HIGHER THINKING

Outcomes

THE MAGAZINE OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

DONORS FIRST
A new paradigm for maximum fundraising

JOYFUL GENEROSITY
Poverty and the grace of giving

MEASURING IMPACT
The secret of strong donor relationships

Mission True

HOPE International's Peter Greer on avoiding mission drift

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HOW DO YOU WANT TO GROW?
DIRECT RESPONSE FUNDRAISING & MARKETING FOR NONPROFITS

Outcomes

Summer 2014 Vol. 38, NO. 2

Money Matters

DEPARTMENTS

COVER PHOTO • DONOVAN ROBERTS WITMER

Good Stewards

IN THIS EDITION of *Outcomes* we explore "money matters." Here at CLA, we believe that Christian leaders should be distinctive in both the transformational way in which we raise funds, and in the integrity with which we manage those God-given resources.

At the recent CLA National Conference, our featured conference book selection was *The Choice: The Christ-Centered Pursuit of Kingdom Outcomes* by Gary Hoag, Scott Rodin and Wes Willmer (ECFA Press, 2014). In its foreword, ECFA president Dan Busby discussed how improper views of success can cause Christian leaders to adopt the world's approach to money: "Boards can lapse into strategic decisions without discerning God's will, financial statements can be crafted simply to attain a high ranking with rating organizations, and resource-raising can stoop to employing marginally deceptive practices." *The Choice* (p. 43) offers a different, Christ-centered paradigm.

In this edition of *Outcomes*, you'll hear not only from Busby (p. 10) but also from HOPE International's Peter Greer (p. 6) who shares insight from his new book *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches* (Bethany House Publishers, 2014)(p. 43). Greer discusses staying "mission true" and avoiding the mission drift that occurs when we prioritize things like pursuing money above pursuing God's distinct call on our lives and ministries. This edition also provides thought-provoking insights from Christian financial management and resource development experts like Vonna Laue, Mark Tjernagel, Lilya Wagner, David Wills and many more.

CLA offers higher thinking to equip you to transform the world for Christ, so please be sure to explore the biblically based resource development and financial management training available through our Online Academy (christianleadershipalliance.org/academy) and monthly Webcasts (christianleadershipalliance.org/webcasts).

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Outcomes

PUBLISHER Christian Leadership Alliance
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The purpose of *Outcomes* is to fulfill Christian Leadership Alliance's mission to equip and unite leaders to transform the world for Christ. *Outcomes* offers those whom Christ calls to leadership with higher thinking, and lifelong learning resources, to equip them for excellence in kingdom service and stewardship.

Contact Editorial offices: 635 Camino de los Mares, Suite 216, San Clemente, CA 92673.
Website: ChristianLeadershipAlliance.org
Email: Editor@OutcomesMagazine.com.

Subscriptions: OutcomesMagazine.com/Subscribe.

***Outcomes* magazine** is published quarterly by Christian Leadership Alliance, 635 Camino de los Mares, Suite 216, San Clemente, CA 92673.

Postmaster Send address changes to *Outcomes* magazine, 635 Camino de los Mares, Suite 216, San Clemente, CA 92673. (949) 487-0900. Printed in USA, Volume 38, Number 2.

To learn more about Christian Leadership Alliance, contact us at Christian Leadership Alliance, 635 Camino de los Mares, Suite 216, San Clemente, CA 92673; **Telephone:** (949) 487-0900; **Fax:** (949) 487-0927; **Website:** ChristianLeadershipAlliance.org

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Mission True

HOPE International's Peter Greer on avoiding mission drift

CLA PRESIDENT AND CEO TAMI HEIM recently interviewed Peter Greer, president and CEO of HOPE International.

Greer joined HOPE International in July 2004, following education and experience in the field of microfinance. He received a B.S. in international business from Messiah College, and an M.P.P. with a concentration in political and economic development from Harvard's Kennedy School. Prior to studying at Harvard, Peter served as managing director for Urwego Community Banking in Kigali, Rwanda. He also served as a technical adviser for Self-Help Development Foundation (CARE Zimbabwe) in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and worked as a microfinance advisor in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

HOPE International is a network of microfinance institutions and savings and credit associations operating in 17 nations worldwide (hopeinternational.org). HOPE empowers men, women, and families to break cycles of physical and spiritual poverty through discipleship, biblically based business training, savings services, and small loans. By incorporating a strong witness for Jesus Christ and employing a variety of approaches, HOPE is an innovator in the field of microenterprise development.

Greer is the co-author of *The Poor Will Be Glad* (Zondervan, 2009), *The Spiritual Danger of Doing Good* (Bethany House Publishers, 2013), and *Mission Drift* (Bethany House Publishers, 2014). Heim interviewed Greer about his new book *Mission Drift*.

What started your focus on mission drift, ultimately leading to your new book?

Several years ago I was in Houston meeting with a foundation. They were enthusiastic about HOPE International's microfinance model, and were considering a significant funding proposal. At the end of our conversation they had just one additional point: as a publicly traded company they had concerns about HOPE's overtly Christ-centered identity. They said that if we were willing to tone that down they could come alongside us financially in a much more significant way.

Many nonprofit leaders will understand how having someone say "I've got a big check if you're willing to do that," can be tempting. We asked ourselves, "Is it possible for us to receive this funding and still do our whole mission?" We discussed it with our board and leadership team. That started a broader conversation about our core mission. We asked, "What small decisions will bring us closer alignment with who we are and what we're called to do, and what small decisions will slowly and gradually pull us away?" We decided that we couldn't take that money, as it would cause us to drift from our mission.

Mission Drift shares insights from organizations, known for excellence and tremendous impact, that have remained mission true.

This edition of *Outcomes* is themed "Money Matters." How much does money contribute to mission drift?

In our book, we looked at Christian nonprofits that fell prey to mission drift. It was never just one thing that led there. It was not just money. It was not just the board. It was not just leadership. It was not just culture. It was a myriad of small decisions compounded over time that led organizations to a very different place.

To remain mission true, the key is to have your eyes wide open for drift. You then have to make hard, sometimes painful, decisions to stay on mission. That's what we did after that meeting in Houston when we decided to accept short-term pain, refusing a generous funding offer if it required that we talk less about our Christ-centered identity.

Organizations that remain mission true are diligent about small decisions, on staffing, on funding, and more. It is the cumulative impact of a lot of small decisions that keeps you on mission or gradually causes you to drift away.

What are some practical ways of addressing mission drift when you see it happening?

I'll give you an example. Previously, a presentation on HOPE International might have focused on growth we've experienced or the number of families we've served. We've changed that. We still care about and measure those things, but we talk about our identity first. We talk about doing our model, with excellence second.

Growth is not a leading indicator; it's a lagging indicator. We want to lead with our Christ-centered identity. It is why we do our work with excellence.

The second thing that we learned is that we needed to be more diligent in how we recruited board members. We are blessed with a fantastic board, but in the past we did not have the right process in place to screen board members to ensure they were fully in line with our mission.

A third thing is that although we screened well for staff, once they came on board we didn't have a sufficient process to support their spiritual health and growth. Today we have a department at HOPE making sure discipleship and outreach happens at every level of the organization. We have a director of spiritual integration on our executive team who makes sure that outreach and discipleship is not peripheral, but at the very heart of everything that we do.

What are the biggest challenges for organizations in maintaining Christian distinctiveness in today's world?

When you look at organizations that have drifted, you see stories of founders who were passionate about the

gospel and the Christian mission. But it's a mistake to think that the founder's story, the passion of the original team, will never be lost. If you're not diligent about protecting your mission, the tug of secularization will cause you to drift. The biggest challenge is to have our eyes open to realize that this could happen to any organization.

Most of us have strategic plans that last one, two, three, or five years at most. Very few organizations have a plan that says in 50 years or 100 years, long after we're all gone, here is what we hope will remain. Even at Christian Leadership Alliance, if you don't combine your name, founding vision, and mission with a high degree of intentionality to reinforce that identity, there is no guarantee that in 50 years you're going to be doing what the organization was created to do.

What about the roles of the CEO and board in keeping an organization on mission?

The board is the guardian of the mission. Certainly there is a fiduciary responsibility and the approval of resource allocation. There is the selection of the CEO. But those roles are subordinate to making sure that the organization is doing what it was created to do.

Let's think practically. What is the focus when your ministry board gathers? Is it all about strategic decisions, growth, and expansion? Is it all about the budget? Or are there conversations around how the organization is remaining mission true? Is the CEO evaluated not only about growth and budget, but also about whether the organization has a vibrant mission true culture?

A lack of corporate prayer is another key mission-drift indicator. If at board meetings there are so many important topics to discuss that you can't stop and pray about those topics, it's an indicator of a lack of intentionality about remaining mission true.

Mission true organizations know who they are and why they exist. They filter all decisions through that lens. It's not saying the methods don't change, that means don't change, but the core purpose of the organization remains.

How do you bring that mission true intentionality to an organization's culture?

I love what Taylor University does. Their orientation includes what looks like hazing for freshmen who are blindfolded and led near water. But when the blindfolds are removed, upper-classmen are there with pails of water and towels to wash the feet of the freshmen. It's a way of welcoming them to Taylor, and communicating an upside-down, Christ-centered, college culture.

Every organization has a culture. I love the Peter Drucker quote, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." Mission true organizations are diligent in the small practices that become the culture.

At HOPE International, we believe that you get what you measure and what you celebrate. For every staff meeting we have a passion practitioner of the week. For us passion is an acronym: Prayer, Allegiance, Service, Stewardship, Innovation, Optimism and Nurturing. Staff members are asked to be on the lookout, and each week we get dozens of notes from staff who see colleagues going above and beyond in living out the HOPE culture.

When it comes to metrics, how do you measure outcomes?

Our experience in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) helped change my perspective. We had several consecutive years of incredible growth. Key indicators pointed to health. However, a few years later we realized we didn't have a strong foundation. We were forced to make major staff changes and right-size the organization. I will never forget that. The "bottom line" can be misleading if you're not also paying attention to staff development and measuring the full mission to ensure health and vitality at every level.

Today, I am far less likely to lead by talking about growth numbers in terms of budget, scale, or size. I'm more interested in talking about how we intentionally build staffs that fully embody the mission, and which have clarity about what that mission looks like day-to-day.

I want to go beyond measuring numbers, to communicating actual impact on the ground. As such, we worked with staff and consultants to develop "The HOPE Quotient" to measure four domains of transformation that gives us a broader picture of what is happening with the families we serve.

Would you mind unpacking that? I know most ministries are asking, "How do I measure that transformational part of what we do?"

We base our four domains of transformation on categories found in Bryant Myers's book *Walking With the Poor* (Orbis Books, revised, 2011). First, we measure financial position. Do families have a stronger balance sheet? Are they working their way out of poverty? Second, are their relationships with the community being strengthened? What's the community impact? The third indicator is internal change. Is there more hope? Has the individual gone beyond just thinking about today to thinking about the future? The final indicator is whether the individual has experienced a change in his or her relationship with God. Our measurement is a combination of the financial, the social, the personal, and the spiritual.

What key insight do you hope nonprofit leaders will take away from the book?

We hope it will equip leadership teams, boards of directors, and staffs to ask whether their decisions are bringing greater alignment with their organization's mission or gradually bringing them to a different place.

We only see the impact of our decisions long-term. It's the vector principle. Being one degree off when you're going 100 yards doesn't make much difference. But if you're going across the country, one degree off will take you to an entirely different place.

We also created a mission drift survey available at (missiondriftbook.com). It has been interesting to see where organizations are in terms of their susceptibility to drift. Our goal is to help leaders and organizations remain mission true. ●

Learn more at (peterkgreer.com/mission-drift)

Measuring Impact

The secret of strong donor relationships

ONE OF THE GREATEST CHALLENGES for any donor is being a good steward over the funds that have been entrusted to them. At the Stoller Foundation, we receive numerous requests for funding and many are for praiseworthy projects. How do we narrow them down? How do we choose? I think the answer to that question is very similar for any donor — whether it is an individual giving $100, a church donating $10,000, or a foundation granting $100,000.

Do I identify with the cause? Do I understand the purpose of the project and the desired outcomes? Do I believe this donation will make a difference to the ministry and those they are serving? If donors do not have clarity on how their funding will be used and the outcomes it will produce, they are less likely to contribute. Ministries must be able to measure their impact on the community and communicate that impact to donors.

When we ask ministries how they will measure their impact on the community, they usually respond with answers such as, "More people will get off the streets, communities will be transformed by the youth that complete our program, or entire families will be touched with the gospel." I am astounded by the selflessness of God's servants who spend their days loving these people in his name. These are great goals, but from our experience, most people don't have the tools in place to measure them.

I believe there are times when God asks us to step out in faith, and there are times when he asks us to be strategic. In Luke 14:28-30, Jesus tells us of the importance of appropriate planning: *"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'"*

Developing tangible measures of transformation will benefit not only the donors but also the individual ministries. This isn't as easy as measuring salvations or volunteer hours. Community transformation isn't that simple. Each ministry has a unique mission and method for achieving that mission. Having ministries establish measures that adequately represent their unique mission can bring clarity to both the organization and the donors. Measures give evidence of the effectiveness of the ministry.

How can ministries start to measure their impact?

1. **Clearly articulate what you do as a ministry.** This is more than a mission statement. How are you carrying out your mission statement? What is the purpose of your ministry? What makes you unique?
2. **What are the desired outcomes of your ministry?** Be specific. When using a word like "transformation," define what it means to you, leaving no ambiguity. What is truly important to you?

Developing tangible measures of transformation will benefit not only the donors but also the individual ministries.

3. **How can you tangibly measure those outcomes?** It is easy to get overwhelmed here. Make sure you break down your large-scale transformational outcomes into smaller bite-size pieces. What can you measure to know you are on your way to achieving your mission? Are one-time decisions or actions important to you or would you rather see a lasting impact?
4. **How can you communicate your impact to donors?** How can you show them where you are spending your money and what you are measuring to illustrate progress towards your ministry mission? The answers to these questions communicate to the donors what is most important to your ministry.

These are not easy questions to answer. I recommend answering them prayerfully and collaboratively with your staff and your board. If your ministry is able to articulate its mission and demonstrate evidence that it is achieving that mission, you will be astounded at the positive response and increase in funding from individual donors and foundations alike. People want to be able to feel like they are making a difference when they donate. They want to feel as though they are a part of your ministry's mission. In order to do that, they must be able to clearly understand your mission, how you achieve it, and the measurements of your success. ●

ASHLEY HURLEY is the executive director of the Stoller Foundation, which funds and supports Christ-centered ministries that mobilize volunteers to serve others and share the gospel of Jesus Christ. (stollerfoundation.org)

Stamp of Approval

ECFA's Dan Busby shares insights

INTERVIEW WITH DAN BUSBY

AS PRESIDENT of ECFA, Dan Busby is out to help churches and Christ-centered organizations operate with sound financial practices. ECFA offers accreditation for organizations that meet the ECFA (ecfa.org) standards. *Outcomes* spoke with Busby about the importance of wise financial stewardship for Christian ministries.

How does accreditation with ECFA help ministries excel in terms of sound financial management and securing charitable resources?

The ECFA standards provide the guardrails for operating with integrity in areas of governance, financial management, and stewardship. The independent board concept — in other words, the majority of the board members being independent, which helps translate to board decisions made in the best interest of the church or charity — is a key item. Then compensation approval, would be an important concept. We just initiated a new standard on compensation that requires members to be more diligent in the way that they set compensation of the top leader.

ECFA standards also require avoiding conflicts of interest. When an insider at a church or charity receives a gift that is not commensurate with the services provided to the church or charity, that often can result in a conflict of interest that can be devastating for the organization. Appropriate transparency: ECFA requires its members to provide a copy of its most recent financial statement to donors, prospective donors, or to the media. They're also required to provide a copy of a summary of financial data for any project for which a donor has contributed.

In terms of resource raising, truthfulness donor communications, and tracking donor-restricted gifts and then using them for the intended purpose, are just a few of the key principles embedded in the ECFA standards that organizations would find helpful.

What are the key financial focus points for ministry leaders?

These are challenging financial times for many ministries. Looking at past financial data tells us where we have been—not where we are going.

Here are some of the key items on the dashboards of many ministries: (1) Cash has been and will always be king. Maintaining adequate cash reserves at the lowest cash point in a ministry's year is one of the most fundamental concepts for a ministry. (2) Monitoring debt is important. This is an era for debt reduction for most ministries. (3) Avoiding the borrowing of funds designated for projects is very important. (4) Analyzing total revenue and important elements of revenue such as gifts or fees is vital.

We just completed a church stewardship survey asking large U.S. churches about their budgeting practices. That report reveals that churches that are really moving ahead budget 10 percent below projected expenses. They have some room in case gifts turn down or other situations arise that would impact them financially. Large churches that budget every anticipated dollar simply don't have flexibility to handle changes in financial patterns.

What are some of key issues on the horizon for ministries?

One of the biggest issues is trust. In today's media environment, innuendo equals guilt. People are dying to trust churches, they're dying to trust charities, and yet trust is giving way to a nation of cynics. While most churches and Christ-centered charities operate with a genuine commitment to integrity, we need to do better if we expect believers to be obedient in their stewardship of money and material things.

Milestones

STEPPING DOWN
GEOFF TUNNICLIFFE, secretary general and CEO of World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), in December, at the end of his second five-year term with the organization.

APPOINTED
ELIZABETH DAVIS, as president of Furman University, in February. The Baylor University provost will become 12th president of the CCCU-member school and the first woman to hold the post. She takes office July 1.

APPOINTED
DEANA PORTERFIELD, ED.D., as president of Roberts Wesleyan College and Northeastern Seminary. Porterfield has served at Azusa Pacific University and Azusa Pacific Online University (APOU) for more than 24 years, including most recently as executive vice president at APOU. She takes office July 1.

HEADLINES:

CLA Digital Pass: Build Your Leadership Learning Library

Christian Leadership Alliance (CLA) offers you a great opportunity to build your leadership learning library, though its Digital Pass, offering access to more than 50 leadership videos from CLA Dallas 2014. You'll see CLA Dallas 2014 keynote addresses, back-stage interviews with keynote presenters, and more than 40 CLA Talk video presentations by CLA Dallas 2014 faculty. These videos feature thought-provoking insights from leaders including Francis Chan, Nancy Ortberg, Jedd Medefind, Steve Douglass, Shirley Mullen, Rich Stearns, Mark Hanlon, Gail Dudley, Phyllis Hendry, Tim Elmore, Bruce McNicol, Janel Curry, Deana Porterfield, and many more! The CLA Digital Pass is only $199. Learn more at (ChristianLeadershipAlliance.org/DigitalPass)

CLATV: Coming This Summer!

Later this summer, CLA will launch a brand-new Internet TV e-station called CLATV. CLA's new multi-channel e-station will present leaders with 24/7 Christian video and radio content. CLA is honored to aggregate and develop the content for this national leadership channel. True to CLA's mission,

SCORECARD

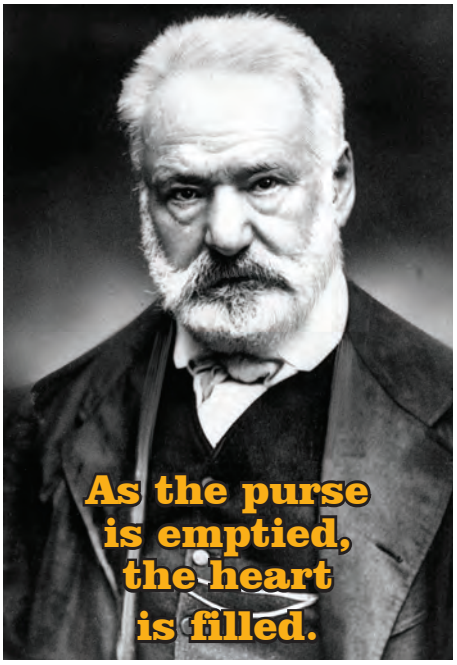
OUR DAILY BREAD

In April, the Barna Group released its *2014 State of the Bible Report*, commissioned by the American Bible Society. The report showed that the number of Americans who read Scripture at least four times a week and believe that it is the inspired Word of God has fallen to just under one in five.

This study also indicates that three out of four adults (75 percent) gave to a charity or nonprofit organization, including a church or religious organization, in the previous year. The average (median) adult gave $200 to such organizations in 2013, double the amount reported in 2012. Below is the median annual dollar amount of giving to such organizations by age in 2013:

	ALL ADULTS	BIBLE READERS	NON-BIBLE READERS
MILLENNIALS (18-29)	$30	$100	$10
BUSTERS (30-48)	$300	$1000	$100
BOOMERS (49-67)	$300	$800	$125
ELDERS (68+)	$800	$1500	$2000
TOTAL	$200	$600	$100

For more information on this study, go to (americanbible.org/uploads/content/state-of-the-bible-data-analysis-american-bible-society-2014.pdf).



VICTOR HUGO

The latest ministry news and trends

programs featured on CLATV will equip, inform, and inspire your leadership journey. CLATV will feature multiple TV and radio channels, a wide range of content providers, a personalized live chat tool for spiritual coaching, an embeddable player for blogs and websites, social sharing made easy, on-demand viewing on phone, pad, laptop, and TV with Chromecast. Look for more news on this launch soon!

CLA Online Academy

Have you taken a CLA Online Academy module? Sponsored by ECFA, these in-depth, ten-hour CLA Online Academy modules offer you a great way to build your Christian leadership skills without ever leaving home. They're highly cost effective, and offer outstanding faculty and interaction with peers nationwide. The CLA Online Academy is built on a state-of-the-art online platform by University College, Azusa Pacific University (formerly Azusa Pacific Online University). And the feedback CLA has received on these online modules has been outstanding:

The online leadership learning opportunities I've received through CLA have been one of the most helpful of all leadership trainings I have attended.

Andrea Stuart, Statewide Director, Contracts, Arizona Baptist Children's Services

The deadline for CLA's Summer online modules is June 9, and the deadline for CLA's Fall online modules is Sept. 2. Check out the full lineup of CLA Online Academy modules at (ChristianLeadershipAlliance.org/Academy).

Get Giving USA 2014 at a Special CLA Rate!

The Giving Institute and the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy have just released *Giving USA 2014*, the annual report on giving in America for the year 2013.

This year, CLA members are entitled to a special 15 percent discount. Look for a special e-mail from CLA providing CLA members a discount code.

"As the longest running and most comprehensive report on philanthropy in the United States, Giving USA has been providing the nonprofit sector key benchmarking data since 1955," said Rick Dunham, president and CEO, Dunham+Company. "This is the only report of its kind that provides key longitudinal data each year related to the sources and uses of philanthropy in America. With a history of over 58 years, this report provides the most rigorous and accurate data on U.S. charitable giving each year."

Engage with CLA on iDisciple

Christian Leadership Alliance has partnered with iDisciple, a Family Christian Ministry, to bring you a new app featuring personalized Christian content. Whether you use a tablet, phone, PC, or laptop, you will be able to access your personalized content anytime or anywhere. The content you receive is personalized based on preferences you select. There are more than 100 topics available including: Bible, leadership, marriage, money, parenting, and spiritual growth. You can watch messages, read daily devotions and e-books, or listen to top Christian leaders while you're on the go! Learn more at (ChristianLeadershipAlliance.org/iDisciple).

CLA's annual national conference now "The Outcomes Conference"

Christian Leadership Alliance (CLA) has named its annual national conference - The Outcomes Conference.

This new name ties both to CLA's national magazine *Outcomes*, and to CLA's overall dedication to helping leaders achieve kingdom outcomes.

Register for The Outcomes Conference, CLA Dallas 2015, by June 30, 2014 to save: (OutcomesConference.org)

CLARITY AMIDST CACOPHONY

Getting noticed in a distracted world

By Bruce Everhart

IT HAS BEEN SAID BY MANY that the age we're living in right now could well be the most distracted in all of human history. Researchers say at minimum we are bombarded with 3,000 images per day. The problem is that we only notice half of what flashes before our eyes. Our brains have become increasingly numb to this massive infiltration of noise into our minds. We simply cannot process 3,000 visual "pop-ups" a day, let alone take action on them.

And then there's increased time spent doing. Technology was supposed to afford us all this free time, right? Not at all. We spend that "free time" doing things we never could have imagined ten or even five years ago. Facebook and YouTube are easy distractions, and e-mail enters our inboxes at dizzying speeds, adding to already lengthy to-do lists.

Take a look at these quick stats:

- More than 28 percent of every worker's day is spent processing e-mail. (McKinsey & Company, July 2012)
- With total Facebook users now exceeding 1.26 billion worldwide, 20 billion minutes of time is used on this social medium each day. (TechCrunch.com, July 2013)
- Worldwide, more than 6 billion hours of video are watched each month on YouTube. (YouTube.com, May 2013)

> Today, content marketing demands that we "interact with" rather than "broadcast at" our audience.

This makes communication much more difficult for your ministry. When people feel overwhelmed by these distractions, they begin to skip over or set aside difficult information for another time. They try to deal with the information, but the information overload can prevent them from responding in the way you hope or, worst of all, can cause them to ignore your message completely. Keep this in mind the next time someone doesn't open your direct mail letter or an e-mail you send to them.

Here are a few simple rules we're following at Moody to pierce through the clutter and distraction to effectively engage our audience.

1. NAVIGATE THE NEW RULES OF MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Saying things once is not enough today. In this age of donor distraction, we have to use multiple channels to deliver our message. Having spent most of my career in radio, I know the rule of thumb is that a saturated spot rotation in a shorter timeframe always gets more response than the same number of releases over a longer period of time. On average, it takes three impressions to get a listener to take action. In terms of donor communication for your ministry, that means reinforcing your direct mail letter in an e-mail, through a link in an e-newsletter, via a banner on your homepage, and conversation starter posts on your Facebook page and Twitter feeds.

Execution of this kind of strategy requires symmetry of "look and feel" between channels and a lot of collaboration between direct marketing and the digital team. We've been working on this at Moody increasingly over the last two years. Intentionally designed open workspaces are filled with interaction and over-the-cubical conversations about message integration. Also, with digital and mobile usage accelerating at the current pace, we have been slowly shifting our investment into digital, while not completely divesting from traditional direct mail. We are mailing smarter and more efficiently, while increasing e-mail campaigns and social media reinforcement.

In order to do this, one of our challenges has been to increase the number of e-mail addresses we have on file. Through some creative promotional campaigns, our e-mail counts have doubled over the last three years. With the help of our agency partner, Pursuant KMA, Moody hosted an interactive game in 2013 called *The Global Trek* and, in 2012, *The Moody Virtual Marathon*. These online games enlisted listeners and donors to interact with our brand with points and prizes. The object was to travel around the world and hear stories of God at work in various places where Moody had touched lives through a partnership or alumni. Players were awarded points for answering questions and for daily navigation, but the most points were given for recruiting friends and sharing the experience with others. This led to a sort of viral spread of the experience and an increase in active e-mail addresses from both current and new names of individuals with whom we could communicate moving forward.

2. ARTICULATE YOUR UNIQUE CASE FOR SUPPORT

In a distracted world, "different" gets noticed. I think Phil Cooke has really pinned this down in his book titled, *Unique* (Regal, 2012). He says we have to "understand that perception matters." Let's face it, in a world that values design and creative messaging like we do, bad design gets noticed. It sends a message that says "we don't care" or "we're not aware" of the world we're living in. Cooke goes on to say "in a cluttered world, original ideas stand out." That is good news, and is at the heart of every ministry needing to understand their unique brand. What is it that you do that no one else does? At Moody we've spent the last 18 months looking at a 128-year-old brand, identifying what it is that we are known for, and what we can own in the marketplace — that no one else can. This has been an incredibly difficult task, but one that is so important to master in this age of clutter and distraction.

And as you articulate your case, don't forget to keep that online content pithy and short. As Seth Godin said earlier this year in his blog post *Trapped by tl;dr (too long; didn't read)*, "Now that everyone can write, publish, email you stuff and generally make noise, everyone might and many people already are. As a result, there's too much noise, too much poorly written, overly written, defensively written and generally useless stuff cluttering your life. When we had trusted curators it was easy. We read what we were supposed to read, we read what we trusted, regardless of how long it was, because the curator was taking a risk and promising us it was worth it. No longer. Now, it's up to us."

3. CREATE MORE COMPELLING CONTENT

Don't forget that "content is king!" Ultimately, what keeps your customers is the quality and utility of the content you produce. To put it simply, the more people like it and benefit from it, the more they will give. My colleague Scott Veigel, who heads up our radio direct marketing at Moody, often says that we are in the "content publishing" business these days. You could have a great brand, and your messaging could be repeating on all the right channels, but you must have something of value to offer. This could include radio content, books, podcasts, and online articles.

Today, content marketing demands that we "interact with" rather than "broadcast at" our audience. There is an expectation now that in order to have a true relationship we must know what donors like and what they are consuming. Donors

are coming to expect this from us as much as they do keeping their address up to date. Thank you, Amazon!

At Moody we have spent the last eight months overhauling our CRM (customer relationship management) system so we can do this more fluidly. Last fall we launched a project called the "Donor Development Growth Initiative." The purpose of this project is to align our systems to support content marketing campaigns in order to serve our donors better. We have put together a cross-functional team representing content curation/development, business process, information systems, digital marketing, and our agency partner, 5Q Communications. They are working together to identify the correct path for the flow of user data for optimal impact.

Ultimately, our goal is to understand our donors better. We want to be able to determine the type of content they are seeking and, based on analysis, offer up more of it to them. Newly aligned systems capture data from the moment a donor interacts with us on a website and move that data directly into their stored donor profile. We've invested on a larger scale, but the good news for the Christian nonprofit ministry world is that the technology also exists for smaller, less resourced staffs to be very effective in providing their audiences what they like, in the way they like it, and when they like it. There really isn't any reason your donors should be unhappy.

Recently, I had breakfast with a friend from the corporate world. His career path was on pause and he was considering entering the ministry world. Most of his experience was in data processing, helping mega-billion dollar conglomerates arrange their business systems into a tighter and more efficient array. In our discussion that morning, he shared that his goal for ministry was simple: to help them succeed at "the business" to which they are called. I believe that the business for all of our ministries is reflected in the ultimate stewardship question that we'll be asked by our Father: "What have you done with the things I gave you?" I believe that will include the vital question of how we shared the message of the gospel by piercing through the distractions of our day. And it will include how we came to know our partners better, effectively recruiting them to join in this great and noble cause to which we've been called. Let's get after it! ●

BRUCE EVERHART is vice president for donor development and channel strategy for Moody Global Ministries (Moodyglobal.org). He oversees development messaging in mass-market channels for Moody's education and broadcast enterprise.

SOCIAL GAMING:

The Proven Value of Virtual Engagement

Over the past two years, Moody Bible Institute and Moody Radio worked with Pursuant KMA, a nationally recognized fundraising agency and long-term partner, to develop two branded social games: *The Moody Marathon* and *The Global Trek*.

Properly planned, executed, and followed up, our edutainment social games served as a strategy for donor acquisition, stewardship, and upgrading existing donors, all rolled into one.

The Moody Marathon and *The Global Trek* were designed to both entertain and educate. Interactive daily questions, web links, stories, video content, and more helped people understand and engage with facets of Moody they may not have been aware of previously.

For example, of the almost 35,000 participants engaged in *The Moody Marathon*, more than 70 percent were brand new e-mail names. Hoping to move more of our direct mail donors into online engagement, we were able to re-engage 6,800 lapsed donors.

The benefits of the game extended over the next several months . . . even years. Three months after *The Global Trek*, we discovered that among existing donors who played the game, the number of gifts increased 27 percent, while the average revenue per donor increased more than 17 percent. Plus, new and incremental revenue from participant donors surged.

Also, the effects of recruiting extended far beyond one contact. Through *The Global Trek*, one player who was recruited through a friend's Facebook post went on to recruit 156 more players. These players, in turn, recruited another 232! At a global level, we were able to integrate significant amounts of digital data into our donor profiles and contact strategies. Of all the tools in our fundraising belt, social gaming has become one of the more significant tools to proactively move constituents along the donor lifecycle continuum. *The outcomes are worth the effort!*

JOYFUL GENEROSITY

POVERTY AND THE GRACE OF GIVING

By Mark L. Vincent

How does the generous heart grow?

In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. (2 Cor. 8:2)

In the book *Creating Congregations of Generous People*, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), author Michael Durall identifies experiences needed to develop a spirit of generosity.

- The experience of being "seen" as a child
- Having at least one publicly active parent
- Growing up in a home that is hospitable to the wider world
- Living in a safe, yet diverse neighborhood
- Actively participating in a religious life
- Having contact with adults in the community who model commitment
- Participating in youth groups
- Having mentors

Extreme poverty is not on the list.

In the original Greek, Paul's phrase "extreme poverty" in 2 Corinthians 8:2 is βάθους πτωχεία.

- βάθους - depth, valley, floor
- πτωχεία - utter dependence on others for survival, destitution, forced to beg

Buried under an ocean of crushing poverty, a fountain of joyful generosity sprang from Macedonian hearts, blessing Jerusalem Christians living in similar circumstances.

The Greek language has another word for poor (πενες). It means "burdened" or "troubled," having a low standing. Biblical writers could choose which word to use depending on the intensity of the poverty. Luke frequently uses the more severe word, most notably in Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The NIV translates it *"at his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus ... "* (Luke 16:20). But in the Greek it is the first word of the sentence, literally *"a destitute named Lazarus ... "* This broken body at the front gate provides opportunity for a rich man to make a friend who will welcome him into eternity. He fails and receives no welcome (Luke 16:23-25).

Insight 1: Poverty provides opportunity to experience and learn generosity, and to teach eternal lessons about the grace of giving.

Paul doesn't use the severe word for poverty often but does in his description of the Macedonian Christians. They were in bitter, utter, punishing poverty. Their generosity to believers who were also at risk for survival outshines the comparatively prosperous Corinthians who had not followed through with their commitment. The Corinthian church and the Macedonian Christians were practically neighbors — near enough that Paul's pointing to them as an example provides an extra nudge of shame. Paul instructs the Corinthians to make these impoverished Christians their example so they too could *"excel in this grace of giving"* (2 Cor. 8:7)

Insight 2: Those in poverty are held up as examples of generosity for our instruction.

In later Greek philosophy, the highest goal of life was living virtuously in all material conditions, including poverty. Steeped in Greek culture himself, Paul agreed. He wrote: *" ... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."* (Phil. 4:11b, 12) This from a man who hobnobbed in courts of the politically, academically,

and religiously privileged, but also knew drastic vocational disruption (remember the road to Damascus?), beatings, shipwreck, and exposure to the elements, persecution, and imprisonment. In our day, this would be like getting released from prison just in time to attend a fundraising celebrity golf scramble, only to later sleep at a halfway house that night with no change of clothing ... rejoicing every minute.

By the way, the church in Philippi was filled with Macedonian Christians. They are the ones Paul holds up as exemplary. They were reputed to be the one congregation, an impoverished group of Christians, sharing with the Jerusalem church, and who kept assisting Paul's ministry financially (Phil. 4:16).

Insight 3: Poverty teaches discernment between want and need ... and invites us to be content and live with a generous spirit.

Let's reflect deeply on these insights. Doing so you will be invited to:

- Grow in the grace of giving, even if you are burdened, and even more so if you are destitute.
- Learn from the poor about the grace of giving. Perhaps you could make that your next educational event instead of enlisting yet another panel of philanthropists.
- Catalog and then differentiate between your needs and wants, then take the next steps to organize life so God can spend you.

Consider another angle on the subject. In his book *Brightest and Best: A Companion to the Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (Cowley Publications, 1998), Sam Portaro writes " ... our systems move very quickly from being a means to an end to becoming the end itself. Theologians used to call this tendency 'idolatry.'" From 2 Corinthians 8, we've seen that the biblical witness stands in contrast to these world system approaches to resource development that become idols.

- **World System:** Cultivates generosity from abundance.
- **Biblical Witness:** *Points to generosity borne from poverty.*

- **World System:** The system we serve tracks amounts.
- **Biblical Witness:** *Pays attention to percentage, and sacrificial giving.*

(We herald the monetary value of gifts rather than the depth of sacrifice.)

- **World System:** The system celebrates the gift, thanks the giver, and (in some circles) acknowledges the ultimate giver — God.
- **Biblical Witness:** *First celebrates God as the giver, then commends the individual donor, and acknowledges the gift.*

(We use the sequence of receiving and then giving instead of giving and then receiving.)

- **World System:** The system expects growth and accumulation.
- **Biblical Witness:** *Prompts contentment, divestment, and sustained expenditure.*

(We say, "We are a five million dollar charity" far more readily than "Every day we feed 2,500 people in the heart of famine.")

Paul doesn't use the severe word for poverty often but does in his description of the Macedonian Christians.

- **World System:** The system focuses on giving from the last, as an act of appreciation and philanthropy.
- **Biblical Witness:** *Focuses on giving from the first fruits as an act of worship and trust.*

(Many nonprofits invest in estate planning services to reap gifts from those who wish to reduce taxes or have an estate to distribute. It is rare to find one working anywhere nearly as deliberately to cultivate first fruits lifestyles.)

- **World System:** Believes that out of overflowing affluence and extreme wealth wells up philanthropic opportunity.
- **Biblical Witness:** *From overflowing joy and extreme poverty wells up rich generosity.*

The *Chronicle of Philanthropy* regularly identifies the most generous quintile in the U.S. population, not just by dollars, but by percentage. Two consistent findings keep presenting themselves.

- The richest quintile is not the most generous, not even in total dollars.
- The lowest quintile is the most sacrificial in their giving. They tend to give the highest percentage of their incomes to charitable causes, not even counting mutual assistance with their neighbors.

These insights invite self-examination and perhaps penitence. Like Abraham, personally and organizationally, most North Americans have been blessed to be a blessing (Gen. 12:2). Although we are invited to be as the Macedonians, thankful whatever the circumstance and eager to share, we twist and distort God's promise into "we received a blessing therefore we are blessed."

In the book of 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9 are hallmark texts from which Christians teach generosity to one another. We jump to the verses that talk about generosity that gives birth to generosity, and do so out of context. We rush past the opening verses that tell us the circumstances from which this example for generosity grew. I think we need to revisit these passages and ponder their deeper meaning for both the way that we give, and also for the way that we raise funds.

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Redefining Acquisition

A new approach to cultivating donors

By Curt Swindoll

Ask 100 chief development officers their top three development needs, and you will find "acquisition" on 90 percent or more of their lists. Solving an organization's top line revenue challenge begins at the starting point of the donor relationship process. No amount of cultivation or stewardship can overcome a persistent acquisition problem. And because donors rarely maximize their giving until the third or subsequent year, inadequate investments in acquisition aren't felt for years. /// Three things make acquisition, especially broad-based (general or annual fund) acquisition, a challenge: /// 1) Finding prospective donors, attracting them to the nonprofit, and encouraging them to make their first gift. /// 2) The initial cost of acquisition, which is rarely less than $50 per acquired donor, often closer to $100 to $150, and can exceed $250. ///

3) The return on investment (ROI) of acquisition. A donor costing an average of $100 to acquire, and giving an average of $75 in the first year and $125 in the second year, requires 12 months to achieve ROI ... and that's if 100 percent of acquired donors give in the second year! Many organizations report an 18 to 24 month ROI on acquisition investments.

No wonder acquisition is a challenge. Even if a source of donors can be found, no one likes to wait a year and a half just to break even.

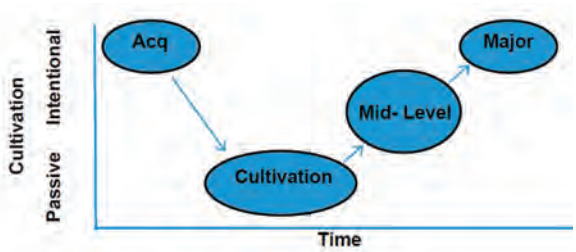
CREATIVE ACQUISITION

Helping clients solve these problems using creative approaches, Pursuant uses solutions such as creative gameification/edutainment campaigns. Organizations with at least 25,000 email addresses are able to sufficiently seed these games, and have doubled the number of email addresses on file while providing a 90 to 120 day ROI.

General/annual fund donors provide a more consistent source of revenue bridging the episodic gifts of major donors. Additionally, our analytics show that organizations with strong broad-based programs find 40-60 percent of their major donors' relationships began with a broad base-level gift. Strong acquisition augments consistent giving, eventually filling and growing major gift officer portfolios.

Solving this problem requires a better understanding of the broad-base cultivation process. See if this looks familiar.

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTIVATION PROBLEM



Acquisition begins with a very intentional process. Once a donor is acquired, however, a passive cultivation process commences that can take three to five or more years before a donor decides to make a mid-level gift. At that point, some organizations begin a more intentional process of stewarding the donor. Personalized communication eventually encourages the donor to make an even larger major gift, and they are added to a gift officer's portfolio for a highly intentional process of cultivation and stewardship.

Cultivation is an important part of the process. Donors are educated. Stories of impact are shared. Retention relies on consistent communication and the frequency of a donor's gifts. So what's the problem? This form of cultivation is passive. Further, many organizations fail to employ a more intentional mid-level cultivation process, further delaying the maturation of a donor to a major level of giving.

Don't misunderstand. Calling the broad-base acquisition process "passive" isn't to imply a lack of significant effort or strategy regarding direct response campaigns. However, such efforts rely on the donor to

PHOTO BY: THINKSTOCK BY GETTY IMAGES

PURSUANT KMA

LOCATION: Headquartered in Dallas with offices in Dallas, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C.

PRESIDENT/CEO: Trent Ricker

EXECUTIVE VP, STRATEGY: Curt Swindoll

ABOUT: Pursuant is a fundraising consultancy serving the world's leading nonprofit organizations. Partnering with educational institutions, athletic organizations, hospitals, and ministries, Pursuant impacts lives through innovative strategies that grow and sustain revenue.

MISSION: Impacting lives every day by helping great organizations raise money.

WEBSITE: (pursuant.com/KMA)

make the first move before the organization alters how it actively engages and woos them.

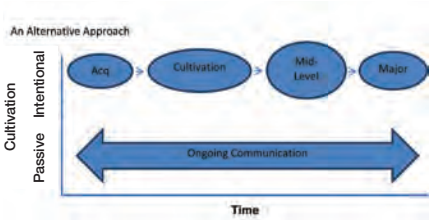
This passive cultivation process is an expensive, long-term process that delays mid-level and major gifts. In my experience, I think frustration subconsciously arises because all other aspects of donor development process possess a measure of intentionality, yet cultivation seems to be a multi-year marathon. If money were no object, most development officers would visit every donor on their file —not just the major donors. But money is an object and cultivating broad-based donors any other way simply hasn't been cost effective. But what if there were another way — one that could actively drive results forward, even from newly acquired donors?

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Pursuant has developed a model, from nearly 20,000 face-to-face visits, that actively engages donors in a face-to-face meeting, culminating in an invitation to make a three-year giving commitment. This program, Charitable Partners, traditionally focused on actively cultivating mid-level donors, is also now being used increasingly to source and train prospective major gift officers in the work of being an effective fundraising officer — improving their metrics and results. This program has produced remarkable outcomes, with nearly half of all visits resulting in an annual commitment of two to five times donors' annual giving. Some organizations have seen successful close rates of 65 percent.

So what's the difference? A combination of engagement and stewardship elements, combined with gift officer efficiency and effectiveness metrics, have produced millions of dollars in fundraising revenue and greater gift officer productivity.

If this same process, or one very similar, were applied to early cultivation efforts, the metrics typically associated with acquisition could be substantially revised. First, here is how this process would revise the cultivation process:



The secret of this process lies in the effective use of data to drive the process efficiently.

First, taking their newly acquired donors and obtaining wealth overlay data gives organizations insight as to which of their new donors have the capacity to make a mid-level or major giving commitment. In our experience, that group represents about 50 percent of their newly acquired donors.

Second, a face-to-face visit to communicate the mission and vision of the organization shows the impact the organization is having. Making the request for a commitment is paramount.

Third, ensuring that an ongoing stewardship process is in place keeps the donor emotionally and intellectually connected to the organization. If these three components are in place, the numbers associated with acquisition change dramatically.

A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

Let's build two simple scenarios based on the following assumptions:

Cultivation		
Donors Acquired:	1000	
Cost Per Donor Acquired:	$100	
First Year Passive Giving:	$75	
New Donor Retention Rate*:	25.0%	
New Donors with Capacity:	50%	
New Donors Who Agree to Meet:	12%	
Face-to-Face Close Rate**:	50%	
Average Intentional Commitment:	$4,000	over year for 3 years
Time to Complete F2F Mtgs:	1	month(s)
Annual Compensation of Gift Officer:	$60,000	
Second Year Passive Giving:	$150	

* The percentage of new donors who will give in the second year

** The percentage of people who agree to make a commitment after meeting

Based on the assumptions above, here is what giving looks like after the first and second years, along with the ROI and break-even points associated with each scenario:

	Traditional Acquisition	Intentional Acquisition
Cost of Acquisition Campaign:	$100,000	$100,000
Cost of Gift Officer:	N/A	$5,000
1st Year Passive Gifts:	$75,000	$75,000
Total Intentional Commitments:	$0	$120,000
1st Year Intentional Gifts:	$0	$40,000
2nd Year Passive Donors:	250	220
2nd Year Intentional Donors:	$0	30
2nd Year Passive Gifts:	$37,500	$33,000
2nd Year Intentional Gifts:	$0	$40,000
Total 1st Year Giving:	$75,000	$115,000
Total 2nd Year Giving:	$37,500	$73,000
Total 2-Year Giving:	$112,500	$188,000
Percent Improvement:	N/A	40%
1 Year Total ROI:	0.75	1.10
2 Year Total ROI:	1.13	1.79
Break-Even Point:	21.3 months	12 months

As seen above, the traditional acquisition approach produces an ROI well into the second year, while the acquisition process with an intentional, face-to-face meeting with some of the newly acquired donors provides a break-even point by the end of the first year.

This analysis doesn't include the third year of giving from those donors intentionally developed, or the cumulative impact realized by incorporating an intentional follow-up process through subsequent acquisition efforts. Furthermore, the Charitable Partners process has also shown that 80 percent of donors who make an initial multi-year commitment are willing to make second (and subsequent) multi-year commitments if they are stewarded properly during the commitment period. That kind of retention is hardly assured purely through passive cultivation efforts.

Additionally, donors who are cultivated this way not only become mid-level donors years earlier than they traditionally would have, they become major donors sooner as well. In fact, although not accounted for, some of these acquired donors will immediately become major donors, providing an even higher level of return than accounted for in this simple analysis.

Today's nonprofit organizations are struggling to find ways to cost-effectively grow their donor bases and build major donor portfolios.

We've compared this new approach to traditional acquisition campaign metrics, but it can also be used to augment cost-effective acquisition programs where positive ROI occurs much faster. Adding an intentional follow-up process will only make cost-effective acquisition campaigns that much more financially powerful.

Finally, it is also important to note that using data mining to prioritize and drive face-to-face donor visits can be used to enhance mid-level and major donor segments. The weighting of recency/frequency/monetary (RFM) data, behavioral engagement data, and wealth scores would need to be adjusted, but this process enhances mid-level, major donor, and planned giving programs.

Today's nonprofit organizations are struggling to find ways to cost-effectively grow their donor bases and build major donor portfolios. Key to this process is finding new ways to acquire and cultivate broad-based donors. By incorporating data-driven strategies with thoughtful approaches to engagement and stewardship, the returns associated with traditional acquisition campaigns can be revolutionized. And that's something every nonprofit can appreciate.

CURT SWINDOLL is the executive vice president for strategy for Pursuant KMA.

PHOTO BY: THINKSTOCK BY GETTY IMAGES

Myths of the CHRISTIAN DONOR

Insights from Grey Matter Research

By Ron Sellers

IN THE WORLD OF MINISTRY FUNDRAISING, many assumptions are made about the perspectives and behavior of Christians, as though their charitable behavior is very different from non-Christians.

Christians do tend to behave differently than non-Christians in certain ways. For instance, Christians are more likely than others to pray, give money to a place of worship, have children, and be politically conservative.

In other areas, Christians and non-Christians are indistinguishable. Christians are just as likely as non-Christians to bank at a credit union, use social media, choose paper over plastic at the grocery store, and watch sports on television.

But when it comes to donor-supported organizations, are Christians really different from the rest of the population? Fundraisers commonly make a variety of assumptions about Christians:

- They are more likely to give than non-Christians
- They give more generously and sacrificially
- They believe in tithing (whether or not they actually practice it)
- They heavily favor Christian causes and organizations
- Churches and parachurch ministries compete for their contributions
- They want any charitable work to be done as a means of spiritually reaching non-Christians
- Because of a desire to reach areas where access to Christian teaching is less available than in the U.S., they emphasize giving internationally
- Because of Christian teachings about stewardship, they hold ministries and organizations to a particularly high standard of financial accountability

Having worked extensively with both Christian and secular nonprofit organizations, and having conducted substantial research of our own on these issues, Grey Matter Research peeked behind the curtain on these assumptions in our study *True or False: Myths of the Christian Donor*. Let's take a look at just two of these assumptions about Christians and giving, to find out whether or not they actually hold true.

ASSUMPTION #1:
CHRISTIANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO GIVE THAN NON-CHRISTIANS

This is *sort* of true. Numerous studies have shown that Christians give more money away than do non-Christians. But the common rebuttal from secular sources is that giving to churches shouldn't count, because that giving is really in their own self-interest (like supporting your country club so you'll have nice facilities and programs to enjoy as a member).

Statistically, this argument is easy to dismiss. When we separate donations to houses of worship and donations to other kinds of donor-supported organizations, there are still substantial differences in giving between the religious and the non-religious.

> Numerous studies have shown that Christians give more money away than do non-Christians.

In a 2012 study of more than 1,000 American adults, Grey Matter Research found that people who read a sacred text (the Bible, Torah, Qur'an, etc.) at least once a month outside of worship services are 43 percent more likely to have financially supported a nonprofit organization — over and above any giving to a local place of worship.

Similarly, people who attend religious worship services once a month or more are 53 percent more likely than those who do not attend worship to have given to a nonprofit organization in the last year (again, over and above any gifts to a local place of worship).

So, yes, religious people are more likely to give money away than are non-religious Americans, even when we look beyond their financial support of their church or temple. The "sort of true" part comes when we start analyzing the data more carefully. It's not *Christianity* that is connected with higher levels of giving, but *religion*. People who are part of a non-Christian religion are just as likely as Christians to be donors.

Further, we don't see differences within the broadly Christian community in the propensity to give. People who are born-again Christians are no more likely to be givers than are people who identify themselves as part of the Christian faith but who do not define themselves as born again. Evangelical

Certainly Christians are supporting Christian organizations; that's why 12 of the 50 largest charitable organizations in the U.S. (as measured by *The NonProfit Times*) are distinctly Christian.

Christians are no more likely to be donors to nonprofits than are nonevangelical Christians. Protestants and Catholics show a statistically similar propensity to give to nonprofits.

The likelihood of being a nonprofit donor also has no correlation with how frequently people attend worship services; people who go only once in a typical month are just as likely to support a nonprofit as are people who are in their church multiple times per week.

So how generous are Christians as givers? They do give away a significantly higher proportion of their household income than do the nonreligious, and this is again true even when we exclude support of churches from the equation.

Even so, the average Christian gives away less than 3 percent of his or her income, even when church giving is included with all other giving. Rarely do Christians actually practice anything close to tithing.

ASSUMPTION #2:
CHRISTIANS FAVOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

Certainly Christians are supporting Christian organizations; that's why 12 of the 50 largest charitable organizations in the U.S. (as measured by *The NonProfit Times*) are distinctly Christian. But by no means are Christians supporting Christian ministries exclusively or even commonly.

For one thing, ministries often are not the organizations grabbing their attention. Grey Matter Research asked more than 1,000 Americans to name the first nonprofit organization, charity, or ministry that came to mind, other than a local church. Only 4 percent of all self-identified Christians named an organization that has, as its primary purpose, religious work such as evangelism, religious teaching, translating or distributing Bibles, etc. This included 6 percent of all Bible readers, 5 percent of those who attend a Christian church, 6 percent of born again Christians, and 7 percent of evangelicals.

Only 18 percent of all Americans thought first of any sort of religious organization, regardless of the type of work it does. The majority of this 18 percent is the 11 percent who named The Salvation Army. All other Christian organizations combined were thought of first by exactly 7 percent of all American adults, including 20 percent of all self-identified Christians, 25 percent of all Bible readers, 24 percent who regularly attend a Christian church, 25 percent of born-again Christians, and 48 percent of evangelicals.

Not only are Christians more likely to be strongly aware of secular organizations than of Christian ministries, but many show no preference for putting their money toward Christian ministries.

A 2006 Grey Matter study found that among people who regularly attend a Protestant church, just 1 percent felt Christians should only support Christian causes or organizations, and 10 percent felt Christians should give preference to Christian ministries. A majority (55 percent) believed Christians are entirely free to support any type of cause or organization, religious or nonreligious. Not only that, but a majority had supported a cause or organization with no religious connection at all in the past year.

Where do these attitudes come from? A Grey Matter study among senior pastors of Protestant churches showed just 3 percent felt Christians should only support Christian causes and organizations, and 30 percent believed Christians should give preference to Christian organizations. Protestant ministers were just as likely as their congregants to have supported a cause or organization with no religious connection at all in the prior year.

In 2010, Grey Matter Research partnered with nonprofit specialist Russ Reid Company for a major study of donor behavior (*Heart of the Donor*). In that research, just 21 percent of donors who attend a Protestant church noted that they prefer to support nonprofits where religious beliefs are a major part of everything the organization does.

Even if we combine people who want to support organizations that have religion as a major focus and those who want to support organizations with some sort of religious background, the picture is not particularly favorable for ministries. Just 52 percent of donors who attend a Christian church favor religious organizations at all in their giving. The same is true for 56 percent of Bible readers, 48 percent of Protestants, and only 30 percent of Catholics.

Clearly, many Christians show no preference for supporting Christian organizations with their money, and some actually avoid supporting organizations with any religious connection at all. So the assumption that Christians want to support Christian ministries with their dollars is, for many Christians, nothing more than a myth.

Acting on actual knowledge rather than assumptions is critical in communicating with current and potential donors, who often think, believe, and behave in ways you may not expect. It is the hope of Grey Matter Research that our research will assist in providing that understanding, and start some important conversations regarding what this means about things such as branding, donor acquisition, donor retention, messaging, and target marketing for ministry organizations.

RON SELLERS is the grey matter behind Grey Matter Research in Phoenix. Grey Matter (greymatterresearch.com) is a consumer insights and market research firm specializing in work within the Christian community. E-mail (ron@greymatterresearch.com) for more information or a full copy of the reports mentioned here (*Myths of the Christian Donor* and/or *Heart of the Donor*).

DONORS FIRST

A new paradigm for maximizing fundraising

By William J. Kimball and Michael Parry

AT THE HEART OF MAJOR GIFT FUNDRAISING is a strong relationship with donors: growing relationships with existing donors and building relationships with new donors. Building a new relationship with a donor begins by gaining trust. Frequently the first barrier we face is an irrational fear from the donor that somehow we are going to "take" money from them that they don't want to give. The single most challenging part of our work in donor relations is getting past this. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes we don't. This article begins after we have succeeded.

THE DONOR

Consider this rhetorical question: How would you get a gift, a donation, or money without the donor? Although the contributions come from individuals, we often fall into the bad habit of forgetting about the donor in order to focus on the gift. All too often we see the donor as a checkbook that will help us reach our financial goals, and we forget about the person.

In this article we will share a couple of donor relation stories that have transformed the way we think about fundraising. You will see in these stories the value of a trusted donor relationship and the incredible outcomes that have resulted in a paradigm shift from money to meaning.

In her book on *Donor Centered Fundraising*, (Burk & Associates, 2003) Penelope Burk describes this process, stating: "When you allow yourself the privilege of seeing your donors as people and not file numbers, a donor-centered approach to fundraising is the natural approach."

Chasing the money, rather than focusing on the donor, leads to the devaluation of the donor as a person, objectifying them as a means to an end. We then become less aspirational for our mission, focusing on our monetary goals and less inspirational regarding the benefits of our donor. On the contrary, when we properly prioritize our work with the donor, we elevate the value of our relationship from the mundane monetary amount to the actual meaning of their giving. This leads to deeper quality relationships that focus on the goal of accomplishing the purpose and vision of the donor's values through the mission or ministry of our organization. We believe that the latter will not only help the vision of the organization, but will also transform the donor into a committed and converted supporter.

TWO EXAMPLES

There are two donors who best exemplify the possible fundraising success that can come from this approach. The first is a widower in his early 70s (we'll call him Stan), who had made only four gifts to our organization in his lifetime, totaling less than $600. He sent a postcard from our planned giving donor acquisition mailing that indicated a bequest. We called and invited him for a tour with our chief development officer. The planned giving specialist followed up with a stewardship visit, taking him to lunch. At the first meeting, he indicated we were to be one of four beneficiaries, which was approximately 2 percent of his estate. However, we found some common themes upon which to build the relationship, and visits continued for the next 15 months. At the end of that period, he decided to purchase a charitable gift annuity for $100,000, and in doing so, transferred an entire account of $127,500 in invested securities for the charitable gift annuity, along with a major gift. In addition, he now gives an annual gift of $12,000.

The second donor (we'll call him Harry), attended a friendraiser event where he and his wife met the planned giving specialist at lunch. Harry is a retired mechanic. During lunch, our conversation focused not on money but on them — and after this couple discovered the role of the planned giving specialist, they mentioned that they had a planned gift. Following the event, a personal stewardship visit was scheduled. Here again, a quick rapport was established; this time around, it was discovered that Harry had been a flight engineer on a B-24 bomber in WWII. After numerous stewardship visits, this relationship has grown into a deep friendship, including the donor and planned giving specialist taking a flight in the only B-24 that still flies. His prior giving was an annual stock gift of about $20,000. Within the first year of this new relationship, his giving more than tripled to more than $64,000, and many of those gifts came in $5,000 or $10,000 checks following a visit.

THE FOCUS ON PEOPLE

This may sound obvious, but it is a problem when fundraising focuses only on the money that is needed and organizational financial goals. We are not saying we should not measure money, nor should we cease to have financial goals. We need them. However, we must see our main responsibility as building relationships of trust and honesty with those donors who have the desire for a closer relationship with our cause, and who have the capacity to grow in their giving. Yes, we must be discerning, and, yes, there are many who will not want this type of attention from your organization. But it only takes a few to make a big difference.

We believe that most organizations have much greater potential from current donors who could be cultivated in this way. Sure, you need to always be looking for new donors, implementing donor acquisition strategies each year. But maximum fundraising begins with people and relationships, so we believe organizations that invest in the people to develop those relationships will realize similar results.

A donor-centric relationship raises the conversation from the technical details of funding needs, although not unimportant, to the value of meaning for the donor. It is here where the inspiration and spirituality reside, not in the nonprofit organization's needs. When we take the time and effort to know the person for who they are, and not what we need to get out of them, we cultivate the much more fertile soil of shared visions and goals to advance the kingdom of God and not just the bottom line of the organization.

The most rewarding experiences, which also testify to the authenticy of a donor relationship, are those donors who thank me when they make a significant gift.

In 2012, James M. Hodge delivered a lecture hosted by the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, a program of The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. Hodge's lecture was entitled, "Philanthropy & Relationships: If philanthropy is all about relationships, then why do metrics only measure money?" Hodge said that instead of "fundraising," he chooses to use the word "philanthropy," and calls donors "benefactors." In essence, he wants to broaden the meaning of our fundraising work to the core value, love of others. He quoted the famous work of Jewish philosopher and theologian Martin Buber, who defined authentic relationships as "I-Thou" rather than "I-it." God created us to be in relationships, and the work of the fundraiser is grounded in this higher calling to transcend the "I-it" utilitarianism of raising money to the "I-Thou" authenticity that sees individuals as "ends in and of themselves... rather than a means to an end."

THE CHALLENGE AND REWARDS

The most rewarding experiences, which also testify to the authenticity of a donor relationship, are those donors who thank me when they make a significant gift. When this happens we feel the satisfaction of being God's instruments in helping that person accomplish something great, which in turn makes them feel blessed. The challenge is the number of initial donor introductions we face and the months or years of cultivation visits that are needed until this happens. Ironically, the challenge becomes the reward when we are truly donor focused. ●

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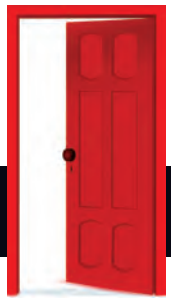
The Stewards Next Door



Lessons in giving learned early in life

By David Wills

WHEN I WAS BOY growing up in Wichita Falls, Texas, my siblings and I would often ride our Big Wheels across our driveway, down the sidewalk, and up to the front porch of our next-door neighbors' house. We were allowed to open the brass mail slot in their front door and if we smelled fresh baked cookies, we knew we could knock, go in, and have some. To this day, I remember how much we loved those cookies! And as you might imagine, we frequently opened that mail slot.

It was on one of these visits that I was told about the life of Dawson Trotman, "Daws" as many knew him, the legendary evangelist and founder of The Navigators. I knew something about The Navigators because my parents began their faith journey through the ministry of John Beckendam. A former dairy farmer with The Navigators, John had long sideburns and a vivacious smile. He often came to our home to teach the Bible to my parents and their friends. As a young boy, I would sneak out of my room, hide around a corner, and listen to him teach in our living room.

Hearing my neighbor talk about Dawson Trotman caused me to think that Dawson was John's boss! In fact, Trotman was so influential that Billy Graham once remarked, "I think Daws has personally touched more lives than anybody I have ever known." My neighbors talked about Daws as if he was their friend ... and he was.

Another important person that I was introduced to by the neighbors next door was the famous illusionist and evangelist, André Kole. When I was in elementary school in the early 1970s, I wanted to be a magician. I loved the control that came with knowing a card trick that others couldn't figure out! (By the way, I still have control issues to this day!) One day when I was about 12 years old, a huge 18-wheeler pulled up in front of the house next door to ours. On the side of the truck was a picture of André. He had come to visit my neighbors! I was invited to go over and meet him, and I was awestruck. It was another experience that I'll never forget.

FAST FORWARD

In 2000, I had the privilege of attending Amsterdam 2000, a conference of the world's leading evangelists. It was during this event that I first met Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church. When we were introduced, he asked where I grew up.

I told him that I grew up in Wichita Falls, Texas. As I began to explain that Wichita Falls is truly in the middle of nowhere, Rick suddenly stopped me and asked me if I knew Wayne and Francis Watts.

Well, my jaw almost hit the floor. Wayne and Francis Watts were the neighbors next door ... the same ones who baked those incredible cookies! They were the very same ones who told me about their friends Dawson Trotman and introduced me to André Kole. After my brief interaction with Rick, I started to put the pieces of the puzzle together and learned that Wayne and Francis not only knew champions of the faith like Daws, André, and Rick, they financially supported them and many others before anyone else knew who they were! Wayne and Francis gave a whole new meaning to angel investors!

You can see the thread of faith that Wayne and Francis have woven throughout my life and countless others through their giving. They were the first giving champions and gospel patrons that I ever knew, even though I did not realize the full extent of their influence until many years later.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

So, what was it that allowed Wayne and Francis Watts to fund these leaders who would eventually change the world? First, it was their faithfulness to their heavenly Father. They also understood the three essential questions that every faithful and generous giver must answer: the why, the how, and the where of generosity. And these three questions provide a clear pathway for today's ministry leaders to help each of their donors grow in their "journey of generosity."

Why? Wayne and Francis had hearts that had been transformed by the Word of God. They knew why they should be generous stewards. Wayne even wrote a book on stewardship! Believers that understand the transformational message of biblical generosity give extravagantly. Instead of trying to get a bigger slice of a finite pie, successful ministry leaders serve givers by helping them understand why they should live and give generously. Helping givers answer this question is all about what you can do for a giver, as opposed to what you can get from them.

How? Their minds were sharp, and they were thoughtful about how they gave. Wayne was a planner, and he and Francis were very prayerful and strategic in their giving. Givers who plan well give more, and give more wisely. Wise ministry leaders help givers answer this important question. How someone gives relates to what they give. The time has come to help stewards give from all their valuable assets, including stock, real estate, and business interests, and to help them do so easily. Simply trying to get more cash will not work in today's environment. Helping someone give beyond writing checks is another way to serve.

Where? Their hands were active in their generosity. Wayne and Francis were friends of those they supported. They walked the road with Dawson, André, Rick, and others. And they became friends with others who supported these leaders to create a network of support for things they cared about. They were truly a part of the leader's efforts. Givers who are strategic and engaged experience far greater joy. And the greater the joy, the more they give, and the more they encourage others to do the same. Successful development efforts encompass high degrees of engagement, including peer-to-peer influence.

> Imagine what would happen if ministries deepened their interactions with givers beyond their checkbooks and asked donors for their wisdom, participation, prayers ... and even their friendship?

GIVING TOGETHER

I encourage ministry leaders to seek answers to the "Why, How, and Where" questions for themselves as they consider their personal generosity. I have seen how embracing this practice in my own life has changed my heart and allowed me to view ministry through the eyes of a donor. The conversation changes when this shift occurs and ministries can begin walking with donors, equipping and encouraging them rather than falling into a give-and-take relationship.

I also pray that leaders will engage their donors at new and deeper levels. Imagine what would happen if ministries deepened their interactions with givers beyond their checkbooks and asked donors for their wisdom, participation, prayers ... and even their friendship? Not all givers desire such close relationships with those that they support, but just one or two can change the course of a ministry. Think of Wayne and Francis' friendships with Rick Warren and Dawson Trotman. Those real friendships allowed my next-door neighbors to be true partners in ministry with these great men of the faith. They were not simply donors ... they were co-laborers in the gospel.

When ministry leaders help donors answer the right questions and engage them on a deeper level, they will find new and fruitful opportunities to serve those who support them. Along the way, they may find precious gifts of friendship and wisdom in places they never expected. May we all be mindful of potential "Wayne and Francis" neighbors as we grow with them and experience the adventure of giving together!

DAVID WILLS is president of The National Christian Foundation (NCF). His passions are centered on generosity and eternity, so he invests his time helping others lay up treasure in heaven and take hold of life that is truly life. Under his leadership, NCF (NationalChristian.com) has become the largest Christian grant making foundation in the world. NCF holds more than $1.6 billion in assets and serves more than 9,700 families, companies, and ministries.

BIG PICTURE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

FOUR WAYS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR MINISTRY

By Vonna Laue

BEING RESPONSIBLE for the accounting and financial operations of a ministry is no small task. While the glory lies with the programs and direct ministry, the support roles of an organization are equally important. Without them, none of the programs and ministry could happen.

The fifth module in the Financial Management track of the CLA Online Academy, for which I serve as content contributor, is called "Big Picture Financial Management." It goes beyond the debits and credits of how the actual accounting is done to look at the role from a broader perspective. Following are four areas critical to successful big picture ministry financial management:

1. Understand how your board functions.
2. Use performance measurements and dashboards.
3. Better analyze ministry financial information.
4. Engage the accounting department in the ministry's mission.

Each area can be approached in many different ways, but they encompass the entire organization, from the staff to the board and the dollars in between. These four areas will give you a wider picture of the financial management of your ministry. Let's take a closer look.

1. UNDERSTAND HOW YOUR BOARD FUNCTIONS

You may not have control over who serves on the board of your ministry, but you do have control over how you respond to the board members and how you assist in providing information they can use to make informed decisions.

Board members are typically well-intentioned individuals who give of their time and resources to serve. They may be seen at times as over-involved, not involved enough, or even as not understanding or caring about the impact their decisions have on the staff. However, this is usually due to a lack of rapport or a misunderstanding by one or both parties.

The primary responsibility of the board is that of a fiduciary. The members are responsible for acting with due care. This means that they make decisions any prudent person would make and that they have a duty of loyalty — keeping the best interest of the organization first and foremost in their role as board members.

It is critical that the information the organization provides to the board be timely, relevant, accurate, and concise. If any of these factors are lacking, it could result in disengaged members at best, and catastrophic decisions at worst. The credibility of management rests in the financial information it provides to the board. You should seek to understand what information would be most valuable to board members and in what fashion they would like to see it.

2. USE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS AND DASHBOARDS

You may find that providing a simple, summarized balance sheet and income statement to the board is sufficient if you also include a dashboard report or other performance measurements to focus attention on the important areas. Graphically displayed information such as this can be extremely helpful in engaging board members who would otherwise not consider themselves "numbers people."

Dashboards are helpful in consolidating a lot of data into a single report without overwhelming the reader. A good dashboard turns data into information and can be extremely useful in identifying trends, comparing progress to targets, assessing the health of the organization, and communicating strategy. The key is to identify the *main* information to be communicated, rather than including *all* the information in miniscule text. The graphic presentation may highlight results through color-coding, such as red (immediate concern), yellow (caution), and green (meeting expectations).

Each ministry's dashboard should be unique to the organization's needs and desires. Dashboards typically include information such as revenue and expense compared to budget or prior year, contributions by month compared to prior years, fundraising expenses as a percentage of contributions, and attendance in ministry programs compared to prior year or budget. Albert Einstein is credited with saying, "Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted." Keep that in mind when you consider implementing or modifying a dashboard report.

The board might find these performance measurement questions helpful as well:

- Does the ministry have adequate cash reserves?
- Is the debt level appropriate?
- What contribution trends are important?
- What are the most important key performance indicators?
- Does the ministry have adequate financial resources to accomplish its mission?

3. BETTER ANALYZE MINISTRY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Financial analysis is critical because ministries cannot achieve their God-given vision unless finances are managed well. The financial reports given to the board offer insight on day-to-day financial operations, but analysis provides a long-term perspective that is more than a balance sheet or income statement. It is the research that results from questions the dashboard may raise.

Knowledge about the current and future financial condition of the ministry enhances the confidence of other leaders, the board, and donors. The analysis will require you to evaluate past decisions like, "Instead of coming in under budget, should we have served 10 percent more people?" It will allow you consider current decisions and determine what future decisions may be necessary as well.

A key component of financial analysis is making sure that the financial plans are aligned with the organization's vision and strategy. It is too easy to consider them independent of each other. It is also necessary to understand the "why" behind the numbers.

A good financial analyst will be able to see a story in the information. Likewise, you should strive to understand your ministry's story. What do contributions tell you? What ministries are self-supporting and which ones use the most financial resources? Is that intentional? Could you accomplish your mission better or less expensively by outsourcing? Those are the types of questions to consider when seeking to better understand your organization's current and future financial picture.

4. ENGAGE THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT IN THE MINISTRY'S MISSION

Finally, you must be intentional about helping your organization's support staff — including the accounting department — see their importance in the overall mission of the ministry. Ken Blanchard said, "The productivity of a work group seems to depend on how the group members see their own goals in relation to the goals of an organization." Our people typically choose to work at our organizations because of the vested interest they have in our mission. Over time, that diminishes as they see processing payroll and accounts payable like any other accounting job.

Here are some practical ways to encourage engagement throughout your organization:

- Make sure thank-you notes received by the ministry are circulated to all staff, not just those on the front lines.
- Keep the vision, mission, and goals in front of staff. This doesn't mean simply memorizing them. It involves understanding what they really mean and how they are lived out.
- Lead by example because if you understand the significant impact your department has on the mission, you will be able to articulate it well to your staff.
- Make sure staff members are equipped to be their best by investing in training or other resources. This will let them know that their role is valued.
- Include direct ministry as part of their job. Allowing staff members to take a paid day once or twice a year to do direct ministry during regular work hours (rather than expecting additional volunteering during their time off) will give individuals a better perspective of the actual ministry and build relationships between program and support staff.

It's difficult to consider and address all of the things that big picture financial management should encompass in a few short paragraphs. Thinking about the board, the staff, and the financial results in relation to the overall mission of your organization, however, will give you a successful approach to fulfilling this vital role. ●

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Retirement Plan Concerns

Insights from the Faith-Based Retirement Plan Survey™

By Bruce Bruinsma

The results of the *2013 Faith-Based Retirement Plan Survey*™, sponsored by Envoy Financial and Christian Leadership Alliance, are in! The final report reveals common concerns, best practices, and issues impacting ministers, missionaries, and faith-based ministries in general.

Independent churches, parachurch organizations, mission-sending ministries, and denominations were the four categories queried in this *Faith-Based Retirement Plan Survey*™. Here are four of the key findings, and primary concerns related to retirement planning discovered through this survey:

1. A FAITH-BASED PERSPECTIVE IS CRITICAL

The lead finding is that a faith-based perspective is critical. Virtually all organizations that do not have a plan identified a faith-based perspective as the most important element to a retirement plan. Some ministries prioritize having a Future Funded Ministry™ plan. Others prioritized the importance of either a biblically based or biblical stewardship perspective. However they chose to identify it, it is clear that for Christian ministries, having a faith-based perspective was the top priority.

But for those ministries that do have a plan, the reality of how this goal of a faith-based perspective is being pursued is a very different matter. Forty percent of all organizations with a plan report that there is no faith-based perspective associated with their plan. They generally report a purely secular "how to" approach. The secular approach identifies only the general importance of "saving for the future" as a desired result. There are no Christian values or purposes proposed beyond the secular goal of having enough to live well in retirement.

As you might expect, the result is different among denominations, although not even universally applicable here. Apparently there is difficulty in translating our Christian worldview into the practical realities of retirement.

2. INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE — THE BIGGEST CONCERN

For respondents with a plan, investment performance topped the list of biggest concerns. That concern was rated highest by independent churches and parachurch organizations. There is an interesting disconnect between the concern over investment performance and the related issues that impact the growth of a plan's assets or the size of a participant's account.

The "investment performance" response suggests concern with the "rate of return" on the plan's investment menu of mutual funds. The performance of the investments themselves cannot be impacted by either a plan sponsor or the plan participant. However, the choice of those investments that make up the plan menu is controllable. The investments chosen are the decision of the employer and employee. The plan's advisory firm should help monitor this. The concern expressed suggests that many advisers do not provide such a monitoring service.

Only 60 percent of respondents indicate that they have recently reviewed their plan costs. Cost is the other side of the performance issue. Rate of return and plan costs are the two controllable elements that impact the financial future and retirement plans for faith-based organizations.

3. EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION — HOW TO GET ENGAGEMENT

Faith-based organizations want their employees to save and be good stewards. Poor employee participation in the retirement plan was a major concern for those surveyed. This issue ranks right behind investment performance as a concern. Even the organizations that report a high participation rate expressed concern over participation. Even plans with such key features as auto-enrollment and an employer-matching contribution pointed to "participation" as a major concern.

Again, there appears to be a significant disconnect between the desired outcome and the action steps necessary to make it happen. The key elements that drive participation are plan design, an employer match, investment education, and a compelling reason, purpose, or vision of future ministry. There is little agreement about the value of each element or the best way to accomplish the desired outcome. Those without a plan at all cite lack of funding and reduced giving as the major barriers to matching or even offering a plan.

Delivering retirement plan information, investment education, or biblically based stewardship education is another component to "engagement." The key question is "how should it be delivered?" The desirability of delivering retirement plan information and education online was highlighted by 34 percent of the respondents. But for organizations with 101 to 250 employees, one-to-one communication was ranked as the most desired delivery mechanism.

How multiple plan elements interact, are designed, and delivered impact employee engagement. That will require implementing best practices, including the use of technology. Without a fully engaged plan sponsor, however, there is little likelihood of a more engaged group of employees, regardless of the delivery system.

4. VENDOR SUPPORT — A CONSISTENT CONCERN

After the desire for a faith-based perspective, investment performance, and employee participation, vendor support is the fourth big concern. The availability and reality, or lack thereof, for vendor support was clear in the aggregate responses to the survey. First, 40 percent of those without a plan cite "lack of ability to administer a plan" as the second reason why they do not have a plan. While lack of money was the first reason, lack of administrative capacity was a surprisingly close second. Among respondents with a plan, 60 percent report to be only "generally" aware of legal, regulatory, and compliance issues. Combining a lack of capacity of those without a plan with a low level of understanding about compliance issues for those with a plan, it is clear why it is important to have outstanding vendor support.

Only 60 percent of respondents indicate that they have recently reviewed their plan costs.

Plan sponsors believe that they must understand retirement plan design, implementation, and administration in addition to investments. The complexity of those perceived needs can help to explain the concern by respondents for the need for more robust vendor support.

The actual amount of interaction between plan sponsors and vendors is another relevant finding. It appears that an annual review is the standard for interaction. Only 17 percent receive quarterly reviews, while 22 percent simply rely on their plan statement itself to cover all review issues and as the basis for plan evaluation. The need for more consistent interaction between the vendor and plan sponsors is indicated.

Providing fee disclosure about plan costs is a vendor requirement, with fee disclosure information mandated annually at the plan level and the participant level. Based on the survey results, these documents are seemingly set aside by many. Little effort is made to evaluate the plan and the results, leaving a void to be filled by the vendor.

The success of the retirement plan depends heavily on the delivery of vendor services and support. Again, we see a disconnect between the desired outcomes and the active roles taken either by those responsible for the plan or those responsible for supporting the plan. One survey respondent noted, "I wonder when I will connect with our plan representative next?"

THE FINAL REPORT

These four major concerns, plus others that surfaced in the survey, are detailed in the final *2013 Faith-Based Retirement Plan Survey*™ report. Separate sections of the report highlight distinctive responses by denominations, mission-sending, parachurch, and independent church communities. In addition, there is a special section of the report dedicated to organizations with 101 to 250 employees. This section shows how responses differ between smaller and larger organizations.

To purchase a full copy of the *2013 Faith-Based Retirement Plan Survey*™ report, and to sign up to participate in next year's survey, please visit (retirementplansurvey.com/results). Contact Envoy at (communications@envoyfinancial.com) with any questions.

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Turbo-Powered Finance

Your finance team can accelerate ministry!

"WOW! I am not used to that kind of acceleration and power ... ," I muttered to myself in my empty rental car on a recent business trip. My "sports car" rental provided a much different driving experience than my four-cylinder economy car back home. Normally, when I step on the gas in my economy car, the engine roars, but the car struggles to go. In this rental car, stepping on the gas brought instant acceleration.

How does the leadership of your ministry view you and your finance team? When your leaders have a ministry idea and they come to finance to help make it happen, what do they experience? Are you responsive like my rented sports car, or are you sluggish like my economy car? Too often, finance is viewed as the place that slows down ministry from happening. What if partnering with finance was viewed the same way as driving a sports car? I believe it can be, because I have seen it happen at Cru and in the New Testament.

Early in the book of Acts we see the growth of the new church. When you get to chapter 6, verse 1, it says *" ... the number of disciples was increasing ... "* and further on in verse 7 it says *"The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly ... ."* From verse 1 to verse 7, there is acceleration in the growth of the church. It went from increasing to increasing rapidly. What happened between verse 1 and verse 7 can give us insight into how our roles in finance (or operations in general) can help to accelerate our ministries.

How does the leadership of your ministry view you and your finance team?

With the growth of the church, there arose a need for organization. People were bringing money, food, and other goods to the disciples to help with the church. At the same time, other people who had needs were coming to the disciples to receive help. The disciples, realizing they couldn't do everything themselves, asked for seven men *"full of the Spirit and wisdom"* to *"wait on tables"* (verses 2-3). The reference to tables likely refers to a collection bank. In other words, they needed people to oversee the collection and distribution of money and goods for the church. With this simple act of organization, they saw acceleration in the growth of the church!

Two points resonate with me from this passage. First, the criteria they used for selecting the seven were those who were full of the Spirit and wisdom. They didn't look for the most organized or learned. They wanted those who the Lord was fully empowering. When I evaluate people for openings on my team, I place a premium on character. There is a baseline of expertise we need, but the priority is finding people full of Spirit and wisdom. It is imperative that I am living that same kind of life and modeling it for my team. When I work in my own strength, I am destined to run out of gas. However, when God is working in and through me, my work is fueled with high octane power. When my team sees God at work in and through me, it spurs them on to do likewise.

When I evaluate people for openings on my team, I place a premium on character.

The second point that stands out to me is how the role of finance is very similar to the work the seven were asked to do — oversee the collection and distribution of money and goods. We remind ourselves in Cru that our finance office doesn't exist for our own benefit. We exist for the benefit of the ministry. The seven in Acts were selected because the church needed them to lead and organize a function so the work of the church could continue to move forward (verse 4). In the same way, we provide services and organize systems so the ministry can fulfill its mission. It is important to remember that the ministry doesn't exist for finance, but finance exists for the ministry. We strive to have our ministry view finance as an accelerator propelling Cru toward the fulfillment of our mission.

As my business trip came to an end, I had to turn in my sports car rental and return to my economy car reality. Though I don't normally drive a sports car, I can experience that kind of power and acceleration in my finance role every day, and so can you. As we trust God to fill us with his Spirit and wisdom, he will use us in our financial roles to accelerate our ministries toward the mission.

MARK TJERNAGEL is the CFO of Cru (cru.org) and has served with the ministry for more than 23 years. He and his wife Colette reside in Orlando and have four children. Mark also serves on the board of directors for Christian Leadership Alliance.

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The Coming Generosity Boom

This generation can change everything for your ministry.

WHEN IT COMES TO GIVING GENEROUSLY, not a lot has changed in the past century. For example, according to John and Sylvia Ronsvalle in *The State of Church Giving through 2011* (23rd edition, 2013) in 1921, for every $100 earned, the typical Christian in the U.S. gave away $2.90. In 2011, for every $100 earned, the typical Christian gave away $2.32 — $1.98 to the church, $0.34 to causes outside the church, such as ministry to the unengaged and unreached.

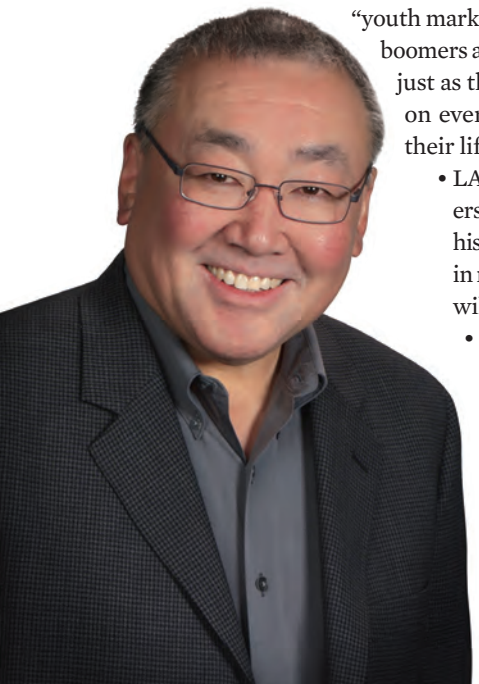
For the most part, our giving as a percentage of total income has been going in the wrong direction for much of the last century. Christians, who have been richly blessed by God with the greatest gift ever, have never once come close to the 10 percent "ideal tithe" in the past 100 years. But that could be about to change.

Because money matters for Christian organizations, new efforts to encourage generosity and stewardship commitment today may begin to turn the tide on our giving attitudes and behaviors. But, as always, it's a good thing God doesn't depend totally on us to accomplish his purposes.

Today, I believe that God is doing something utterly amazing that has the potential of increasing financial giving to kingdom causes — but only if we are able to effectively seize and leverage the moment.

What God is doing today actually began in 1946. In the summer of that year, *Fortune* magazine declared "the Great American Boom is on," referring to the post-war "baby boom" that wouldn't officially end until 1964.

In the '60s, they were called marketing's most valuable "youth market." Today the large and in-charge baby boomers are poised to transform charitable giving, just as they have exerted an outsized influence on everything else they have touched across their lifetimes.



- LARGE: There are nearly 80 million boomers today, the largest adult generation in U.S. history. And thanks to tremendous advances in medicine, by midcentury, people over 65 will outnumber those 15 and younger.
- IN-CHARGE: Boomers control most of the nation's personal financial assets — estimated at nearly 80 percent. They also control 50 percent of all discretionary income. No generation comes close to outspending — or outgiving — the boomers today.

We believe that boomers represent the next great cohort of donors to build our organizations around, especially as our mature donors — those born before 1945 — exit the giving scene at greater and greater velocity.

- As boomers enter their final life stage, they are giving more than any other generation. According to the Center for Philanthropy, boomers are giving almost exactly that generation's share of the nation's total household income and wealth, while monetary donations from Gen Y, the only American generation as large as the boomers, account for less than one-tenth of total giving. According to the Boomer Project, boomers who give to charity are 33 percent more generous than their parents.
- *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof calls this a "give-back revolution," and hopes that if enough boomers find a meaningful calling, "they may just be remembered more for what they did in their 60s than for what they did in the Sixties."

But we face an enormous challenge with Boomers today: their giving motivation and behavior have always been markedly different from their elders — that mature generation with which nonprofits experienced their highest fundraising success rates through "proven" direct mail strategies. Remember, boomers, who invented the "generation gap," actively and purposefully chose to have nothing in common with their parents.

It appears that boomers are not responding optimally to the same fundraising approaches that successfully activated and retained earlier generations. Throughout the fundraising industry today, all success metrics seem to be going the wrong direction ... especially as the boomers step up to become the greatest giving generation ever.

We believe that real changes are required in donor engagement strategies and approaches if we are to successfully reach boomers across the next two decades. We know we cannot keep doing things the way we've always done and expect success with them.

If you are involved in fundraising, "cracking the boomer code" will be one of the key things you must focus on today and for the foreseeable future. To stay up to date on the things Masterworks' Innovation Team is doing to activate and cultivate boomers today, subscribe to our blog by e-mail at (Masterworks.com).

It's going to be one great journey — with much to be gained by prioritizing the boomers, and much to be lost by overlooking them.

KN MOY is senior vice president of innovation strategy at Masterworks. (Masterworks.com) In Dec. 2014, he will keynote a conference for the advancement heads of universities in the Big Ten Conference, on the topic of Boomers.

 By Louis Barbarin

Stewards on Staff

Equipping employees in personal finance

WE LOVE TO USE THE WORD STEWARDSHIP; it connotes a biblical vision for how we manage the resources of our organizations in a God-honoring way. As leaders in the religious world, much of our work depends on the generosity of donors and the careful management of legacy funds and endowments. We have faith and hope in a God-held future, and we take seriously our responsibility to manage what we have today so God can multiply it for his use tomorrow.

The call to be good stewards also extends to those working for our organizations. Many of us do a good job providing spiritual support, but we often neglect these same principles when it comes to helping staff manage their financial resources.

Studies show that the level of debt among American workers is dangerously high and the level of savings is dangerously low. Our own experience at MMBB Financial Services demonstrates that this applies to many working for Christian organizations.

The need for personal financial stewardship using Christian principles is also important because many of us will face decades of retirement. As the TV commercial asks: How old is the oldest person you know — 90? 95? Even 100? We may not think we will live that long, but if you ask the people who reached those advanced ages, most of them never thought they would either.

Money is a very personal issue, so what role should a Christian organization play in assisting employees to deal with financial issues? Good leaders recognize that those who work for them are whole people and that the stress people bear in their personal lives affects their ability to function professionally. Our salaries are lower than those paid for comparable work in the for-profit world, so helping our employees plan successfully for their own financial future really amounts to being good stewards of our greatest resource, our people.

Here are three things we can do as leaders to support our people:

1. **Offer benefits that get staff started building a sound financial plan that leverages tax advantages.** If you offer a benefit, you are immediately saying to your staff, "This is important." There are distinct tax advantages to employer-provided benefits such as medical insurance, retirement savings, life insurance, and disability insurance. Most of these benefits receive favorable tax treatment, even if the premiums are paid by employees through salary deferral. Group plans also typically provide for lower premium rates than individual plans.

   The most important thing for which people need to plan is retirement. It is important for employers to offer 401(k) and 403(b) retirement savings plans. These plans allow for staff to contribute more than they can to individual IRAs. They also allow you, as the employer, to make tax-deferred contributions to staff retirement savings. Even if your budget restricts your ability to make contributions on behalf of your employees, making a plan available for employee contributions is a significant benefit.
2. **Educate your employees as an added bonus.** Regardless of what financial benefits you offer, you can provide access to resources that encourage personal financial stewardship. Start by exploring the educational resources that your current benefit providers can make available. Also consider looking at outside resources and possibly hosting lunch-time learning opportunities by bringing in a Certified Financial Planner™ professional from your community to lead a series of workshops. Many planners will charge a flat or hourly fee for these services that is very reasonable.
3. **Encourage your staff to contribute to a retirement investment account.** If you have a retirement plan, talk to your provider about the level of participation by your employees. If it is low, develop goals with your provider and ask them to lead seminars on saving and planning for retirement. If you do not yet offer a retirement plan to which your staff can contribute, set one up. Many providers will not charge a fee for establishing a plan for you. They will also partner with you to educate staff on the importance of starting a retirement plan early and the tax benefits they gain by making contributions.

Encouraging financial health among our staff not only promotes personal stewardship, it also makes us better stewards of our organizations.

LOUIS BARBARIN, CPA, is the executive director of MMBB Financial Services, a ministry that provides retirement and insurance benefits for churches and Christian ministries. MMBB (mmbb.org) helps employers and their employees navigate a successful journey to and through retirement.

Steward Leader

Transforming our roles

IF YOU ARE ANYTHING LIKE ME, when you think about entering Jesus' presence in heaven, I am sure you desire to hear what he said to the trustworthy stewards in the parable of the talents, *"Well done, good and faithful servant!"* (Matt. 25:21). Have you ever thought about what Jesus would say to you when he examines how you handled the leadership responsibilities he entrusted to you?

Jesus taught the parable of the talents in Matthew 25 to illustrate that his people are stewards, not owners. In the parable, the owner entrusts resources into the hands of his servants to be used for the owner, who would eventually reclaim his resources. As managers, it was not enough to hold on to the resources; they needed to increase the owner's estate. Each steward was responsible for investing the assets in ways beneficial to the owner.

The parable of the talents teaches the principle of stewardship and the inescapable fact that nothing belongs to a person that was not entrusted to him by the rightful owner. God is the originator of everything in existence. He grants access to his resources at his discretion, and he has never abdicated his ownership.

Early Christians understood that ownership rights were a primary competitor with Jesus for lordship in their lives. They modeled the way in service to Jesus because they understood: *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money"* (Matt. 6:24). It is through this understanding of lordship that Christian steward leaders can joyfully submit ownership issues to Jesus and experience a transformation in their leadership.

The biggest barrier to overcome on the journey to become a steward leader is the idea of ownership. A Christian's calling is to fall under the lordship and kingdom of Christ; however, we are easily seduced and drawn into setting ourselves up as owners. We fall into a trap of rights, entitlements, and privileges. Despite our hope and desire to give Jesus total lordship, we hold certain things back, creating a barrier between us and Christ. Further complicating our ability to submit as stewards is the problem that many leadership models available to Christians are steeped in the conviction that owners have rights to the organization that often conflict with what might benefit customers, employees, the community, and even what might be best for the health of the organization.

Being set free from an ownership mentality allows the leader to pursue organizational goals without regard to personal desires that may be contrary to what God wants for that organization. Joyfully submitting to God's complete ownership begins the transformation of our role as leaders. Our perspective changes from seeing ourselves as owners to seeing ourselves as caretakers. This release of ownership sets the leader free to rely fully on God's direction.

When we view our role as a steward, we can see the position we occupy is not ours; it is Christ's and we only do his bidding.

Our role as steward is distinctive because it defines our relationship with God; it is our identity in him. It also requires a complete dependence on God for every decision and action as his representative. Stewardship speaks to the core of who we are in relation to God and his creation. Seeing ourselves as stewards instead of owners requires a change of perspective that will affect the meaning of our lives. If we embrace the identity of steward, it will change every interaction we have, especially our relationship with God.

This is why we must have an ongoing, vital, and personal relationship with Christ. It is that relationship with him that allows us to surrender ownership, serve others, and shepherd our followers. Freedom from ownership helps us see our need for personal devotion and prayer. Scripture and prayer are the conduits to understanding how Jesus wants our leadership deployed for him.

When we view our role as a steward, we can see the position we occupy is not ours; it is Christ's and we only do his bidding. This will help Christian professionals balance the perceived rights of owners, employees, and the community by realizing that the entire organization and process of operating is entrusted to their care as a steward. Understanding leadership in terms of stewardship sets the leader free to invest in others, equipping those under their care to succeed and influence the world around them for Christ.

HOWARD RICH, PH.D., is president of the Steward Development Group (stewarddevelopmentgroup.com), a leadership coaching firm established to help business professionals discover the freedom of generosity and stewardship.

Boards and Fundraising

Why "skin in the game" is vital

FUNDRAISING AT REDEEMER SEMINARY in Dallas is a team effort. President Steve Vanderhill shares, "I see myself setting the school's vision, articulating its mission, gathering resources, and coordinating personnel." Redeemer trustees sign a ministry covenant agreeing to "introduce, invite, and encourage" others to support the seminary. They pray, share their wisdom, communicate the vision with friends, and give. Trustees who are not ordained ministers are asked to find $100,000 annually to advance the mission of the seminary. Last year's $2.4 million budget included over $1.8 million in gift income, much of it due to the prayers, generosity, networking, and hard work of the trustees.

When Warren Buffet purchases a company, he requires his new managers to purchase stock. He believes that executives with "skin in the game" make better decisions. Buffet is unknowingly expressing a biblical truth, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Luke 12:34). Board members who don't give show that their heart isn't really aligned with that ministry's mission or vision. Every board member may not be able to give or get $100,000, but every board member should give a generous, sacrificial, annual gift.

How can you engage your board in fundraising? Paul wasn't writing with nonprofits in mind, but he offers four applications for board members:

"Our counsel is that you warn the freeloaders to get a move on. Gently encourage the stragglers, and reach out for the exhausted, pulling them to their feet. Be patient with each person ... " (1 Thess. 5:14 MSG).

1. Warn the freeloaders to get a move on. Some boards are populated by "obit" members who only serve to build their obituary resumes. A board member's job isn't just to set policy to manage the money you already have, it's to help you find more money. One board member commented, "Every one of our board members should constantly be in conversations with people to find out where God is hiding money!" Board chairs should prompt "obit" members to get a move on, or graciously ask them to move on.

2. Gently encourage the stragglers. The most successful fundraising is peer-to-peer. Some board members agree to raise money, but don't follow through with their assignments. They keep promising to contact a potential donor, but they never call. They talk a good game, but it's just talk. Solomon describes these board members, and even a few donors this way: *"Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of gifts never given."* (Prov. 25:14). It's not what you expect, but what you inspect that actually gets done. Encourage board members to take an active role in fundraising. If nothing changes, refer to step one.

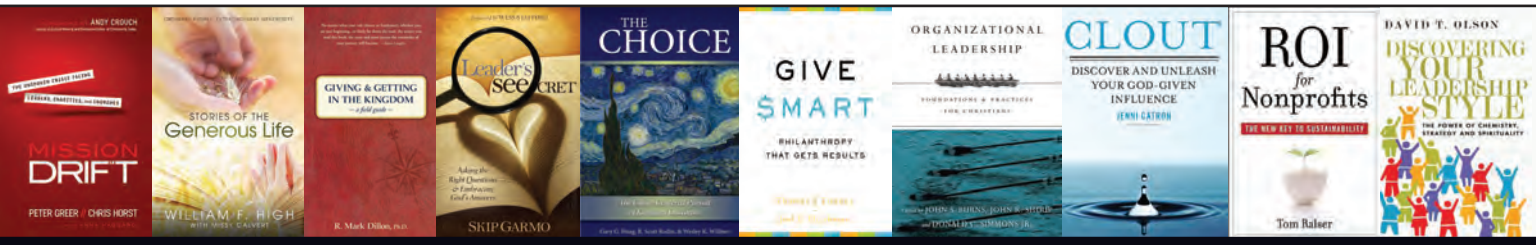
3. Reach out for the exhausted. Don was a rare board member who jumped into a capital campaign with abandon. As he made donor calls, he discovered that many of his contacts weren't as excited about the ministry as he was. At one board meeting he shared, "This is hard work. I'd rather be out digging dirt with a shovel than asking people for money." Don was doing a great job and needed encouragement. Donors weren't giving because the ministry had done a poor job of telling its story, not because Don was doing something wrong. Don kept asking and by the end of the campaign he had raised three times more than anyone else. Reach out to exhausted board members and pull them to their feet.

The stress level at board meetings usually tracks with the monthly financial reports.

4. Be patient with each person. The stress level at board meetings usually tracks with the monthly financial reports. As gift income rises so does everyone's mood, but when donations go down, attitudes often follow. The executive director looks at the board and wonders why they aren't helping. The board looks at the executive director and wonders why he or she doesn't visit major donors. Paul ends with, *"And be careful that when you get on each other's nerves you don't snap at each other. Look for the best in each other, and always do your best to bring it out."* (1 Thess. 5:15 MSG).

How can you bring out the best in your board? Have the "skin-in-the-game" conversation with your board chair. As a group, set giving and getting expectations and hold one another accountable. Start with a small assignment. Ask a board member to invite a friend to meet you for lunch. Good things happen when ministry leaders and board members work together.

RON HAAS is a vice president at The Timothy Group (timothygroup.com) in Grand Rapids, Mich. He is the author of *Ask for a Fish: Bold, Faith-Based Fundraising* (2013).



Books to Consider …

Great insights on Christian leadership, money matters, and more!

MISSION DRIFT: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches
By Peter Greer and Chris Horst
(Bethany House Publishers, 2014)
Too often, as Christian organizations grow, the gospel often becomes cursory, expendable, or even forgotten. Often, leaders have watched their ministries, businesses, and nonprofits professionalize, expand, and lose sight of their original goals. Even churches can stray from their calling. Mission Drift provides the tools leaders need to keep their organizations "mission true" or get back on track.

STORIES OF THE GENEROUS LIFE
By William F. High
(Generous Life, 2013)
What does it mean to live a truly generous life? After all, generosity is much more than writing checks … it is about ordinary people seeking to live well with what God has entrusted to them. Learn the secrets of the giver's journey through 21 short stories of generous family, generous love, generous checkbook, generous land, generous career, and generous life. Discover what a generous life means for you!

GIVING & GETTING IN THE KINGDOM: A Field Guide
By R. Mark Dillon, Ph.D.
(Moody Publishers, 2012)
Fundraising for an organization or ministry is not merely an important task, it's a noble one. Successful leaders must possess the theological vision to recognize the necessity of asking, the joy of giving, and the beautifully collaborative nature of advancing the kingdom. In this book, Dillon challenges leaders to ensure that their organizations and ministries are worthy of the gifts they receive.

THE LEADER'S SEECRET: Asking the Right Questions & Embracing God's Answers
By Skip Garmo, Ph.D.
(Morgan James, Fall 2014)
Of this book, CLA president/CEO Tami Heim said: "Skip Garmo combines the power of story, reflection, and discussion to embed spiritual truths on the heart of men and women called to lead. He clearly defines the three crucial needs of a Christian leader and then elegantly constructs the framework for how to develop Christ like character. If you long to increase your kingdom impact read The Leader's SEEcret. This book will inspire you to stand firmly, walk wisely, and finish well."

THE CHOICE: The Christ-Centered Pursuit of Kingdom Outcomes
By Gary G. Hoag, Ph.D., R. Scott Rodin, Ph.D., and Wesley K. Willmer, Ph.D.
(ECFAPress, 2014)
The Choice was the featured selection at CLA's 2014 national conference in Dallas. ECFA's Dan Busby says: "The Choice addresses a critical yet unexamined presupposition related to ministry today — defining success. Hoag, Rodin and Willmer identify the current situation, suggest how we got here, and outline practical, formational insights for life and leadership. The principles embedded in this book provide a Christ-centered path for pursuing kingdom outcomes."

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP: Foundations & Practices for Christians
By Jack Burns, John R. Shoup and Donald C. Simmons Jr.
(IV Press Academic, 2014)
This book is ideal for those who study leadership, organizations, theology, and/or Christianity. The contributors aim to provide a practical theology of leadership from a Christian worldview for emerging and established Christian leaders who seek to lead in a manner consistent with their faith, in both religious and nonreligious contexts.

GIVE SMART: Philanthropy that Gets Results
By Thomas J. Tierney and Joel L. Fleishman
(PublicAffairs, 2011)
In Give Smart, Thomas J. Tierney, co-founder of The Bridgespan Group and Duke professor Joel L. Fleishman encourage donors and grant makers to ask six questions: (1) What are my values and beliefs? (2) What is "success" and how can it be achieved (3) What am I accountable for? (4) What will it take to get the job done? (5) How do I work with grantees? and (6) Am I getting better? It's a powerful read for donors and nonprofit leaders who want to effect real change.

CLOUT: Discover and Unleash Your God-Given Influence
By Jenni Catron (Thomas Nelson, 2014)
It is easy to believe that power, influence, and leadership are gifts given to a special few. But the Bible says otherwise. We all long for significance. We listen for God, but hear only voices of doubt and practicality. Listen again. There is a call that only you can answer. Clout is power and influence. With Scripture and stories from her own life, Catron maps out the pitfalls and clear paths on the way toward discovering and unleashing your very own clout.

ROI FOR NONPROFITS: The New Key to Sustainability
By Tom Ralser
(John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2007)
Written by Tom Ralser, a CFA uniquely qualified to apply ROI methodologies to the nonprofit sector — this book details the methods and processes to help nonprofits raise money in an environment that increasingly demands accountability, transparency, and results.

DISCOVERING YOUR LEADERSHIP STYLE: The Power of Chemistry, Strategy and Spirituality
By David T. Olson (IV Press, 2014)
God can use your unique gifts, passions, and personality to help you become a better leader. While personality inventories can help you understand your temperament, the model designed by leading church planter David Olson is designed to form fruitful Christian leadership. Olson's model reveals how three factors — spirituality, chemistry, and strategy — work together.

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Presenter: **Jan Dwyer Bang,** President, Boundless Results

August 28 — People Management and Care
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And more are yet to come...

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The new name of the Christian Leadership Alliance annual conference is The Outcomes Conference

 By Lilya Wagner

More Blessed

Why giving truly is better than getting

ONE OF THE MOST FAMILIAR TEXTS IN THE BIBLE — that we remember from our childhood efforts to memorize key texts, and that has also taken on the air of an aphorism — is from Acts 20:35 in which Jesus is quoted as saying, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* That statement engenders a variety of reactions, ranging from "You can't be serious," to "That doesn't make sense," to "The Bible must be true so I believe it," to "Of course it's true — I've experienced it!"

I learned that text early in life as a pastor's daughter and experienced living examples of its meaning. Our family had come to the free world as refugees with almost no worldly goods. Growing up in South America, I observed as my parents, outfitted by their sponsoring church, shared what little they had with people in the Andes who had even less. In my teen years, as life began to improve, I continued to observe the generosity of my parents as they selflessly served immigrants in a notoriously poor and crime-ridden part of Brooklyn in New York City.

With that background, it was no surprise to me when in the '90s I came across a book by Doug Lawson entitled *Give to Live* (Alti Publishing, 1998). In it, he extolled the virtues of generosity, using Bible texts which were familiar to me, to expand on the concept of "it's more blessed to give than to receive." Lawson's book, however, did not receive a warm reception in all quarters, particularly for those who required research proof before they believed such a simple concept that generosity benefitted the giver as much as the receiver, or maybe even more.

However, we can now point to research that supports the principle. In the ensuing years since Lawson's book was published, research by credible organizations has proven time and again the validity of the concept that those who are generous live longer, are healthier, and are happier.

1. **Altruism is a basic human motivation.** *The Washington Post* reported in 2007 that if it feels good to be good, it might only be natural. Neuroscientists at the National Institutes of Health scanned brains of volunteers who were asked to think about scenarios involving donating money versus keeping it for themselves. They found that altruism is not a superior moral faculty that suppresses basic selfish urges but rather that it is fundamental to the brain, hardwired and pleasurable.
2. **Generosity rather than acquisition promotes happiness.** In a 2009 Newsweek article, a survey reported that of 30,000 American households, those who gave were 43 percent more likely to say they were "very happy" about their lives. The conclusion was that when people begin to give, they free themselves from the acquisitive treadmill and find new meaning. Along these same lines, *The World Giving Index*, produced by the Charities Aid Foundation in the United Kingdom, reported on the strong link between the giving of money and happiness. Happy people, studies indicate, are more likely than wealthy people to give to charity.
3. **Generosity results in better health.** Human beings appear to be genetically disposed to be happiest when they are selflessly giving to others, according to research conducted at the University of North Carolina and reported in 2013 in *The Week*. One conclusion reached was that humans tend to be unhealthy when they are devoted to self-gratification, while people who emphasize service to others and connection to community show a pattern of gene expression that results in less inflammation and stronger immunity.
4. **Giving time has benefits similar to giving money.** In 2012 the *Harvard Business Review* told of a research study that people who give time feel happier and more effective, once again underscoring the physical and mental benefits of generosity.

We who raise funds for our organizations to aid humanity can do so with pride and not apology. We are not only carrying out the biblical command to do good to others, we are also taking part in extending that good beyond the recipient to the giver as well. We have the Bible as our guidebook, along with a research base that proves, once again, the truth of the biblical statements. What a winning combination that can guide our most significant work of fundraising!

Happy people, studies indicate, are more likely than wealthy people to give to charity.

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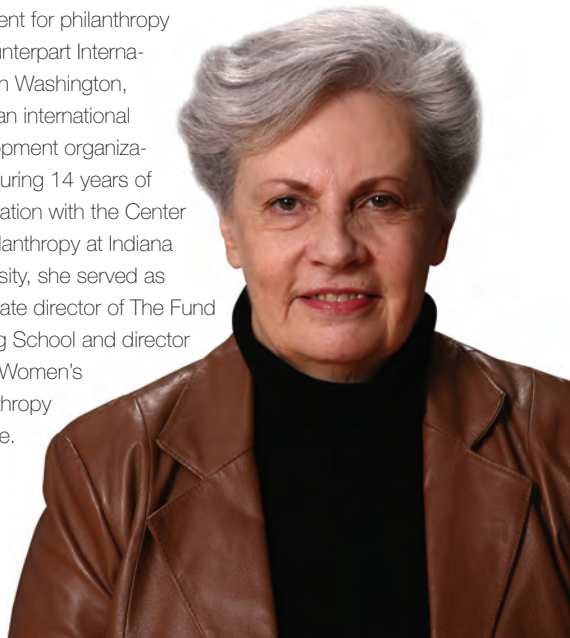

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