

HOT TIPS FOR RAISING AND SPENDING MONEY, PART 1

Committee For Conventions member John Dixon runs a non-profit organization, and offers the following advice:

In the non-profit world, it is called **development**.

In the college world, they found a fancier name: **advancement**.

To you and me, it is **asking for money**, and organists don't like to do this. No doubt a number of your Steering Committee members said, "I'll do anything except ask for money." That's what my Steering Committee members told me!

It's not that hard. You need to make the commitment to do it well; you need to work hard; you need the assistance of someone who has done it before; and you need to know at least a few people who might be worth asking. You also need to start **YESTERDAY**.

When I first started asking other people for money, I had a colleague who gave me some simple advice:

People give to people.

Also:

Some will, some won't

So what? Move on.

In other words, you can't let a negative response get to you. It is not a personal reflection on you. What you are trying to do is match your request with your potential donor's charitable giving objectives. A lot of generous people have a pretty good idea of how they would like to direct their gifts. If a potential donor likes organ music and is a member of one of your host churches, and you ask for a gift to underwrite the convention performance at that church, what do think your chances are of receiving a gift? They are very good.

When you receive a gift, remember to thank the donor promptly, in writing. Then make sure the donor is recognized in your program book.

You cannot take rejection personally. If a door is closing, see if another one will open:

Potential donor: “I’m sorry, but I’m not in a position to help you with this project. I have made a significant commitment to the Symphony and it is all I can do to keep current on that pledge.”

You: “Thank you so much for supporting the wonderful music in our community. I certainly hope you can attend some of our recitals. You do seem to have a lot of friends who are interested in music. Is there anyone you could introduce to us who might have a particular interest in the pipe organ and would welcome the opportunity to support our convention?”

Significant gifts from individuals take time to cultivate, but I have found they give the best return on the time and effort invested.

You can also apply for grants. This takes a lot of time, and all granting agencies are under extreme pressure – too many requests and not enough funds. The best advice I can give is to talk to the person who makes the grant decisions BEFORE you sit down to write the application. I have saved myself from starting many grant applications that were guaranteed to yield nothing, because the decision-maker told me that directly.

If you have connections to corporate sources, work those hard for corporate gifts. If you have no connections, bear in mind that any corporation you are thinking about is making gifts to folks who DO have connections. If you have the time, make a connection or two and see where that leads you. Remember, it takes time. Start yesterday.

Don’t expect to make a large profit on your exhibits, but you can look on advertising in the program book to be a good source of revenue. Again, it takes time, it takes energy, and it takes a lot of the advice mentioned above. Be methodical. Analyze previous program books to see who placed ads. Was it organ builders? Local churches in honor of their organists? Companies providing services to organists? AGO chapters? Draw up a plan and go for it. And expect to be booking ads up until the day before you go to print. You might think an “early-bird special” deadline of December 31 will stimulate advertising activity for your July convention, but it will not. You will need to plug away in February and March.... and April and May...

Good luck. If you think I can offer any useful advice, please e-mail JohnSDixon@aol.com and we’ll set up a time to chat.

John S. Dixon