not, do you think they are all of equal importance?
- How does the economy effect your philanthropic decisions?

Profiling questions:

- What other organizations do you support?
- What are your top 3 charities? Why do you like to support them?
- In general, when you support an organization, how do you like to be involved with them? What kinds of support or relationships are most satisfying or appropriate for you? Are you more interested in a hands-off relationship, a moderately close relationship? If board service appeals to you, why is that important? What other forms of recognition or volunteering are important to you?

Giving our organization a report card:

- What do you think are [our nonprofit's] greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses?
- What motivated you to start making gifts to [or to become involved with] our organization?
- What advice would you give us as we plan for the future?
- What particular concerns or comments, if any, would you like me to share with [senior management, board member, board chair]?

FOR CORPORATE SPONSORS

Questions about the company's motivations for giving to nonprofits:

- Please tell me about your company's experience sponsoring charitable organizations. How important is corporate sponsorship in your marketing strategy?

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- If you don't do much sponsorship today, how do you think it could benefit your corporate objectives in the future?
- What motivates your company to donate money and time to any charity? What types of charities are you most likely to support?
- How do you go about deciding which charity or cause interests you?
- When you think about our organization, what is it about us or an organization like ours that motivates or would motivate you to donate?
 - How would sponsoring our organization complement your corporate objectives?
 - What is it about our mission that you find motivating?
 - How do you think sponsoring us would impact your branding or market reputation?
 - How important is sponsoring nonprofits like ours to the way you are perceived in the local market? What about the regional or wider market?
- If our organization were to succeed in its mission beyond your wildest dreams, what potential value would that offer your company, in terms of marketing?
- Let's think about the reverse situation. Let's say for some reason our organization was not able to succeed at all. What do you think might happen then? Why would that be noteworthy or troubling or important to your branding or marketing?
- You mentioned these ideas/things/concepts as being important to you (list the main points the interviewee has mentioned). Can you help me put them in your order of priority? If not, do you think they are all of equal importance?
- How does the economy effect your company's decisions about philanthropy or cause marketing?

Profiling questions:

- What other organizations do you sponsor?
- What are your top 3 charities? Why?
- In general, when you support an organization, what outcomes are most important to you? [Options include exposure to a pool of potential customers, improving your perception in the marketplace, engaging in cause marketing. Suggest some of these if the respondent has trouble with the question.]
- Have you ever considered corporate involvement or sponsorship as a way to groom your staff for positions of leadership in the community? If so how do you see this happening?

Giving [our nonprofit] a report card:

- What do you think are [our nonprofit's] greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses?
- What motivates (or motivated) you to start sponsoring [our nonprofit]?

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- What advice would you give us as we plan for the future?
- What concerns or comments, if any, would you like me to share with our leadership or board chair?