

DRIVING PARTICIPATION

WITH BETH BRODOVSKY

SESSION 150

THE POST-DONATION EXPERIENCE

WITH GAIL PERRY

BETH: Hello, this is Beth Brodovsky, and welcome to Driving Participation. Today I am so excited to finally have on the fabulous Gail Perry from Fired Up Fundraising. I can tell you, in all the years I've been in this business, the one name that shows up over and over again, and people say, "You know Gail Perry. Don't you know Gail Perry?" and I'm like, "No, I don't know Gail." I am thrilled to finally have gotten my introduction to the fabulous Ms. Gail Perry, and thank you so much for joining me today, Gail.

GAIL: Oh my gosh, Beth! Thank you. What an introduction.

BETH: I'm so thrilled that over the course of planning this and coordinating that we've had the chance to get to know each other and talk about all of the really terrific and interesting things you do, and now I get the chance to bring your insight and wisdom to our community so that they can see one more level of how you can communicate with your donors in a way that really drives participation, attracts them and keeps them attached to you. We're gonna be talking today about that experience people have after that initial donation, but what I want to kick off with is how does participation show up in your world? When you're working with your clients about building relationships with donors, what does the word "participation" mean to them? What are they looking for in ways that help them thrive?

GAIL: Well, you know, what we talk a lot about when we're talking about the post-gift experience for donors, we're using almost a new word, engagement, and we're looking for ways to invite the donor in to build that emotional connection with the donor. So participation is one aspect of engagement, but I tell my coaches and my clients that there are two kinds of invitations, so to speak, or two





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kinds of things you do with donors after they give. One is experiences and the other one is communication. So, just to define those experiences, our chances for the donor to literally get involved and meet people and their invitation is in. There are active invitations to the donor to come in and then the communication is more passive. It's the stuff that we're sending to the donor so we initiate that and the donor is more passive. So I do think that when you're trying to increase participation and of course that is the number one goal that we all have because we know the more the donors participate with us, the more they will give.

BETH: I love that you've already kind of identified those different types of things you want to do because the way we talk about participation is it's that idea of taking engagement and moving it into action.

GAIL: Yeah, good point. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I like making the distinction because you can create strategies around the donor experience in terms of invitations to come in and then you can create strategies around the more passive communications flow to the donor, and you can really analyze what we're doing and how we might change and Tweet those two different streams of communications because they really have different goals.

BETH: Right, exactly. I'm sure they kind of feed off of each other. So let's start with talking about that. What are the different goals that those two different channels and directions have?

GAIL: Let's talk first about communications, which is more passive. Say the donor makes a gift and I did start out in fundraising at Duke University and they had a motto at Duke that I love. It goes like this "The first gift is never the largest."

BETH: That's good!

GAIL: Then I would say the first gift is hopefully never the largest so you sort of had the idea that the donor in making that first gift is the beginning of a journey, and then the second motto that landed with me is, "The first gift needs to be an





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occasion of joy and celebration on the part of the donor and the institution.”

BETH: Oh, that’s good.

GAIL: If you really think about that, I mean you think about those awful thank you letters that we write and we receive and they’re so dead and they’re so full of cardboard.

BETH: Right, they’re basic receipts.

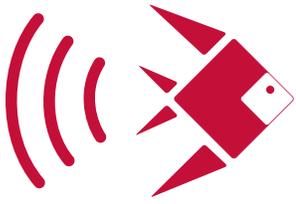
GAIL: Yeah, and they’re just so nonprofit jargonese with no life, and the number one step to establishing a fabulous post-gift communication with your donor is a warm and fuzzy thank you that expresses joy and celebration on the part of the donor’s gift. I will tell you right now, I think that is a great place to aspire to be because we’re not there. Don’t you think?

BETH: Oh my gosh! I absolutely agree. I had, like my college experience was so transformative in my personal life, and you know, the communications that I get from them, it’s so shocking to me working in this profession. I cannot reward that communication with a gift. It amazes me that I’ll give something and get a back a generic thank you letter. When they ask again next year, there’s absolutely no acknowledgment of anything. It’s like I could be anybody giving them anything.

GAIL: I just think that fundraising is done so poorly, and we teach the best practices over and over, and yet the best practices are not implemented or people are lazy or they’re spread too thin. I do think the fundraisers are generally beleaguered and stretched way beyond their means, but we all know that giving your donor a fabulous post-gift experience is gonna get your donor retention up.

BETH: So what else happens? From a communication standpoint, you give, you get a thank you note. Many people, even if they don’t do what they want to be doing or what they should be doing, they do know that you’re supposed to send a thank you note. It’s sort of like then what? What’s the next thing?





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GAIL: Look, going back to Duke again, and listen, I'm a Tar Heel. I'm a Carolina graduate. So it's hard for me to say nice things about Duke.

BETH: Wait a minute, wait a minute! You're a Tar Heel and you went to work for Duke? You just said that publicly! I have two Tar Heels that work for me right here, and when they hear this, they're gonna be horrified!

GAIL: Carolina was pretty good to me. After two years at Duke, and I was one of the top fundraisers at Carolina after

BETH: So you redeemed yourself.

GAIL: I redeemed myself. I went to my alma mater, worked for the business school, got an MBA and it was a rich and fun experience for me.

BETH: What are some of the things that you've learned through these experiences? That after you send the thank you note, what I find a lot of times is dead air, dead air. It's almost no different than an event cycle where you're talking about creating experiences or talk a lot about how there's this ramp and it's like, "Do the thing we ask, do something, do something, do something, do something. Here's the thing, thank you very much." Crash. Then dead silence until you're on the next ramp up where you want them to do something again.

GAIL: Well, the other axiom I want to quote is, "Find seven ways to thank your donors and they'll give again." I learned that 25 years ago. Seven ways to thank your donors, seven. You send a warm and fuzzy thank you note, then you phone call the donor. Sometimes, somehow, somebody from your staff, even volunteers, can phone call donors to say thank you, and maybe a board member sends a handwritten thank you note. Then maybe you're having, a lot of organizations have a donor appreciation night. I can't think of anything more boring.

BETH: Yeah, right.





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GAIL: But if we're having a cookout or a porch party for the donors, oh yeah, come. Yeah, let's have a party! That falls into the invitation.

BETH: Yeah it sort of falls into that experience, but the reality I think is that's a huge point. That you can't necessarily separate the experiences from the communications around those experiences. We'll talk a lot when we talk about branding and marketing for organizations and then they'll say, "We don't want, like programming is fine. You don't need to deal with the programming," and I have to explain to them that when you shift your audience that you're targeting and you shift the messaging for them, you also have to shift what you're delivering to them to make them happy. It's this co-dependent or synergistic cycle. How does that work? So you then have the kind of events and experiences people want, which then means you've got to communicate differently about them.

GAIL: Yeah, you have to show up online or in paper and say, "This is gonna be fun." My number one fundraising motto is, "When in doubt, throw a party."

BETH: That's an excellent, excellent, that's an excellent life motto.

GAIL: Well, yeah, because if you're making it fun, I'll be having another fundraising event. No, no, no. If you're making it fun, people want to help with you, and people will come to your parties and events. They'll come to your major donor cultivation gatherings. They'll join your board. They'll attend your fundraising events. They'll become sponsors because it's fun. I mean, my partner and I are doing a host committee today for the Contemporary Art Museum in Raleigh because it's a fun, cool bunch of people and we're friends with them.

BETH: And you want to be there.

GAIL: We self-identify. Yeah. We don't have to be the host, but it's my way of really supporting them. I want to tell a story. A few years ago, back when you really did pick up the telephone when somebody called asking for gifts, I decided





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that I wanted to make a gift to an environmental group out of the blue because I've never been an environmental person particularly, and so the first person who called me or sent me a letter was gonna get a gift. Lo and behold, the Sierra Club called me, and I said sure, \$50, boom, and do you know that three weeks later I got an invitation from the Sierra Club for a potluck dinner here in North Carolina in the Triangle.

BETH: Really?

GAIL: Yes! I thought, "Wow, they are well-run." I thought they were well run because they really pulled that off so quickly and then three weeks after that, I got an invitation to volunteer, which I also strongly recommend as a post-gift experience to volunteer. You know, they do the clean sweep of streams once or twice a year all over and to become a volunteer to help pick up trash, which is part of the Sierra Club's goal. I wouldn't do either one of those events, but the invitation landed. I think lots of times nonprofits send an invitation to a donor and think, "Oh, I never heard from them," but you get credit for the invitation.

BETH: Right, and here you are years later telling the story, and it sank into your memory and so they gave a gift and then you thanked them and then they thanked you and then they give you something different to invite you into, as opposed to them asking you to do something for them, and then they presented you with an opportunity to get further engaged. So they're taking you down this path of drawing you in and presenting you with a few different things that you might like to do and I like the fact that they're doing it one touch at a time. The mistake that I see people make a lot of times is the minute they get fresh blood, it's like they vomit out everything they want them to know with a fire hose and people get overwhelmed and scared away and they don't think about this process of like kind of letting them, OK, you just put your toe into the water. Let's get used to that temperature, and then let's put our ankles into the water.

GAIL: You know, it's funny. I made a pledge after the election to make gifts to 20 organizations and I became a donor to 20 organizations. A couple of them I was





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renewing an earlier relationship, but most of them were brand new and I could not even remember, I made a list, but typically I couldn't remember who I had given to. All of a sudden I start getting these invitations and these thank yous and I'm going, "Uh, am I a donor to them now?" and the point I'm making is that many times donors can't remember whether they have given to or not either.

BETH: That's right.

GAIL: Nonprofits are afraid generally to email too often. That's absolutely ridiculous. I saw a study that said you're more likely to get blocked or unsubscribed from somebody's mail box if you only send something once a month than if you send something every other week or every week.

BETH: That is so huge. It's so funny. Just this week I actually recorded, I'm not sure what order things are gonna go out in, but I just recorded with Spencer Brooks of Brooks Digital about that exact thing, about how do you avoid the spam folder. The funny thing is that's one thing, we had so much to talk about we didn't even get time to talk about the fact of quality of sending and how you're sending, and we hear this all the time. I am on the mantra of how many is too many. Like wait for people to scream and don't over-react. I can't even tell you, like even me, when we get an email from somebody saying, "Oh you send too many emails," and like it's TOO in all capital letters, it's like you have that instant reaction of what are we gonna do to change our emails, and then I look at it, and I'm thinking, "Well, wait a minute. I just sent 8,000 emails out and I got three people sending me notes saying that I send too many emails," and so people absolutely are on the side of under-sending versus over-sending, I think.

GAIL: And did a board member complain? Poof. There goes your email.

BETH: It goes away. Right, exactly because people make marketing decisions based on personal decisions way too much of the time.

GAIL: It's called making decisions based on personal preference or opinion. Board





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members are the most guilty people of that in the world.

BETH: Right, and it's funny. Even if here we find, my vice president, I have a wonderful vice president who literally has the complete opposite personality from me. So we agree on absolutely nothing, which I find hilarious. She's been with me for 15 years, because there's so much value in that. I think we have a tendency to kind of gather people around us who agree with us and think that everything, we want people that are gonna tell us we're doing a great job, and that it's awesome, and so you don't have somebody saying, "I want to try it this way," or "I want to try it this way." You need to challenge yourself and try different things, but it's also like you're saying to not assume either one of you are right and that really what's right is what shows up in testing. Like you send an email out and have 3 percent open rate on one and a 50 percent open rate on the other, well, guess which one is the winner, whether you liked it or not.

GAIL: Right, right, and you know board members judge fundraising programs based on whether they personally liked it or not.

BETH: So, how do you get people past that? Like how do you when you're working with a client and they're having this kind of pushback on their communications, what are some things that you've been able to do to help them navigate that?

GAIL: Well, I work a lot with boards, and I have a fundraising workshop that teaches board members about fundraising, and one of the things I say is fundraising is now professionalized, and we know what works and there's data and I was doing this as a webinar for my major gift coaching board members and they were really interested and shocked to know that fundraising is professionalized.

BETH: That happens a lot, you know, and it's funny. My mother volunteers for tons and tons of things and I'll hear her say things like, "I'm off to do my beg-a-thon





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this week,” and I just cringe and she is a committed, involved person that believes in the organizations that she’s working with, and yet, somehow in her mindset is still she’s going around to the local businesses to beg them for money. We’ve got to change this.

GAIL: That’s ridiculous. The owner of the business may have had a kid who was impacted, and it’s joyful. It’s joyful for people to give and if you’re trying to wring \$250 sponsorships out of your local businesses and they’re hit up by everybody in town, you’re not gonna raise money like that. No, no. You can raise money with fewer donors.

BETH: And I’m sure everyone would love to be able to do that. Let’s make sure that we’re getting back to the other side of the equation because we’ve talked a little bit about the experience side and I’d love to know like after somebody gives, what’s different about that type of experience that you’re trying to create for people?

GAIL: Well, I think that we ought to talk about donors in fundraising and it would be good to get email newsletters from organizations that acknowledge that I was a donor, that it’s just not a generic email, and I do think email newsletters are pretty bad.

BETH: Absolutely horrible.

GAIL: They’re all about the organization, and you know I’m a former board member of this one organization and they profile all their freaking interns in the newsletter, and I said, “Why are you wasting this space? I know this college girl is very nice, but she doesn’t deserve to be featured in the newsletter.” Interns are writing the newsletter and they don’t know anything about proper communications, but you should be featuring donor stories and wonderful heartwarming stories about the dog that was saved or the kid who was healed or the family that was helped or the student who got a scholarship. This is what you





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talk about in newsletters.

BETH: It is a huge problem now that you mention it. A lot of times the people who are doing the newsletter are the interns, and we talk about that a lot. Like can you get an intern? Can you do things with some of these online services? What I often would tell people is if you're an expert in that tactic, you can do that because you can then give that newbie that guidance to make sure you get what you want and you can evaluate what they get, but what I see a lot of times is it's not the case. Basically it's more abdication, like I don't have time to do this. Give it to the intern. Then you have somebody who is working who has the best intentions, but has no guidance and has no experience working in your world. They may have gotten a journalism degree in a local university. They come in and they know what their teacher tells them about journalistic integrity and writing, but they don't know anything about how to craft a story to make a donor the star of everything.

GAIL: Yeah, I strongly recommend Tom Ahern's book, "Making Money With Donor Newsletters." I strongly recommend.

BETH: Great, great resource. I love to hear you talking about newsletters because everyone, I'm sure most people that have to do them are like, "Ugh, it's time for me to do the newsletter." Can you talk a little more about like why it's important to take the time to do it and do it well?

GAIL: Yeah, well I'll tell you my story. I have been blogging and sending out an email newsletter to fundraisers who sign up for my list. Actually, they're all around the world at this point. I've been doing it since the fall of 2009.

BETH: Wow! It's a commitment.

GAIL: Yeah, and you know, I just drew a line in the sand that I was gonna do this every Friday. It started out Wednesday and then it got pushed to Thursday and now it's Friday because that's the last day of the week, but sometimes my





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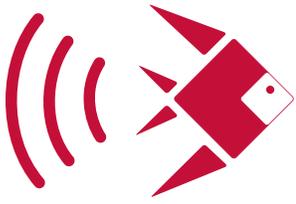
newsletters are really routine, but I usually remember that it's an opportunity to engage with my people, it's an opportunity to be cheerful and optimistic and send them something happy to think about, it's an opportunity to build my brand and build my relationship with my people. So I think if you understand how important that communication is, you'll take it more seriously. For an intern writing a donor newsletter is an opportunity to build up your donor retention. It's an opportunity to connect with your donor, to make your donor happy and to bring joy to your donor to know that she's helping make a difference in this group that she cares about, and so I love donor newsletters that say, "Because of you, blah, blah, blah. Because of you blah, blah." I think a story, a person hears this person you helped. So it would be useful. This is actually the idea I want to share with you. If an organization decided on what the objectives were for its newsletter, like "What are we trying to accomplish with the newsletter," and if they could just decide that, then maybe somebody could write copy worth reading or format it worth reading. I mean, when I go in to do a board retreat, the first thing I want to know is, "What are your objectives? What do you want to accomplish?" Even if we're having a meeting, what are our objectives for this hour, and I love that question. Otherwise you can wander around.

BETH: It's so true.

GAIL: If you really know why you're here, and if I'm writing a letter, well, dadgummit I know what my objectives are and let's see if we can nail them.

BETH: This is such a key point to make sure we get out there. It doesn't matter whether it's your fundraising ask or your newsletter or what. I think especially in the communications world we get stuck in this habit of doing things because everyone else is doing them or you feel it has to be done or that you don't want to feel out of date or left behind. Well, oh my gosh, we've got to be on Facebook. We've got to have an Instagram because that's now a thing. You start doing things for the sake of doing things and it's so easy to get pulled off course with actually thinking what is the outcome that you're looking for. What I feel I'm





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seeing lately is also people tell me outcomes that aren't actually outcomes. I call them more like interim measures. You know our goal of this is to get 20 percent more likes on Facebook, and I want to say, "And then? What is that gonna do for you?" Do you make money, and the reality is that there is an outcome to that. If you grow your likes on Facebook, and you have a Facebook strategy, and you can say, "If we get more likes on Facebook, then I can then present this event. Then when we get this event, that we're gonna promote on Facebook, then." Then, then, then. If you know where you're going you can create a micro-conversion trail to get them there, but if the sum total of what you thought about is this interim measure, you're gonna end up bleeding money, and not even just that. You're gonna end up bleeding the patience and the appreciation of your donors. I'm assuming, Gail, if you got a bunch of these really weak and horrible emails, after time you're just gonna say, "I need to unsubscribe from this."

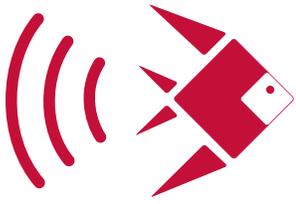
GAIL: Yeah, I just put them all in another box or put them in unenroll me.

BETH: Exactly and I think what you're saying happens a lot is you put it in a side box. So the person who is sending it doesn't even know you're not seeing it anymore. It's like a lot of people don't take the time to unsubscribe so you end up with these big, giant lists of people that aren't paying attention and then you blame the tactic. People blame email because it doesn't work.

GAIL: Yeah, well you know with own list, it's up to I think maybe around 20,000 right now, but it was up to 30,000 and we cleaned it up. I could have said, "I have a list of 30,000," but instead we cleaned it up. We cleaned the people out who never open.

BETH: Exactly, and that's some of what you and I have been talking about. It's like you have to take your ego out of things, like, "Hey, I've got this huge list," but if it's a huge list of people that take zero action, it's not gonna get you anywhere. That list, those extra 10,000 people cost money.





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GAIL: Yeah. I want to say one thing, too, about print versus email. I have seen this. I have seen way too many formerly smart organizations eliminate their print newsletters to save money, and it is a tragedy to do that.

BETH: Talk about that more.

GAIL: Please, because there are too many decisions in which people have cut way, way back on their print in order to focus on email to save money and they don't know what they're doing. They're not designing email well, and they're sending crappy stuff and their appeals are now online. They may or may not be reaching the donor's mailbox and then you've got the older generation. I'm a boomer. I don't really read a lot of snail mail anymore, but snail mail stands out.

BETH: There's so little in my mailbox anymore. I always want to say, how many times have you deleted something important in your email because you're reading your email with your finger over the delete button. I get so much stuff. It has to be amazing, an email, to stand out or it has to be from somebody that, like you said, emails me enough that I'm waiting for it.

GAIL: Yeah, and a lot of times you'll find something in print doesn't get thrown away. It gets multiple views.

BETH: We have clients that have said when they tuck an envelope, like a donation envelope, even though there's no ask whatsoever in the mail, they will tuck the envelope in and then they put like a code on the envelope. They get those envelopes back 6, 8, 9 months later, and they know that it went out in the spring newsletter, and it shows up. That's what the end of year ask ends up showing up in. So then someone has had it sitting there for months.

GAIL: Yeah. We also call this multi-channel, and we know that if you can connect with your donor via mail, snail mail, via email and maybe on social media, that you have a chance to multiply your messages and that you get through to your donor's consciousness about something. So multi-channel is important, and





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frankly, more money comes in by mail than it does online anyway. So to get rid of snail mail appeals is really a mistake.

BETH: What else do you tell people? I think a lot of communications and development people in organizations also believe this, but they are up against adversity from executive directors or from their board pushing them to get rid of it. What advice can you give them so that they can make a case to keep something or to start something if they've never had it?

GAIL: Well, I follow the Agitator Blog almost religiously, and they are, I highly recommend it to your listeners, the Agitator I think is .net. They shared an infographic of direct mail versus email recently, and you got to take your board the data. Direct mail was deemed to be more important, more thoughtful, more attention-getting, and email was considered to be smart, quick and of the moment. So the attributes were very different. The ask has much more weight by mail, but there's a lot of data out there showing where money is coming in online versus paper. Paper is king, still king, and we also know for a fact that many donors will receive a paper appealing to go online and make their gift. So you can't judge the paper separately from the email.

BETH: Right. It used to be that people thought that whatever channel people started in, that was the channel that they liked, that they wanted to stay in that. So if it was an email ask or something that they saw on social media, that people wanted to stay in that bubble, but that's not actually playing out in the data.

GAIL: Not at all. In fact what you really do want to ask your donor about is communication preferences and if you can do that, we talk about those early post-gift communications, ask your donor if they'd like to hear from you by paper or by email or how often they might want to hear from you. Apparently that is a huge factor in donor satisfaction. It's like maybe the number one factor.

BETH: Now do you find that people tell, this is a horrible thing to say. Like I





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would say tell the truth. What we find a lot of times is that when you ask a direct question, you get like the obvious answer. Something like, “Would you like to be thanked or honored for your volunteer service?” “Oh no, no, no, no. No, please don’t do anything.”

GAIL: I don’t think I’ve asked that.

BETH: Something like that. Would you want to get email or print? Do people answer that in a way that really does ring true?

GAIL: That’s a great question, great question. I don’t know.

BETH: OK. So we need to do some research on that.

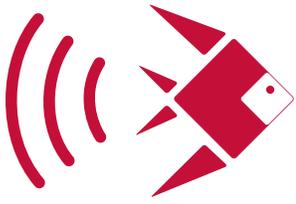
GAIL: Paper appeals are very powerful and they’re more powerful than email appeals.

BETH: And you’re saying that the same is showing up with email newsletters as well? Interesting. I’m old school. I’m a Gen X, but I was raised in a company, like my first job was a company that did paper newsletters. It was a nonprofit health research organization, and we did newsletters, newsletters, newsletters, and they’re still in business and they do plenty of stuff online, but they still do a ton of print, because it’s just different and there’s value to it in some ways.

GAIL: I’m thinking about adding a print newsletter to my business, but it would be subscription only.

BETH: Oh, that’s a great idea. So that’s something that we want to talk about, is these things do cost money. How can people make sure that they’re putting their communications efforts into the places where it’s gonna have the most payoff because we don’t want them to just be doing tons more work and spending tons more money without it actually generating results. Do they do something different for annual givers versus major givers? What would you suggest?





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GAIL: Well, every organization needs to have a donor loyalty program and that's for the post-gift experience, and there need to be systematic touches to donors every month, if possible. It could be an invitation, it could be a tour, it could be a certain impact report, one letter saying thank you so much for giving. Here's what we accomplished thanks to your support. So donor loyalty is part of your annual fund budget and that can include a newsletter as long as the newsletter is well done. So many newsletters are treated as throw away routines, which is a real shame because that's where the time and effort is really spent. It's wasted on a poor newsletter when it could be very powerful. So the annual fund has got to have a donor loyalty program. Now for major donors, we talk about moves management and what we mean by moves management is really what are the steps you're gonna do every month or every other month with this particular donor, but the difference is that we design the cultivation experiences that are happening with the major donor prospect based on the, totally customized on the donor's interest area. So I'd love to share my five steps to close a major gift.

BETH: Please do!

GAIL: First you have to have a prospect that's qualified, in that they have capacity to give and they have an interest. So you've got to have a qualified prospect to start with. Step two is you got to find out your donors' interests and passions and hot buttons, which is fine. It's not like pitching the donor, you're interviewing the donor. Tell me your story. Number three issue is cultivation experiences around the donor's particular area of interest. For example, if I was an aspiring violin player, the symphony could come help me meet the first violin person or sit in on a master class the violin is sharing, playing in the orchestra. There are lots of fun experiences just around that personal area of interest, or if I'm interested in rape crisis center or battered women's shelter. I really worry about where the women are going after they leave the shelter, how they're getting on a good solid foot. Then the organization can help me learn stories to see what happens. The fourth step and this is key, you as a fundraiser, all you have to do is say is would you like to know more about how you can impact this program, would you like





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to know more about how you can impact the violinist or the ladies leaving the shelter. So of course I'm gonna say yeah. I'd like to know more about how I can impact it. If I'm really interested and being cultivated in that area of interest. You need to have maybe three ideas you can throw out to your donor. Well, for \$1,000 you could do this, or for \$5,000 you could do that, and for \$50,000 you could really make a huge impact, blah, blah, blah. I've been playing around with this new model with coaching people and people like it because it seems very straightforward and doable and not really complicated.

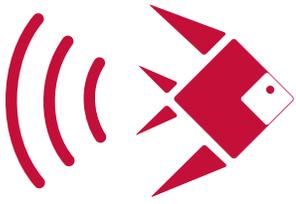
BETH: You know what I like is the personalization aspect. We talk about that a lot with really making sure that you know your perfect person deeply. That's sort of knowing in general, like a broad sense for an organization really identify what profile, what profiles across the board even in generalities you know tend to want what you want, tend to what what you're trying to create, but then to even get to know them very personally we've had a number of people on like the team from Drexel University was just on recently, and Jeff Miles from Keystone Opportunity Center were both talking about programs that they created that didn't even exist. Like because they found a group of people that had a common group of interests and cared about the same things and they understood their person so well. They were actually able to craft a package, basically a program or package or an offer to this group that didn't exist before and the funding for it went through the roof because it was so specialized. Like one version is OK, we've got these things, let's find the right people for them, but the other option is we've got these people that are clearly interested in something. Is there any commonalities or something that can be made bigger if you pour a little gasoline on it.

GAIL: You've got to be careful about mission creep. I'm sure you've heard of that.

BETH: Absolutely.

GAIL: An organization will chase a funding opportunity when it's not really in their mission.





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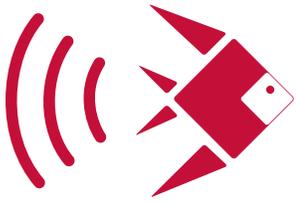
BETH: That's a really, really good point. You know, like these two people actually created programs that were absolutely within what their mission was, but it was the difference between saying fund this big giant thing to fund this one. Instead of fund this program that helps kids at school, it's can you help us build this playground for this specific need.

GAIL: Oh yeah, and people, a major gift is almost always designated for some purpose. Almost always unless the donor is really in love with you and just wants to make a \$200,000 gift, which doesn't happen that often.

BETH: Exactly, and that's the other reason why we talk a lot about kind of looking for this middle channel, making sure you understand what the vast amount of people that support you are and how they're interested. The zealots are typically made not born. Everybody always wants to model behavior and model communications based on like their favorite donor or their top person. It's like, "Oh my gosh, if we could just get 10 more people just like Mary, we would be amazing," and it's easy to forget that Mary didn't walk in Mary. Mary walked in maybe with a \$250 gift and now she's here, but the people that are often cultivating Mary may not be the same person that has that history or knew it or reported that cultivation. Kind of remembering what does somebody at the beginning of your organization need to know and need to feel in order to get to that point where they are your star donor.

GAIL: Yeah, well, I think we always need to remember that emotion is our goal when we're communicating, that we want to be emotional and we want to invoke the donor's emotion and I always recommend that you should wear your heart on your sleeve when you're writing. Again, an intern with a journalism degree doesn't know that fact and if you can write a thank you wearing your heart on your sleeve or if you can write a note to a donor, you know that's really got that passion and engagement or that emotion, you will invoke that in the donor as well. I mean, I think a lot of nonprofit communications don't have enough emotion. They're too factual, they're too dry. When we're saying there are kids dying, and we're just





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going, “under-served.”

BETH: Right or my favorite one, my favorite like, “take a drink” word is empowerment. I just like, oh my gosh. We all use the same language, we all use the same stuff and the individual ...

GAIL: So generic.

BETH: Yeah, exactly and you don’t realize that you sound just like everyone else. Everyone talks about “We’re gonna create hope.” Well, I don’t even know what that means.

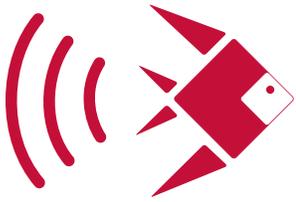
GAIL: Yeah. You know, I think especially social service organizations have the real challenge because they’re using social service speak, which is very technical. They’re using it in their marketing and their website and it’s like, “No! You can’t raise money with those words.” You have to use different words to raise money.

BETH: Exactly and people have to remember that those words are important, but it’s a matter of who you’re talking to. Are you talking to your connoisseur or are you talking to your consumers? When you’re talking to people that know you well, not using insider language can often be a put off because they think, “Wait a minute, don’t you know me?” Using those kind of internal words with people that know you deeply attracts them and makes them feel more connected to you, but if you make the mistake of using that same language with people that are just kind of hovering around the doorway, they’re never gonna step in.

GAIL: Right, right. I have a real beef. So if you’re a communications guru, I hope you’re reminding everybody to make sure their language has no jargon and has emotion in it and snap. It has to snap.

BETH: Yeah, it has to connect people. Gail, these are such great ideas, and I think leaving people with the idea that focus on the emotion, get rid of your jargon, touch people frequently. Are there any other things that from our conversation





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today we want to leave people with a couple of highlights before we close today.

GAIL: Yeah, create a plan. You need to have a donor communication plan, or call it a donor loyalty plan, and you need to know what you're gonna be doing and you plan it out and if you have to create a newsletter, you don't want to be having it the week of the gala. You need to schedule everything so it's very doable and then also for those higher level major donors that you've identified, create a separate plan and communication stream for them. It's not complicated. It's a matter of being organized so you don't go bonkers.

BETH: Right, and there you go! The quote of the session. You organize, so you don't go bonkers.

GAIL: Yes, yes, yes.

BETH: Gail, this was an absolute pleasure. Thank you so much for taking your time and sharing all of your knowledge and expertise with both me and our whole nonprofit community.

GAIL: Thank you, Beth, for the opportunity. I'm glad to help anybody. I'd like to invite you all if you have a question, you can email me at GP@GailPerry.com, and I've got lots and lots of free resources and posts about some of these topics on my website at FiredUpFundraising.com.

BETH: All right, wonderful and I would highly recommend you really take advantage. Gail writes tons and tons of great stuff and has all kinds of terrific insight even well beyond this that she can share. Please go look her up, and thanks again, Gail, for being here, and thanks everyone for listening.

GAIL: Take care. Bye bye.

