

## The Extreme Fundraising Ezine, Vol. I Issue 5

### "Are You Creating Donor Evangelists?"

Greetings from Lewiston, ME! I'm thrilled to welcome everyone, including our new subscribers, to the latest Extreme Fundraising Ezine!

I've given a lot of thought to the message in the previous ezine. (If you missed it, go to <http://fundraisingcoach.com/>, click the ezine tab, and look for it in the archives.)

Fortunately, I picked up of a copy of *Creating Customer Evangelists: How Loyal Customers Can Become a Volunteer Sales Force* by Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba. What an incredible book! And it deals precisely with "partnership" and "advice"—the two highest forms of customer expectations that the Gallup organization found necessary in moving customers from mere patrons to committed advocates.

Wouldn't it be great if all of your donors were also "evangelists" for your organization? Their eyes light up when talking about what your group does. Their voice is full of emotion. They can't wait to let everyone know about the "secret" they've stumbled across. They'd be forever introducing potential donors to your nonprofit!

Does this describe most of your current donors? If it does, congratulations! Please let me know! If not, don't lose heart. Creating an environment for such loyal donors may be easier than you think. McConnell and Huba are experts at helping companies create environments that foster evangelists and they offer great tools in their book. They've distilled their observations to six themes:

1. Customer Plus-Delta: Understanding the Love
2. Napsterize Your Knowledge: Give to Receive
3. Build the Buzz: Spreading the Word
4. Create Community: Bringing Customers Together
5. Bite-Size Chunks: From Sampling to Evangelism
6. Create a Cause: When Business is Good

Since brevity and simplicity are two of my top priorities with this newsletter, I'll be dwelling on the implications of this book for the next few ezines.

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

Let's start with "Customer Plus-Delta." This is the shorthand McConnell and Huba have also called "understanding the love." Obviously the CUSTOMER is central to "creating customer evangelists." (For our purposes, think of the donor as the customer.) The PLUS is what customers say you are doing correctly. The DELTA is what customers say you need to improve. So, how do you put "Customer Plus-Delta" into practice? You need to know what your donors are saying to your AND about you. More importantly, you need to respond to what is being said.

McConnell and Huba offer several tips on finding out what your customers are saying. I will tweak them to better fit our nonprofit purpose:

## **1. Make Real Donor Contact**

How often are you actually face-to-face with one of your donors? Perhaps a goal to have at least one lunch per week with a donor would be appropriate.

## **2. Scour the Web**

Have you ever typed your nonprofit's name into a search engine like Google? It can be *very* enlightening. This can be an incredibly effective way to find out who is talking about you and what they are saying.

## **3. Gather Feedback on Your Web Site**

Encourage your constituents to give you feedback and make that option easy to find from every page of your website. You could then use the stories this brings in marketing material or on your website. Rather than using a <donorservices@xyz.org> email, why not put your direct email address?

## **4. Mine Call Center Data**

If your organization outsources for phonathons, find out what your constituents are saying to the callers. When you talk to the company, be sure to talk to the actual callers, not just the sales rep.

## **5. End Every Donor Meeting With Feedback**

This may be a little awkward in the beginning but it can become habitual with practice. This can be as simple as asking "What was beneficial?" (PLUS) and "What can be improved?" (DELTA). Imagine how that could help your solicitation calls? Volunteer training sessions? Mailings? Moreover, the sound-bite like answers you'll most likely get may be very helpful in future publications.

## **6. Interview Your Donors**

McConnell and Huba advise using an independent third party to perform these individual, in-depth interviews. These are standard for feasibility studies. What if you were to use them for other things? Back in the 60's in his classic *Designs for Fund-Raising*, Si Seymour noted that a Harvard fundraiser put essays from 39 Harvard alum of various ages together in a book called "College in a Yard." The book didn't mention fundraising at all but it's credited with being a significant factor in the successful completion of their \$82 million campaign.

## **7. Use Online Surveys**

These can be incredibly effective and cheap. Services like SurveyMonkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>) and Zoomerang (<http://www.zoomerang.com>) seem to be consistently helpful to organizations. I believe both offer free versions. McConnell and Huba recommend using questions like "What one thing do you value most about our organization?" Online surveys can also be a great way to involve donors in less lofty matters, such as finding a location for an upcoming regional event. Rather than trying to guess from your desk, why not involve as many of the people in the region as possible? Online surveys make this possible and convenient.

## **8. Create a Donor Advisory Board**

This last one is nothing new for us. We usually have boards, committees, and teams ad nauseum. Perhaps you could give one of your existing groups the specific task of providing feedback. McConnell and Huba suggest that when someone gives unsolicited feedback, you ask them if they would be willing to be on an advisory board. This would be easily accomplished by tagging them in your database. Then you'd be able to easily email them a question or draft of something. This could be an effective way of showing your noisier donors that you value their input...even if you choose not to act on it.

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

So what about you? Do any of these tips sound helpful? Which one could you easily implement this week?

Let me know how which ones struck a chord with you (or which ones you came up with on your own!). My email is: [marc@fundraisingcoach.com](mailto:marc@fundraisingcoach.com).

I highly recommend reading this book. I'm sure it's at any local library. If you want to use my affiliate link to buy the book, click on:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0793155614/marcpitmancom>

### ***TELECLASS NOTE***

As a reminder, there won't be any more teleclasses this month. Why not use this found time to practice a random act of kindness?

To your extreme fundraising success!

Marc

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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!

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