

AFP Central PA Chapter
Vignette Program Presentation
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“The dilemmas we face as nurturers of philanthropy”

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Principle: As development professionals we create strong, trusting bonds with the individuals we interact with requiring us to always keep their best interest as the top priority.

Vignette: As our careers as professional development officers progress so do the number of relationships we create, often for several agencies and causes over time. We develop trust and cause our potential donors and donors to be comfortable in sharing many dreams and concerns and a great deal of privately held information.

Over time we also learn about our donors relationships with other causes and it is imperative that we support the direction of their passion, even if it does not point toward our specific need for support. Situations have developed in which by leading a donor to fulfill their interests with other organizations they have developed increased trust and confidence in the agency we are representing. In some cases our agency is the benefactor of this good will in the future.

Once a relationship is created with a potential donor (Who hopefully becomes a donor) advocating for their interests and passions within philanthropy is our primary responsibility. Of course we can not do anything that is derogatory to our own organization in the process. If this is a risk remove yourself from the relationship with grace.

As our donors are aging another challenge often develops. As “Friends” and confidants of our constituents we develop a great deal of influence and therefore responsibility to do what is best for them. I remember a time when a woman I knew well, we talked about family and priorities in her life and dreams and caring for our organization over several years.

One evening after dinner she decided she wanted to make a major gift to the organization. I was thrilled in my heart but cautious because I was not convinced that she was fully cognizant of the impact of her decision. Her thought processes were not as clear as they had been in prior years. So even though she wanted to sign a commitment and write a check at that moment I suggested we wait until we could arrange a meeting with her daughter to discuss the full benefit to the organization and the children who would gain from her generosity.

I felt very comfortable in putting off the final gift, perhaps risking the outcome, because in our relationship could have been the tipping factor to have her make a decision she would not have made in any other situation.

The outcome developed several years later when that exact gift was realized with by clear headed donor and a clear conscience for the development professional.

The Donor Bill of Rights

Philanthropy is based on voluntary action for the common good. It is a tradition of giving and sharing that is primary to the quality of life. To ensure that philanthropy merits the respect and trust of the general public, and that donors and prospective donors can have full confidence in the nonprofit organizations and causes they are asked to support, we declare that all donors have these rights:

- I. To be informed of the organization's mission, of the way the organization intends to use donated resources, and of its capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes.
- II. To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization's governing board, and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities.
- III. To have access to the organization's most recent financial statements.
- IV. To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given.
- V. To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition.
- VI. To be assured that information about their donation is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by law.

VII. To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature.

VIII. To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organization or hired solicitors.

IX. To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share.

X. To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.