

RA's Top Ten Recommendations Steps to Take During This Economic Downturn

1. Don't overreact. Educate yourself about historical correlations between recessions and philanthropy and the specifics of our current economic slowdown. Remain realistic, positive and measured in your responses as people are looking for leadership from all institutions in the country including non-profits.
2. Work intently with your Board of Trustees and leadership volunteers to make sure that those closest to you serve as informed advocates and current philanthropic supporters;
3. Treat your current donors as your single most precious resource and make sure they are aware of how their philanthropy advances your mission. Deepen the relationship through consistent communication and cultivation. Conduct periodic small group information and update sessions or conference calls with your more significant contributors.
4. Review your annual development plan for this year and next. Start with the premise that it is a better time to increase personal contact with your most committed donors rather than seek new sources of support and tailor all your programs including special events and mail appeals accordingly.
5. Carefully review your operating budget. Identify any areas that can be trimmed without impacting your service or mission, and then share your fiscal responsibility with constituents.
6. Demonstrate openness and financial transparency. Be accountable for all directed or restricted gifts.
7. Seek philanthropic support for what you need, not what you want. Be certain that you frame all requests for annual or capital support as needs that are vital to fulfill your mission and vision.
8. Expect that you may need to modify the pace of your activities and be flexible with your goals as donors evaluate the timing of their philanthropy.
9. Americans consistently rally to people in need and worthy causes, especially in challenging times. Be confident that your constituents are willing to listen and remain engaged and are inclined to be generous.
10. Don't prejudge the ability or willingness of key prospects or current donors to support your organization. This economic situation is affecting everyone in different ways: year-end giving, including gifts from IRA's for those who qualify, remain advantageous. Remember, the only way to raise money is to ask.

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