

## The Extreme Fundraising Ezine, Vol. I Issue 4

### "2<sup>nd</sup> Class Citizen or Crown Jewel?"

Welcome the November 25<sup>th</sup> issue of the Extreme Fundraising Ezine! And a special welcome to our new subscribers—it's fun to see the list grow every week! Remember, you can always catch up on earlier issues in the "Extreme Fundraising Ezine" section at FundraisingCoach.com (<http://fundraisingcoach.com>) in the listing of "archives."

Have you ever thought of alumni relations (or donor relations) as THE most valuable activity of your development effort?

I've been re-reading *First Break All the Rules* by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. If you haven't read this book, I highly recommend it. They do a remarkable job at distilling tons of information from surveys and interviews conducted by the Gallup organization into a few simple (but not easy!) observations of excellent managers.

At one point (pp. 128-132), in commenting on the reasons customers go beyond mere patronage to become advocates of an organization, the authors mention findings from a Gallup study on what customers really want. While these often varied by industry, four expectations surfaced that remained remarkably consistent. In order of increasing importance, they are:

- \* accuracy
- \* availability
- \* partnership
- \* advice

The lowest level is "accuracy." More than friendliness, customers want to get what they ordered and they want the bill to reflect what they got. If the company isn't accurate, customers will not be loyal.

The second lowest level of expectation is "availability." Customers expect to be able to do business quickly and easily--"hence the proliferation of drive-through windows, ATM machines, and...web sites."

On commenting about these lower two levels, Buckingham and Coffman note that these expectations are fortunately easy to meet. But the note that "both of these expectations, even if met successfully, can only prevent customer dissatisfaction." People aren't going to smile in admiration over a company sending them an accurate bill. Nor are they going to rush to the telephone to recommend a mechanic simply because he was available at a convenient time. What makes an organization really stand out is fulfilling the two lower expectations AND following the next two: partnership and advice.

"Partnership" is defined as the customer wanting to know that you're on the same side of the table as they are. You're responsive to them and you're like them. "Staff picks" at book and video rental stores are ways some companies are saying "We read or watch videos too. We're like you." In other words, customers expect to feel understood.

The highest level of expectation, according to the Gallup study, is "advice." "Customers feel the closest bond to organizations that have helped them learn." Buckingham and Coffman state that if

you consistently meet the advanced levels of expectation, "you will have successfully transformed prospects into advocates."

\*\*\*\*HOW A DOES THIS APPLY TO NONPROFITS?\*\*\*\*

Something in my head started dancing when I read this! For years, I've seen alumni relations portrayed as a sort of second class citizen in institutional advancement. Sort of an "I-suppose-it's-important-but-I'm-not-really-sure-what-they-do" mentality. For the first time, I saw an objective study that shows why alumni relations may well be the crown jewel, the preeminent part of the development/advancement effort!

The development office can take care of accuracy by making sure the receipts, the donor records and addresses, and the giving reports are all correct. It can also take care of availability with consistent, and clearly posted, office hours and contact information--email addresses to all staff, web presence with clear ways to give online.

But Buckingham and Coffman clearly state that those first two needs only keep the customer from being *dissatisfied*. They do *not* help make customers wildly crazy about your organization. Wild enthusiasm is created when customers feel a partnership with you and then ask you for advice.

Major gifts officers may be able to do this...to a point. Some of this happens in the "donor cultivation" process. But it's limited because each fundraiser has her own portfolio of assignments that she needs to work through. The ultimate in partnership and advice is when you're able to connect donors to each other and to your organization and when you know which alumni to go to when asked for advice. The development office would be out of it's realm to focus on this too heavily.

But not the alumni office. Through regional events and affinity group gatherings, the alumni office is helping create partnership with itself and its alum and between the alumni themselves. Through career networking events and mentoring programs, the alumni office is identifying who to go to when others seek advice. Isn't this exciting!?! These are the very programs that the Gallup organization found move donors from mere donors to advocates of the institution--people that brag about the school and introduce it to more prospective donors!

I know many of you don't work in educational philanthropy but can you see how this easily applies to donor relations? Isn't it great?

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

So what about you? How are you going to apply this to your approach to alumni/donor relations? Perhaps you can get a copy of the book and share pages 128-132 with your supervisor? (If you want to use my affiliate link to buy the book, click on:

<A HREF="http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0684852861/marcpitmancom">First, Break All the Rules</A>

Perhaps you could brainstorm with your alumni board or development committee ways to work on the "partnership" and "advice" levels of expectation.

What ever you end up doing, let me know! Email your thoughts and comments to [marc@fundraisingcoach.com](mailto:marc@fundraisingcoach.com) (mailto:[marc@fundraisingcoach.com](mailto:marc@fundraisingcoach.com))

\*\*\*\*TELECLASS NOTE\*\*\*\*

There won't be any more teleclasses in 2003. Enjoy the end of the year fundraising and activities!

I'd love to know if any of you are planning on attending the TABS conference in Boston. I'll be there and would love to chat with you or your colleagues!

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 put the "fun" back into fundraising!

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.

-----