

## **An Introductory Guide to Fundraising**

*These notes are based on a one-day workshop on fundraising given by Samayasri at the July 2006 European Chair's Assembly. Samayasri has been a professional fundraiser for over ten years and is currently Director of Fundraising at the World Society for the Protection of Animals - an animal welfare charity with an annual turnover of over \$38 million. She also gave a lot of advice to the Aranya fundraising campaign in the FWBO. She is excited about fundraising and sees it as the "Dharma in action" - a chance to engage with all sorts of issues around generosity, communication, and altruism.*

*The notes have been written-up by Lokabandhu and Vajragupta, and checked by Samayasri. Please note that they are based on the questions and issues that arose on one particular workshop. They therefore should be read as introductory notes, rather than as a definitive guide to fundraising.*

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## 1) WHAT IS FUNDRAISING?

In this guide we are going to cover just the basic principles - why people give and how to make it easy for them. Try and keep it simple.

Fundraising is: "A conversation about unfulfilled ambition (or vision)."

The fundraiser is the catalyst to this communication about a vision. They are the link between someone's aspirations for the world and the means of making it come true. They are helping someone to make something happen. They are connecting them up to other people who share the vision and can help it come true. In other words, they are helping people - both fundraising organisation and donors - create the world they want. They are facilitating this equal partnership between them.

## 2) WHY DO PEOPLE GIVE?

There is a myth of "charity burnout". After the huge charitable response to the tsunami in early 2006, there was a prediction that charity income would then drop. But this never happened.

People want to give. We are basically generous, especially when our giving is witnessed and reflected back. So, it is important to say thank you. Giving connects us to life and to our ideals, and also allows a sense of sharing those ideals with other people. Research shows these six basic reasons why people give:

- a) **People give to people:** We respond to passion, vision, leadership in another person. There is that personal, inspirational element which is crucial in fundraising.
- b) **Self-interest:** Partly we give to a cause (e.g. a new Buddhist centre in our town) because we will benefit ourselves - that is fine as a motivation.
- c) **Pride of association:** We get a sense of belonging and identification from giving to causes that resonate with our beliefs and values. This means that different kinds of people will give to different types and styles of charity (e.g. a radical, campaigning charity vs. a softer, more conservative one).
- d) **Long-term impact:** People are more likely to give if they feel confident that there will be a long-term, sustainable benefit. They then feel they are really making a difference.
- e) **Involvement and belonging:** People ache to belong! We want to be part of something bigger than ourselves that has meaning for us.
- f) **Immortality:** We want to leave a "legacy" and feel we can make a difference after we've gone.

## 3) WHY PEOPLE DON'T GIVE

- a) **They forget:** We have busy lives and we just forget to do the things we intended to do. There is evidence that you can write up to 14 letters and then someone will give. People can have good intentions, but they just don't get round to reading it. Don't take a lack of response as a "no". Only a "no" is a "no"! So, you can feel OK about asking again and again.
- b) **They don't believe that their £X can make a difference:** we need to be given confidence that the contribution we can make is important, necessary, and helpful.

- c) **They don't connect with the person doing the asking:** you need to make sure it is the right person approaching people. You need to think about this on a case-by-case basis - who is the right person to connect with X?
- d) **They don't hear a clear request:** people won't (can't) give if they are muddled about what they are being asked to do. We tend to be culpable in the area in the FWBO - we make general, vague requests like: "And what would you like to do to help?" We need to ask specific people to do or give a specific thing appropriate to them. Don't ask a millionaire to give you a fiver! We need to have the confidence to ask some one for X or Y.
- e) **They've never been asked:** Often this really is the reason - no one asked them!

#### 4) VISION AND MISSION

Dylan Thomas: "Ambition is critical".

You need to be exceptionally clear about exactly what you are trying to achieve. This will take a lot of time and discussion right at the very beginning, but it is absolutely crucial. If you get fundraising underway with an unclear message, or key people in the organisation not fully behind it, it will flop.

Vision is: "a feasible description of a world yet to be achieved".

Mission is: "how the vision is to be achieved".

Be very clear about what you are going to do... and what you are not going to do. Make the vision and the mission as crisp as possible, not just "spreading the Dharma" but: Who? Why? How? Compress it into the one-minute elevator conversation. Passion and clarity go together.

People give to success, not to projects that seem desperate, or uncertain, or that are failing. This is just giving emphasis to the importance of being very clear before you start, and talking it through with all team members so they are clear too. Then you will all be able to be really passionate and convincing.

#### 5) THE "CASE FOR SUPPORT"

The next phase is to create a "case for support". This is a well-argued statement that covers all the things a potential donor will need to know before they can decide whether to give to your project. Once you've really worked hard on the "case for support", it provides you with a checklist of points you need to cover in any request for money - whether its an official application form to a trust, a fundraising letter, or a conversation with someone at the charities open day. Get to know the ten principles in the checklist below, and get someone else in the team - not the person who has prepared it - to look over any letter, funding application, or speech - to check that all the points are covered.

One general point: You need to appeal to both the head and the heart of the potential donor. Some people will be more "head" than "heart" and vice-versa. As a rather crude generalisation, individuals are probably more "heart", trusts and organisations more "head". (However, don't forget that it will be an individual at the organisation

who will be reading your application. In other words, no donor is exclusively head or heart!)

**i) Who are you and what are you trying to do?**

In the FWBO we can fall into the trap of assuming people know we are a charity and what we do. We can make too many "in-house" assumptions. Or we assume they will be bored by hearing it all again. And this then prevents us from making the case for support properly.

So, who is your organisation? How long has it been around, who runs it? Are you honest and reliable people? Why do you exist - what is your purpose? Are you trying to change the world? Make sure your organisation sounds solid, clear about its aims (across all members), trustworthy, and respectable.

Any vagueness (which may just come from you being vague!) may come across as shiftiness and unreliability. You must communicate integrity. Offer to tell people a lot more if they need to know more. Can they see your council minutes or audited accounts?

Also show that you will be a pleasure to work with! People want to enjoy the charities they support and the people they deal with there. Show them you have a sense of humour and are kind and polite. Show that if people get involved you won't harangue them with your personal views, and you will respect the level of commitment that they want to make - they are not opening the floodgates to unlimited calls on their time and money.

**ii) What are the specific objectives and programmes of this project that you are asking for funds for?**

What exactly are you going to do if you get the funds you need? Teach more classes, befriend people more, have more time for outreach, hold on to key teachers, build a new centre? You must show that you have thought this through - that it is a well-planned piece of work that makes good sense and will be delivered on. How exactly will you do this? Have you got to hire new staff or equipment? What is your timetable?

**iii) Why is the appeal important and urgent?**

Why is it essential that you do this work? And do it now? Why can't you wait a few months or years? This is important because the majority of people who don't give do want to help, but they put off giving because they think they'll do it another time. You must make them feel they have to do it NOW - this is the moment to act if they want to make the world a better place.

And why is it important - how will the world be a better place if you do this work? How many people will be helped? How much suffering will be eased or prevented? Inspire people with your vision of the benefits of this work. This part of your appeal should uplift the spirit and make the donor feel very happy that they could be part of something so positive and life enhancing. Positive and happy images - or testimonials - of the benefits of your work will often help you with this.

**iv) What will happen if this appeal for support fails?**

You need to show what might happen if you fail to raise the money and do the work. Paint a picture of a problem not getting solved or tackled; perhaps a critical opportunity to make a difference will be lost? You are not trying to frighten or upset your potential donor, but you do need them to understand that turning away from this opportunity to help might have consequences. You are making a point, but not blackmailing!

**v) How much money are you trying to raise?**

You must know very specifically what money you need and what for. If you can, provide a budget that lists all your costs. (This also helps to demonstrate that you mean business, that you are trustworthy, and that the money will only be spent on the project you are fundraising for.) If you can, indicate how much you would like this particular person or organisation to contribute.

**vi) Over what period of time are you attempting to raise the money?**

If people are given a specific timetable, people will be able to sense the urgency and need to act more clearly. For example, do you need a specific amount in three weeks time in order to purchase something? A timetable also demonstrates that you planned your project properly and that you mean business.

**vii) Who else is contributing?**

People like to contribute to a cause that they know other people think is also worthwhile. If you can mention other admired and respected donors in your community who have given (asking their permission first), or tell people how many other individuals have offered their help.

**viii) Relate to your donors.**

Show how their potential gift will be a reflection of what they care about - show you know who they are and what aspect of this work matters to them. If necessary, tell them what part of the project they are paying for e.g. they can pay for the teaching of Dharma classes, or - if they particularly care about ritual - can they give to the new shrine room. People need to feel that by giving to your cause they are expressing something of who they are.

**ix) Be concise, coherent, urgent, and motivating.**

The challenge is to do all of the above in a concise and straightforward way - so people can easily read and understand your important message and will be motivated to help you.

**x) Be ruthlessly consistent.**

The leaders of your sangha need to discuss and explore exactly what you are going to do before you go public. There needs to be consistency between all those speaking on behalf of the appeal. In other words, disagreements need to be ironed out first.

**6) THE BASICS OF GETTING IT RIGHT**

**a) some general points:**

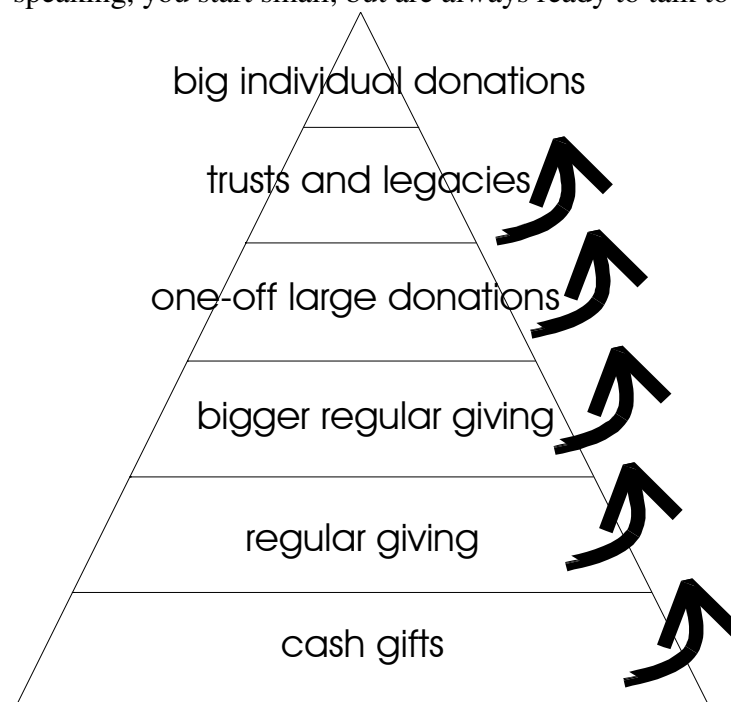
\* get the right person and resource them. It will need a dedicated person, it won't get done in the tea break. For a £150K plus campaign, think of having someone working

fulltime on fundraising. They don't necessarily need to be already trained or experienced, they can train on the job (see section 7 below).

- \* the fundraiser is often the person facing out of the organisation.
- \* talk through and plan your campaign.
- \* start with making the "internal case" i.e. does it work for you, are you convinced by this? Then make the case to others.
- \* 1/3 of the time is planning, 1/3 of the time is research, and 1/3 of the time is fundraising.
- \* don't be hesitant! Don't say: "We'd like X", say: "We need X". Don't say: "We will try to do Y", say: "We are going to do Y".
- \* plan a timetable.
- \* think about branding - a name and an image.
- \* check your energy levels and those of your team. it is your responsibility to stay inspired.
- \* line up your team, get ready and prepare, then... go public!
- \* say "thank you" a lot, reinforce and appreciate generosity.
- \* track how it is going i.e. re-jig the pyramid (see below) as you go along.
- \* tell people what you did and how they DID make a difference.
- \* if your vision changes, you must go back and talk to people, explain, and ask if they are OK with this.
- \* it is easier to raise a big amount than a small amount. The former sounds exciting and ambitious, the latter will make people think, "well, they can get it themselves".

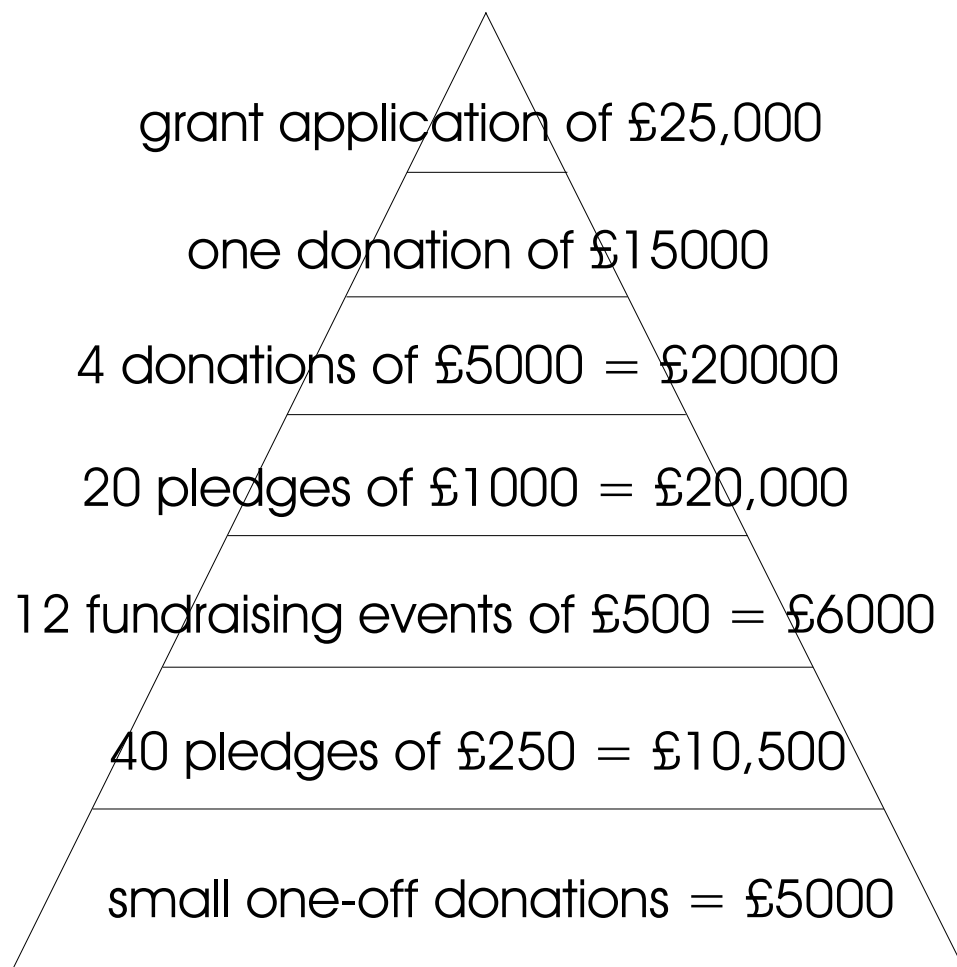
#### **b) the fundraising pyramid:**

Fundraising is an on-going process: you are taking people on a journey of giving. They may start giving at a certain level, but become more engaged and involved and eventually be happy to give at a higher level. Fundraising is about having that on-going conversation, and taking people to the level they are happy with. Generally speaking, you start small, but are always ready to talk to people about the next level.



the fundraising pyramid

This is a great tool for planning fundraising. You draw a pyramid with different levels of giving that add up to the total amount you want to raise. You build in a slight surplus to that amount. Each level - i.e. each segment of the pyramid - then needs its own fundraising strategy. To get the two £10,000 donations at the top of the pyramid will require a different approach to getting the fifty £250 pledges further down the pyramid. The pyramid helps make this all clear and it can also help give people confidence that the amount can be raised, and a feeling that their contribution is a part of the overall strategy.



### a pyramid plan to raise £100,000

Then, for on-going fundraising, you can encourage people to move up the pyramid if they wish. It is a free choice, but give people the option!

Generally speaking, the interactions get more personal the further up the pyramid you go. You need to think of this process of pyramid creation and management as taking place over 3 or 5 years - it is not just a one-off thing. For example, you might have an appeal for monthly standing orders at your centre. A year later, you may be able to go back and repeat the appeal to get more new standing orders, but also ask those from last year if they could donate a higher amount.

This process involves getting to know your sangha. It will also involve trial and error, remembering and recording what you learn, building up knowledge of the community in which you are fundraising. You can re-jig the pyramid as you go along.

**c) a guide to tax-effective giving:**

- \* in the UK you can claim tax back if it is a donation - i.e. are people genuinely free not to give? If it is a "suggested donation" are people really free not to give anything?
- \* people paying tax at the higher rate of 40% can claim this back on their tax form, or send it to a charity of their choice.
- \* The Institute of Fundraisers have more information on their website (see below) and there is a guide to gift aid on <http://www.fwbo-centre-support.org>

**d) grants and trusts:**

- \* they will know if you've under budgeted and will be put off if they think you have - so pay attention to budgeting.
- \* they want to give - so don't tell them what they don't need to know!
- \* build up a relationship - they are real human beings running the trust!
- \* if you can, go and see the person. It is not always possible, but sometimes they will have a funding surgery.
- \* make it professional and practical.
- \* don't let it get boring. It needs to be professional and credible (e.g. perhaps with references etc.), but it will also be read by a human being.
- \* in the UK, the NVCO website will have details of trusts and grant-giving bodies. NCVO may have a branch near you where you can get advice. The Directory of Social Change will also have indexes of trusts.
- \* send audited accounts.
- \* you may need equal opportunities policies, risk assessments etc.
- \* don't bend your vision to fit the criterion of a grant-giving body.

**e) regular giving:**

- \* should be the backbone of your on-going fundraising strategy.
- \* builds a solid, consistent, dependable income.
- \* builds at the bottom of the pyramid i.e. you establish a connection with people which can then develop over time.
- \* invite them to an evening to say thank you.
- \* sometimes people say, "don't spend money thanking us", but they might not mean it! You have to make a judgement between wanting to thank them versus respecting their wishes.
- \* standing orders: you (the charity) cannot change the amount given. Any changes have to be made by the person himself or herself.
- \* direct debit: the charity can change amounts themselves (once they have the donors permission!). They are easier to keep track of, and you tend to lose less people. So, most charities prefer them these days. In the FWBO we still seem to do standing orders.

**f) fundraising letters:**

- \* 45% of people read the P.S. first - so put a P.S. in!

**g) legacies:**

- \* we neglect this area of fundraising in the FWBO.



- \* many big charities get 50% of their income from legacies.
- \* think of it as a top of the pyramid part of fundraising.
- \* like anything else, you need to keep mentioning it.
- \* Buddhists should have a head start in this area - encouraging people to think about death, plan their funeral, think about what they do with their money etc. Also, some people in the movement may not have children and may have bigger legacies to give.
- \* should this be organised nationally or collectively?

**h) sponsorship:**

- \* don't use the word "sponsorship" if it is just a donation - you may end up getting taxed on it!
- \* you'll find books and leaflets available on corporate fundraising.

**i) websites:**

- \* make it as easy as possible to give.
- \* you will lose 50% of people per click.
- \* click to donate on every page.
- \* track which pages people go to and which they donate on.

**7) FURTHER TRAINING AND RESOURCES**

Samayasri recommends the 5-day course run by the Institute of Fundraisers. It's called the "foundation in fundraising skills" and its 5 full days or every Friday for five weeks.

The Institute of Fundraisers also publish a "Guide to Fundraising Ethics and Best Practice".

They also have a website (<http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk>) with more fundraising advice and resources.