

3:15 - 4:15

Concurrent
Educational
Session IV

International Perspectives to Inform Our Best Practices

Benjamin T. Mohler, CFRE, UNC Charlotte

Room: Crown

TARGET AUDIENCE: Advanced

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW:

Presentation explores the context for philanthropy and charity of international cultures such as those in Africa, Asia and Latin America. By understanding the unique perspectives of these cultures, the audience is positioned to incorporate a diverse approach to their fund development efforts stateside.

Presentation provides examples to help the audience think about fundraising from a diverse perspective, thereby improving donor interaction and overall operations—regardless of target donor demographics.

PRESENTER:

Benjamin T. Mohler, CFRE, is the Director of Philanthropy and Development for The William States Lee College of Engineering at UNC Charlotte. He is responsible for designing and implementing the strategic fundraising goals of The Lee College of Engineering. He has worked in this role for the past four years. In this capacity he has secured over \$16M in gifts and commitments, including the two largest gifts in the 46 year history of the college—supporting the Energy Production and Infrastructure Center (EPIC). Prior to moving to North Carolina, Mohler was on the fundraising staff for the College of Engineering at The University of Texas at Austin.

Mohler is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE), a longstanding member of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), and has completed the Saint Mary's University of Minnesota graduate program in Philanthropy and Development.

Mohler serves AFP International as a member of the Publishing Advisory Committee, International Development Committee, Professional Advancement Division, and Membership Services Division. He also supports AFP at a local level through his involvement with AFP-Charlotte. Mohler leads the AFP-Charlotte chapter's Mentoring Committee and serves as a mentor within the program. He is also a member of the AFP-Charlotte Board.

7th Annual

NC Philanthropy
Conference



Presented by



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VOLUNTARY WORKCAMPS ASSOCIATION OF GHANA:

“In practice, a workcamp consists of people who are living together in a rural setting and have volunteered their time to perform manual labor aimed at improving the quality of life of the rural masses. Their activities include: building schools, health clinics, water dams, secondary roads, disseminating information relating to agriculture, health and the environment; and planting trees and performing other activities. All these activities are planned, designed and implemented by the rural beneficiaries themselves who invite the VWAG to participate. In a typical workcamp the direct cost of labour to the local community is almost entirely free. The bulk of the work is done by VWAG members who do not receive compensation for their services.”

Badu, Y. A., & Parker, A. (1994). The Role of Non-governmental Organisations in Rural Development: The Case of the Voluntary Workcamps Association of Ghana. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 9, 27-39.

EFFECTIVELY UTILIZING VOLUNTEERS:

This grassroots approach to volunteerism utilizes volunteers both as visionaries, planners, designers, and the workforce in completing projects for the greater good. Volunteers are involved in all aspects of the effort, from the conception, through the implementation and into completion.

Are you giving volunteers meaningful and critical roles to accomplish the goals of the organization?

OR

Are you giving them busy work and jobs paid staff will not touch?

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DEBRE LIBANOS MONASTERY, ETHIOPIA:



This enclosure structure protects a cave and the source of a spring considered to be holy. Wendesen points to names written at the top of the structure, these individuals contributed funds to the effort to build the structure.

Mohler, B.T. (Photographer). (2009). *Wendesen points*. [Web]. Retrieved from <https://picasaweb.google.com/102785581043143519079/2009Ethiopia>

GIVING DONORS MEANINGFUL RECOGNITION:

Selflessness could easily be identified as a national character trait for Ethiopians. Despite difficult living conditions, sparse resources, and limited opportunities to accumulate personal wealth, Ethiopians reflect an understanding of the importance to connect a donor's identity and character to the causes they help support. Ethiopian culture deeply values the meaning of a name. Funds for building projects, such as churches or other structures, commonly feature the name of donors in a location that strengthens the connection between the person and the mission they are helping support.

Do donor recognition efforts reflect the impact donors have had on the organizational mission in a real and tangible way?

OR

Are you simply putting donor names on a list and calling it stewardship?

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AFRICAN NGOS:

“There is already ample evidence in the Ghanaian context to suggest that ongoing donor-supported decentralization to the 110 administrative districts is creating a new tier of local NGOs whose principal aim is job- and wealth-creation for the entrepreneurs who establish them.”

Porter, G. (2003). NGOs and poverty reduction in a globalizing world: perspectives from Ghana. *Progress in Development Studies*, 3(2), 131.

“Unfortunately, the central priority of many public and private expatriate donors is the development and preservation of the harmonious relationship with the host government rather than taking the necessary and often politically sensitive steps of getting the relief job done.”

McCleary, R. (2009). *Global compassion: Private voluntary organizations and U.S. foreign policy since 1939*. Oxford, New York.

BEING MISSION FOCUSED:

A common trend among African NGO's is a culture that caters to donors and governments for organizational self-preservation, not accomplishing mission objectives.

In the case of Ghanaian NGOs funded by international aid, the overwhelming organizational priority is to pay staff and enlarge the infrastructure of individuals supported by international funds.

In the case of Ethiopia, NGOs place the approval of the national government as a higher priority than accomplishing the organizational mission.

Do your funding priorities and strategic plans reflect an understanding of how to address a societal need?

OR

Does your organization exist for other reasons (e.g. self-preservation)?

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INDIAN TRADITION OF GIVING:

"In its teachings to humanity about the principles of dharma, Brihadaranyaka Upanisad has three ingredients: be in self-control (damyata), be in the habit of giving (datta) and be compassionate (dayadhvam)... The Taittiriya Upanisad says 'Give. Give with faith. Do not give without faith. Give with sensitivity. Give with a feeling of abundance. Give with right understanding.'"

K.S. Sripada Raju. (n.d.). Philanthropic Perspectives of Hinduism. Learning to Give. Retrieved January 1, 2011, http://learningtogive.org/faithgroups/voices/phil_persp_of_hinduism.asp

"India's wealthiest man Mukesh Ambani on Sunday criticised Western philanthropy as counter-productive and said his own country's approach to charity gave more self-respect to the needy." He was quoted as saying, "Whatever we give should be for our own satisfaction, it should never be for publicity."

Vatsyayana, M. (2011, July 10). India's richest man attacks western charity ethos. Yahoo! News, Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/indias-richest-man-attacks-western-charity-ethos-191551052.html>

RECOGNIZING DONOR ATTITUDES:

Philanthropy in India is influenced by its colonial past and by its prominence in the corporate world, BUT the essential cultural influence is in Hinduism. Laid out in the religious texts for Hindus is a responsibility to give to the poor or needy and therefore charitable donations are made out of a religious obligation, they believe it to be their dharma (duty). They believe in reincarnation, and karma that depends on actions in this life affecting in what form you return to earth in your next life, giving is made into a custom. In India, gift value is innately connected to donor attitude rather than the numeric value. It may sound as though giving in a Hindu tradition is selfish but in fact according to the scriptures, acts of generosity have no reward if the gift is given with a negative attitude.

Does your organization consider donor attitudes when recognizing the philanthropy of supporters?

OR

Does your fundraising strategy just focus on transformational gifts and high net-worth donors?

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MEXICAN TRADITION OF GIVING:

“The traditions of giving and sharing within the Mexican community are centered around the family, or *familia*.... *Familia* extends beyond the immediate family to include aunts and uncles, grandparents, cousins, other relatives, and often includes those who are not related biologically, but are from within the neighborhood or community.”

“Many Mexicans are Catholic, and the church is a key element in the Mexican community for religious instruction, education, and socialization.”

Petty, J. G. (2001). *Cultivating diversity in fundraising*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

“*Familia* (family) *confianza* (trust) *la importancia de la palabra* (the importance of one’s word)... All of these are founded in relationships”

L. Wagner & A. Figueroa D. (Eds.). (2009). *Hispanic philanthropy: Exploring the factors that influence giving and asking*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

ASK FOR TRUST FIRST, NOT A GIFT:

With a giving tradition deeply rooted in informal reciprocity, Mexicans show preference in their giving for causes and issues related to their family, community, and faith.

In an interview with Mexicans regarding their perspective on philanthropy, one respondent said that many would be offended by specific monetary solicitations from nonfamily members, in particular from non-Hispanic organizations. In such cases, no relationship or trusts exists and such philanthropy is too transactional. Rather, non-Hispanics should approach members of this community and focus on building relationships, discuss their needs and together develop a plan that addresses those needs.

Werner, J. (2008). *Principles for success and community impact*. Unpublished manuscript.

In conversations with prospective donors are you listening and asking questions in a genuine effort to build rapport?

OR

Is your primary concern to just determine linkage, ability, and interest?

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BRAZILIAN NGO INNOVATIONS:



Similar to the cultural importance Mexicans place on family and community, Brazilians place strong emphasis on their relationships. Over the past several years, the Brazilian organization, Legiao de Boa Vontage has made an overt effort to better connect their organization with the familiar faces of community benefactors and beneficiaries. Through the simple operational innovation of a t-shirt, they have improved both awareness and support.

THE BEST VEHICLE FOR GIVING... MOTORCYCLES:

The operational innovations of Legiao de Boa Vontage doesn't stop with their use of t-shirts. By reflecting the Brazilian cultural importance of face-to-face interaction, both in asking and in thanking, they are seeing success with a new type of "giving vehicle" that reinforces interpersonal authenticity and shows an understanding for demonstrating an urgency of need.

Legiao de Boa Vontage met the challenges of gift collection where mail is unreliable and cash is king with a fleet of motorcycles dispatched each day following phone calls by staff members. Each donor is personally visited (and thanked for what is typically a cash gift) within hours of their pledge by a cyclist who weaves through the dense traffic of the cities.

Are you using the manner or method of asking and receiving to reinforce an organizational urgency of need?

OR

Do you follow-up phone solicitations with postal mail and depend on reply envelopes in your direct mail appeals?

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JAPANESE TRADITION OF GIVING:

“Japan has long been uneasy about non-profit organisations. It lacks a tradition of private philanthropy. Support for the needy is often expected to come from the family. Officials tend to regard NPOs as meddling amateurs.”

Japan, long hostile to non-profit groups, is easing up. (2011, July 7). *The Economist*, Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/18929259>

“For Japanese, time and money are given with equal readiness due to a strong sense of payback, or of doing one’s share toward community survival. Japanese mutual aid associations, originally established for economic survival and political advocacy, have become more social, focusing less on giving assistance and more on preserving the culture.”

Petty, J. G. (2001). *Cultivating diversity in fundraising*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

LEVERAGING THE FAMILY CIRCLE:

Because of the longstanding absence of organized philanthropy, Japanese, like most Asian cultures, are more likely to provide financial gifts in other than nominal amounts only after significant contributions of time—e.g. volunteering on boards, advisory councils, and event committees (Petty, 2001).

“Among Asian Americans, informal giving is related to close family and social circles. These circles of family and friends seem to expand as financial means increase” (Petty, 2001).

The cultural example of the Japanese reinforces the importance of focusing on those closest to the mission and most passionately connected to the organization.

Are you leveraging the passion of those closest to the organization to conduct face-to-face solicitation and stewardship?

OR

Are you spending time and money on donor acquisition efforts that rely heavily on impersonal methods (e.g. direct mail and e-marketing)?