

The Extreme Fundraising Ezine, Vol. I Issue 3

“The Rule of Three’s, Part II”

Welcome back to the Extreme Fundraising Ezine! And welcome to our new subscribers!

It was wonderful getting to meet so many of you at APC’s East Coast Fall Conference at Friends Select School in Philadelphia! What an incredible time! I *always* find that to be one of the most helpful and informative conferences of the year. If you’re not familiar with APC, check them out at <http://apcnetwork.org>. If you work at a private school or are an alum of one, make sure your school is a member—it’ll probably provide the best return on any of their memberships.

****HOW A SCHOOL MIGHT APPLY THE RULE OF THREES****

In the last issue, we looked at The Rule of Threes. As a reminder it was:

- * identify 3 AUTHENTIC attributes about you or your organization
- * identify 3 natural channels of communication
- * feed the 3 attributes into those 3 channels 3 times within a 3 month period.

Now let’s see how an organization may apply this rule. Let’s choose an imaginary private boarding school “Sywash Prep.” You’ll see that this is not only a powerful tool in communicating with external audiences, but it’s equally powerful as a team building tool within an organization.

3 ATTRIBUTES

As we discussed last time, these three attributes *need* to be authentic and true of the school as it is today. There may be many things the school would like to become, but what is it doing well today?

Sywash Prep’s head of school devoted an entire joint faculty/staff meeting to brainstorming attributes of the school. She particularly made sure that the admissions and development staffs would be there. After giving an overview of The Rule of Threes, she passed out Post-It note pads to all present. They were asked to write down phrases and key words that they heard parents, students, colleagues, and alumni use to when talking about Sywash Prep.

After giving them a few minutes to begin, she asked for people to volunteer what they’d written down. People shouted out the attribute as they handed her the Post-It note. While she put the Post-It on the white board, others scribbled down characteristics that came to mind in light of the one just announced. Since this was a brainstorm, all attributes went on the board without *any* criticism. Not an easy feat with a bunch of faculty! The energy in the room was tremendous.

When the ideas slowed to a trickle, she called for a coffee break. While everyone was buzzing about the ideas, she started grouping the Post-Its according to themes or categories. Some others saw her doing this and got involved helping her.

It turns out there were more than three themes. And the participants were from very different areas of the school so defining the “perfect” audience wasn’t going to be easy. Was that person a donor? A parent? A prospective parent? A student? Rather than have that conversation, the head of school guided the faculty and staff toward identifying the three *top* attributes of Sywash Prep.

3 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Once those were identified, she directed the conversation to a verbal brainstorm of various communication channels Sywash could use to broadcast these attributes. Some of the options were:

- * the school's alumni publication
- * the parent newsletter
- * the website
- * advertising done by admissions
- * admission materials
- * alumni weekend/parents weekend
- * graduation
- * chamber of commerce
- * faculty room conversations
- * all school events
- * the classroom
- * the sports field and other extracurriculars
- * in dorm events (formal and informal)

The head of school was ecstatic with the results of the brainstorm. The faculty exhibited a *huge* paradigm shift by beginning to see the classroom and extracurricular activities as channels of school communication.

3 ATTRIBUTES, 3 CHANNELS, 3 TIMES, 3 MONTHS

She directed every director and department chair to let her know what three channels they would focus on for the next three months. She also asked them to let her know if the three attributes they planned on using varied from the three identified at the meeting. She also reminded them not to expect results for the three months. She told them to be farmers and plant the seeds. Good farmers don't keep digging up the seeds to see if they're growing!

She's planning on holding a follow up meeting in four months to report on the successes and assess the process.

****WHAT ABOUT YOU?****

What did your staff and constituents come up with when they brainstormed attributes? What three channels are you going to commit to putting those attributes into? Can you imagine how easy it will be to write fundraising letters and publications now that you know what three characteristics you want to promote about your organization?

****TELECLASS REMINDER****

The next Extreme Fundraising Teleclass will be on Tuesday, November 18 at 1:30 p.m. We'll be learning even *more* about The Rule of Threes and hearing how participants have put this to use in their organizations.

Until then, keep emailing me your comments marc@fundraisingcoach.com. I'd also love to know if you're planning on attending the TABS conference in Boston. I'll be there and would love to grab a cup of coffee!

To your extreme fundraising success,

Marc

Marc A. Pitman is an executive coach to nonprofit leaders. An expert in helping people identify their natural abilities, he's committed to providing down-to-earth information that will decrease stress and remind people how much fun it is to ask people for money!

The Extreme Fundraising Ezine is a complimentary newsletter of The Fundraising Coach (<http://fundraisingcoach.com>). Feel free to pass it on!

(c) 2003 The Pitman Group.

“Fundraising is an extreme sport” and “Extreme Fundraising” are trademarks of The Pitman Group.
