

20 Common Mistakes in Raising Charitable Money – Examples

***Disclaimer:** This document is not intended as legal advice. Your organizational goals, purpose, bylaws, and values should drive the creation of this document.*

The list is not intended to find fault or blame but rather to remind everyone on the team that there are ways to overcome the common pitfalls of this work. If any of these ideas are practiced in your organization, then see this as a moment to pause and reflect with your team about how to navigate to a more favorable position for success. Remember to provide some “grace and space” for everyone on the team as your organization plans a successful strategy together.

1. Failing to thank people for the ways they give before asking again
2. Doing everything except asking
3. Thinking that raising funds is for fundraising professionals only
4. Thinking that others can raise money for us
5. Forgetting to concentrate on individual donors
6. Believing that because people are wealthy, they will contribute
7. Selling a sinking ship (rather than supporting something worth growing)
8. Thinking that you can whisk wealthy prospects in at the last minute
9. Failing to research and evaluate prospects
10. Overlooking past donors, volunteers, stakeholders
11. Thinking that publicity or written materials will raise money – press releases, brochures, and advertisements will never take the place of relationships
12. Failing to guide and cultivate board and other volunteers
13. Thinking that your organization will attract support simply because it is a good cause
14. Believing that you can raise money by the multiplication table (i.e. dividing your goal by the number of individual donors, then asking everyone to give an equal amount)
15. Looking upon your work as a job rather than a cause
16. Keeping too many secrets
17. Promising the world by Friday at the latest
18. Refusing to recognize factors beyond your control
19. Failing to have a plan that follows deadlines
20. Not making it fun!

Bonus: Thinking fundraising=special events rather than seeing events as a strategy in an overall plan.