

STRONG PARKS, STRONG COMMUNITIES

Tool 9: Fundraising Motivations

The charitable actions of individuals reveal important core values that people bring to the community. *The Seven Faces of Philanthropy*, by Russ Prince and Karen Maru File, describes seven different types of “givers” with different motivations. While many people have more than one motivation, nearly everyone falls more obviously into one of these categories over the others. When you design your organization’s fundraising materials, you might want to consider using language in your messaging to resonate with these different types of audiences and their giving motivations.

Communitarians (26%) Give because of their sense of belonging to a social community. They give, not out of a sense of obligation, but because they consider nonprofit organizations to be effective at delivering social services and attuned with community needs. These people often have a history in, and ties to, their local community. They support cultural, human service, religious and educational organizations. “Doing Good Makes Sense.”

The Devout (21%) Do good based in their belief in God. They believe giving is a moral obligation. Everyone needs to take responsibility for creating a better world and should not expect personal recognition for the volunteering of time, talent, or money. “Doing Good is God’s Will.”

Investors (15%) See philanthropy as “good business.” They are motivated by the personal tax and estate benefits philanthropy represents. They also give in the same way they invest their personal wealth—looking for nonprofit causes and organizations which are businesslike and effectively respond to civic needs. “Doing Good is Good Business.”

Socialites (11%) Focus on doing good work or charitable giving of money because it can be fun. They are often members of a social class or group for which fundraising includes some form of socializing and entertainment. Socialites are often charitable “at heart.” “Doing Good is Fun.”

Altruists (9%) Tend to focus on social causes and giving that provide a sense of purpose and personal fulfillment. They believe giving promotes spiritual growth (in this case, not religious-based). Giving is a moral imperative and everyone’s responsibility. They see themselves as the true philanthropists, unfettered and untainted by business considerations or personal gain. “Doing Good Feels Right.”

Repayers (10%) Do good in return for what they have received in life. This can involve gratitude for medical or educational benefits they’ve received. They think wealthy people have a special responsibility to be philanthropic in their actions and social outlook. Repayers insist on cost-effectiveness and want nonprofit organizations to focus on client needs. “Doing Good in Return.”

Dynasts (8%) See philanthropy as a family tradition: their giving results from childhood socialization by parents or other relatives as to the importance of philanthropy. Philanthropy is part of their self-concept and their rewards from giving include a positive self-identity and strengthened family values. They believe philanthropy is everyone’s responsibility. “Doing Good is a Family Tradition.”

Prince, Russ A. and Karen M. File. The Seven Faces of Philanthropy, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.