

## **Understanding Solicitation: beyond the binary variable of being asked or not being asked**

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*Submission to International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, special edition on 'Understanding Fundraising'*

*Revised submission, accepted for publication 7/11/17*

### **Abstract**

The identity, motivation and experiences of philanthropists have become increasingly popular topics of study in a wide range of disciplines, yet no equivalent attention has been paid to the 'askers', despite research showing that almost all donations are solicited in some way (Bryant et al 2003; Bekkers 2005, Gunstone and Ellison, 2017, p 4). The propensity to be asked for contributions has been found to be positively related to the propensity to give (Bekkers and Wiepking 2007:24) but despite the usefulness of this finding, it reinforces the suggestion that solicitation is a binary variable, such that people are either asked or they are not asked. This paper, drawing on data from in-depth interviews with 73 successful fundraisers in the UK and Canada, highlights the importance of the *quality*, as opposed to simply the *quantity*, of solicitation. Three important factors that lie behind successful 'asks' are identified and discussed: Firstly, they are made within relationships of trust rather than as a result of a transactional approach. Secondly, they occur as a result of

fundraisers' ability to be an 'honest broker' between donors and the organisations they might support. And thirdly, they rely on the fundraisers' skills in reframing complex issues and finding alignment between the recipient organisation's needs and the philanthropic aspirations of the donor. The paper concludes with implications for practice.

**Keywords:** Fundraising; solicitation; charitable giving; philanthropy; donor relations

## Context

Fundraised income is of great importance to most nonprofit organisations, accounting for substantive amounts of total income. A 12-country study found that it accounts, on average, for 23% of the income of nonprofit organisations (Salamon et al, 2013, p.10). To take the two countries that are the subject of this paper: in the UK, a third (38%) of charity income comes from voluntary donations and gifts (NCVO, 2016), and in Canada, 14% of income in the non-profit sector (excluding hospitals, universities and colleges) comes from donations, compared with 19.5% from public funding and 66.5% from earned income (Statistics Canada 2007). The reliance on fundraised income is even higher amongst the vast majority of smaller charities that receive no public funding and have no mechanism for earning income (Clifford et al, 2013, p.255).

Despite its importance, our awareness and understanding of the role that fundraisers play in securing donations is low, especially in contrast to our understanding of donors and philanthropists. In recent decades there has been a rapid growth in studies seeking to understand why, how and under what conditions private wealth is given to promote the public good. This research into philanthropic behaviour has primarily focused on the donors, regardless of the disciplinary setting of the studies: marketing academics have studied topics such as donor giving behaviour (Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007a) and how donors interact with charity brands (Sargeant et al, 2008; Faulkner, 2015); economists have studied the impact of adjusting the price of giving and sought to identify the benefits that the donor is 'buying' (see, for example, Andreoni, 2015); psychologists have explored inter-

relations between personal traits and altruistic behaviour (see, for example, Oppenheimer and Olivola, 2011); and sociologists have identified social structures that trigger philanthropic acts (see, for example, Bekkers and Wiepking, 2011). These studies amount to a substantive body of understanding, and yet they are deficient in one crucial regard: they are largely focused on the supply-side (those who make donations) and overlook almost entirely the demand-side (those who solicit donations).

There are a handful of studies demonstrating that almost every donation is prompted (Bryant et al 2003; Bekkers 2005, Gunstone and Ellison, 2017, p 4) and that people are more likely to give and also tend to donate more when they are asked (Andreoni, 2006). Yet despite empirical evidence of the common wisdom ‘if you don’t ask, you don’t get’, awareness that charitable giving and philanthropy are not largely spontaneous is overlooked time and again in donor-centric studies (as discussed in Breeze, 2017: 8-9). One exception is Bekkers and Wiepking’s literature review (2007) in which solicitation is identified as one of the eight mechanisms that drives giving. However the studies discussed under that heading are focused on ‘the mere act’ of being solicited (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2011: 931) rather than consideration of the quality of the ask; the only paper that does not focus on simply the existence and quantity of asks, is instead focused on how much fundraisers are paid (Gneezy and List, 2006).

The substantially greater interest in philanthropy over fundraising is normative.

Donors – especially wealthy donors – are of general public interest and attention,

both historically and contemporaneously, whereas those asking for donations have not yet breached the public consciousness. The names of leading philanthropists, such as Andrew Carnegie, John D Rockefeller, Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, are well known, but no fundraiser shares a similar high profile. The recent flourishing of research on philanthropy is also driven by a practical goal: to identify the factors that encourage people to give, in order to encourage more people to become givers, and to encourage those who are already donors to give more. Whilst understandable, given the increasing expectations of philanthropically-funded goods and services (Pharoah, 2011; Bernholz et al, 2016), this can create an expectation that there is a 'donor type' or a set of socio-demographic characteristics and personal motivations that are allegedly typical of those most likely to give. Chasing this elusive donor profile has absorbed much intellectual and practical energy (see for example Prince & File 1994, Rooney & Frederick 2007, de Las Casas et al, 2013) and yet, given the global variation in levels of giving, and the fact that people can move from being non-donors to donors whilst retaining all other personal characteristics, it is clear that individual-level attributes offer insufficient explanatory power for understanding the incidence and quantum of philanthropy.

Research attention must therefore expand further to offer more detailed accounts of the context in which philanthropy occurs, which includes factors such as a conducive fiscal framework (e.g. tax reliefs for donations), high levels of confidence in charities as a result of robust regulation, as well as structures within which potential donors encounter frequent, plausible and attractive requests for support.

The crucial role of an environment that prompts and encourages charitable giving, and the importance of studying those enabling conditions, is summarised by Smith:

*There are no 'social laws' that explain who is generous and why. There is no simple list of variables that 'produce' or 'predict' generosity... [P]ossessing the natural general power for some given practice like generosity does not guarantee that it will be activated and exercised in any given case. Not all human capacities are triggered, cultivated, and expressed. Some, perhaps especially virtues like generosity, need to be actively prompted and tutored in order to become regular practices. That shifts our analytic attention from deep human neurology to more proximate triggering and routinizing factors promoting generosity (Smith 2014).*

The conclusion that the existence and infrastructure of asking leads to more positive responses has been reached in many contexts beyond financial donations to charitable organisations. The importance of asking to prompt a response has been identified in relation to volunteering (Musick and Wilson, 2007, pp.288-291), giving blood (Drake et al, 1982; Healy, 2000), and donating kidneys (Simmons et al, 1977). Even those who rescued Jews during the Second World War were more likely to have been directly asked for help than those who did not (Oliner and Oliner, 1988; Yaish and Vaese, 2001). These diverse studies all show that in many different contexts, a situational factor (that is, receiving a direct appeal for help) triggers the underlying motivations that lead to altruistic action (Yaish and Vaese, 2001). Transferring this 'integrative view' – that situational factors activate motivational

factors – to understanding the donation of money, means studies need to focus on fundraisers as well as donors.

Despite the primary function of solicitation in the nonprofit sector, fundraising as an activity lacks cultural legitimacy and social approval (Duronio and Tempel, 1997:171; Breeze, 2017:20-21), and people actively try to avoid being solicited (Pancer et al 1979; Andreoni et al 2011). However, whilst Andreoni et al's study found "*dramatic avoidance*" of solicitors in a natural field experiment of the annual Salvation Army Red Kettle fundraising campaign, it also highlights the importance of *how* the ask is conducted, confirming a prior finding that active solicitation is far more effective than simply presenting opportunities to give (Lindskold et al, 1977). As Andreoni et al explain: "*adding the simple verbal request of 'please give', is about as effective as adding an additional silent solicitor at the store*" (2011:11). This example underlines the error in viewing fundraising as a binary variable such that the crucial factor is whether a potential donor was solicited or not solicited. In the Salvation Army appeal those who were solicited with a pleasant message responded significantly more generously than those faced with a passive solicitation.

The variable quality of 'the ask' by different fundraisers, and the consequent differential in response, is the subject of our paper. Our research question is: What factors, beyond the simple existence of a solicitation, are believed to contribute to successful fundraising outcomes?

## **Methodology**

Our current understanding of the nature and impact of solicitation is not only hampered by a lack of research on this topic, as noted above, but also by the dominance of quantitative approaches in those few studies that do exist, for example asking whether or not a solicitation occurred, or counting the number of 'asks' that donors encounter. While such studies are useful in highlighting the existence and impact of solicitation, they cannot provide insight into questions about the context, nature or quality of asking. As Halfpenny noted, descriptive statistical exercises reveal little about the *"social reality behind the figures"* (1999:208). Qualitative approaches to data collection offer a better chance of comprehending behaviours because this methodology seeks to understand, rather than simply count, phenomena. This is therefore the approach taken in this paper.

The chosen qualitative method for this study was semi-structured interviews with current major donor fundraisers to discuss their views on the nature, characteristics and qualities of fundraisers and fundraising. In-depth interviews were chosen as the research instrument because we wanted to explore and probe the topic extensively in search of rich data that would yield new insights. The aim of the interviews was to reach an understanding of the act of solicitation that goes beyond its mere existence to highlight the qualities of good asking. This was achieved by gaining access to solicitor's interpretative understanding of the nature of the task of fundraising, the qualities required to succeed in asking, barriers to success and examples of 'best practice' in solicitation.



A total of 73 interviews were conducted: 56 in the UK and 17 in Canada.

Interviewees all had experience as major donor fundraisers and were in mid-to-late career with extensive experience in working in the not-for-profit sector and with philanthropists. Participants were drawn from the membership of established professional associations, attendees at professional association conferences, and/or were part of the researchers' network of fundraising professionals. Underlying the sample selection were the following three criteria:

- Holding a leadership role in a fundraising department in a major nonprofit/charity
- Being recognised by peers, such as receiving an industry award
- Having a high profile within major donor fundraising, such as being a keynote speaker at a national event.

The sample differs only slightly from the normative social background of fundraisers [Institute of Fundraising 2013], being predominantly female, middle-aged and lacking in diversity in terms of ethnicity and disability. The age range was from 30s to 60s with people in their forties being the most highly represented. 35 were women and 38 were men. Of the 73 interviewees; the roughly even gender split of interviewees is likely reflective of senior level of those interviewed.

The interviews were conducted over an extensive 26 month period between March 2013 and April 2015, reflecting the time involved in recruiting and interviewing the sample, who come from a fairly small pool (More Partnership/Richmond Associates 2014) and have pressurized jobs that are not necessarily conducive to engaging with

academic research. Interview lengths ranged from 30 minutes to three hours, with most lasting around an hour.

The research interviews were approached as ‘a conversation with a purpose’ (Robson 1993:228). A semi-structured format was used, which combined specified questions with the freedom to *“probe beyond the answers ... [to] seek both clarification and elaboration on the answers given”* (T. May 1997:111).

The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. The UK-based researcher conducted all the UK interviews, and the Canadian-based researcher conducted all the Canadian interviews. The interviews were transcribed and coded using Nvivo software (the UK data) and by hand (the Canadian data). An ‘open coding’ approach was taken, which involved reading and re-reading the transcripts to inductively identify the key themes in the data. To minimise the risk that data collected using this methodology was affected by any personal bias or selective perception of the interviewers, two measures were taken: Firstly, a research assistant who did not participate in data collection was recruited to assist with the coding process, this ‘third party’ review of the transcripts helped introduce an objective perspective on the data. Secondly, an extensive period of joint, in-person data analysis was conducted by the authors, during which iterative process the findings were reviewed, challenged and refined. Despite these measures, we remain cognisant that our chosen methodology of in-depth interviews generates ‘manufactured data’ that risks generating socially desirable and pre-scripted (albeit unintentionally so) responses (Silverman 2007). Distortions in manufactured data are

a result of over-scrutiny of the topic and over-reflection by the people being questioned. We took steps to avoid stimulating formulaic comments, notably by making our questions intentionally repetitive to 'flush out' any perceived 'right answers' and create space for respondents to express more deeply held views. However, the possibility remains that some of our data reflects the 'appropriate script' expected of people occupying the role of a paid, professional fundraiser. This risk can only be substantially tackled by future studies using a range of methodologies, as recommended in the concluding section of this paper.

The remainder of this paper presents and illustrates our findings, discusses the data, and ends with some concluding thoughts and implications for future research and practice.

### **Findings and discussion**

The findings of this study reinforce the suggestion that the quality of asking matters, and reveal three important factors that lie behind successful, fundraising asks.

Firstly, they are made within relationships of trust rather than as a result of a transactional approach. Secondly, they occur as a result of fundraisers' ability to be an 'honest broker' between donors and the organisations they might support. And thirdly, they rely on the fundraisers' skills in reframing complex issues and finding alignment between the recipient organisation's needs and the philanthropic aspirations of the donor. Each of these three factors will now be illustrated and explained in more detail.

### *Relationships of trust*

Prior research in the marketing discipline has highlighted the importance of trust in achieving sustainable fundraised income (Thomas et al, 2002; MacMillan et al, 2005; Money et al, 2007; Sargeant and Woodliffe, 2007b). This is evident in the now-dominant paradigm (in theory if not always in practice) of 'relationship fundraising' which involves developing and maintaining long-term relationships with donors (Sargeant and Jay, 2014, p.169).

All fundraisers interviewed in this study noted that successful fundraising requires more than a stand-alone 'ask' and pointed to relationships as the essential underlying element to successful solicitation. Those interviewed were clear that building relationships is something that has to come naturally to fundraisers – they must genuinely like, be interested in, and have empathy for people, and they need to blend these characteristics with a passion for their organisation and its cause. Fundraisers reported a need to be authentic in presenting themselves because donors will sense when these elements are contrived, and will react badly to standardised offerings (Breeze, 2017, p.115). As one Canadian fundraiser explained: *"just doing the activity [asking] doesn't necessarily mean you are going to get the result if, in fact, you are not engaging in donor relationships effectively"* (Canada 7). Likewise a UK interview explains:

*You have to enjoy relationships. The relationship is about getting to know the person and then weaving everything into it, fitting the ask to the individual.*

*You don't start with the organisation that you're fundraising for. (UK 25)*

Many of the fundraisers interviewed noted a recent shift in donor relations from the transactional to the relational, and described donor relationships as essential to establishing the life-long, legacy giving that can advance a cause: *“It’s the ability to create a connection... it is a relationship business not a transactional business”* (Canada 8). In discussing relationships with donors, the fundraisers interviewed consistently pointed to the need for the relationship to be grounded in trust: *“It’s about building trust by doing things in a professional way”* (UK 40), *“They want to know they’re in a safe pair of hands”* (UK 55). A Canadian interviewee compared it to the relationship one would have with the executor of one’s estate because:

*People give large amounts of money based on a proposition of trust... you put your trust in someone who you think will use the resources in the right way in your absence (Canada 2).*

Building relationships with donors and prospective donors relies in part on the willingness of fundraisers to engage in self-disclosure to prompt reciprocal revelations and thus deepen intimacy (Ragsdale, 1995, p.21). As a UK interviewee explains: *“So much of fundraising is based on trust and you can only really build trust by being real, by being open, by being vulnerable even”* (UK 50). For this reason, successful fundraisers are prepared to express their own personal feelings and respond to the donor’s emotions:

*Fundraisers must be willing to open up – we can’t expect donors to talk about such personal issues as their money and what’s happened in their life to make them care about a topic or cause, unless we as the fundraiser reciprocate and also open up and share revealing stories about ourselves. (UK 24)*

The need for authentic and sustainable ‘good relations’ not only refers to the relationship between fundraisers and donors, but also includes the relationships that fundraisers have with the leadership, colleagues and volunteers in their own organization: *“We have to explain to non-fundraising colleagues what we do and how we do it”* (UK 30). Extant research confirms that fundraisers must dedicate substantial effort to building a culture of philanthropy within their organizations in order to support the solicitation process (Bell and Cornelius, 2013; Worth and Asp, 1991, p.27 and p.37). The need to commit time and effort to convincing, educating and coaching the senior management team about fundraising (Daly, 2013, p.26) and encouraging chief executives and trustees to embrace a donor-centred philosophy (J. May, 1997, p.33) is embraced as ‘part of the job’:

*You have to be able to inspire colleagues as well as donors, and persuade them to follow you. It’s about conviction and belief. If you can’t do that, you really can’t do the job.* (UK 21)

Many fundraisers therefore refer to fundraising as a ‘team sport’ which includes not only their colleagues in the fundraising office, but also the organisation’s administrators, practitioners, researchers, executives and volunteers. The role of the fundraiser in these internal relationships is reported to include informing, educating, and inspiring their colleagues so they understand philanthropy as a means to advancing the mission of the organisation over the long term, not just providing one-off solutions to stand-alone issues or challenges. This is essential to the collaboration between the fundraiser and his or her colleagues, and necessary to crafting inspiring

solicitations. Further, fundraisers rely heavily on their colleagues to use the donor's gift well, delivering on and being accountable for the impact the donor expects. This reliance on others results in successful fundraisers accepting the task of fostering an internal culture of philanthropy as part of the job, and viewing their colleagues as part of their team:

*Good fundraisers see the finance team, you know, the support teams and the services team as all part of the same team... Poor fundraisers talk a very, kind of, 'us and them' language about the rest of the organisation and I just don't think that's effective. (UK 43)*

Just as some donors do not have a well-evolved sense of their philanthropy, some non-fundraising colleagues often do not have a good understanding of the transformative power of philanthropy and think of giving as transactional.

Fundraisers interviewed talked of deans, doctors, clinicians, researchers, curators, even chief executive officers and board members who saw donor giving as a one-off solution to a stand-alone issue or challenge, rather than the long term, transformational advancement that philanthropy can support. Thus, while the role of the fundraiser in the donor relationship is to educate, enlighten, inspire, fundraisers often find that the same work is required in their own organization.

#### *Honest broker*

In a relationship of trust, the fundraiser builds the donor's awareness for the needs of the cause and the organisation such that *"you are a portal to a world that interests them"* (Canada 3). As well, the fundraiser seeks to understand the

philanthropic aims of the donor; the affinity they feel to the cause and the organisation; and their propensity and capacity to give. This understanding is essential to finding the common ground, or the convergences, between the donor's aspirations and the organisation's needs.

Interviewees described this role between the donor and the organization as 'the honest broker', such that *"you are representing the institution to your donor and representing your donor to the institution"* (UK 49). In this role, the fundraiser must represent each side well, staying true to the spirit and intention of both the donor and the organization, and finding an alignment that accomplishes the needs and expectations of both: A Canadian interviewee concurs: *"You have to be able to understand not only the needs of the organization you're representing but you need to be able to put yourself in the donor's shoes as well"* (Canada 9). In order to be a successful broker, fundraisers talk of setting aside their own personal needs (e.g. to meet performance goals) in favour of getting the gift agreement that best suits the donor and the organization. Many fundraisers interviewed agreed that they are not primarily motivated by external factors such as compensation or public recognition, rather they are intrinsically motivated. They have a passion for the cause; they believe in their organisation as an agent of good works; and they have a sense of purpose about the impact their work can have. Whilst this sounds like an idealised depiction, the essential role of intrinsic motivation is summed up by one interviewee who said: *"What makes a fundraiser a fundraiser is the mission. It is the belief in what you are doing, and that what the institution, the people, the researchers, the volunteers, are doing, is going to make a difference for the world"* (Canada 10).



Understanding the affinity a donor has with an issue – what they really care about – is essential to finding the common ground, the convergences between the donor’s goals and the organization’s needs. It is also essential to the value exchange with the donor, i.e. the return they expect as a result of their gift. For some donors, being assured of the ‘good works’ of their giving is most important; other donors are looking for access to people and ideas in worlds that interest them (art, science, medical research, social issues); for others public recognition among their peers is important.

Being an ‘honest broker’ also involves fundraisers organising and orchestrating the various elements of donor relations like a staged performance. Many interviewees saw the fundraiser’s role as the choreographer or conductor of a performance, coordinating the prospecting, the cultivation of the relationship, the engagement of the CEO and/or a lead volunteer, the events, and the communications. The fundraiser is “*willing to be back stage*” (UK 7) whilst always “*putting the donor centre-stage*” (UK 32). For this reason, interviewees talked of the need to ‘have no ego’, to subjugate their personality in favour of both the organisation and the donor. As a Canadian fundraiser explained:

*“They [the fundraiser] have a personality, but they are able to subjugate it and focus on the people they are working with – whether it is a donor, or the President, or the Dean” (Canada 14).*

The work of ‘scene setting’ for solicitation was frequently referred to as ‘the art of fundraising’. To execute it with finesse, fundraisers have a high level of emotional

intelligence (as demonstrated in Breeze, 2017, p.87-88) to sense when to continue building the relationship, introducing new characters and events, and when it is time to make a clear 'ask' for a gift.

### *Reframing*

The third aspect of successful solicitation involves a reframing of complex issues in order to find alignment between the recipient organisation's needs and the philanthropic aspirations of the donor. Achieving this requires fundraisers to educate and help donors to better understand themselves, to identify what they care most about, and to work out how to achieve the difference they hope to make (Gunderman, 2010, p.592).

A key role for fundraisers is drawing attention to needs that might otherwise be neglected, and framing them in such a way as to encourage a philanthropic response: "*Fundraisers are a bit like Venetian storytellers, going down to the wharf to get stories from visitors to take back to their neighbourhoods*" (UK 38). The framing of needs also requires subject knowledge and patience. Major donors with a high level of expertise in the work of the organisations they support, will understandably prefer to interact with someone who can speak proficiently on the topic. In some cases, a fundraiser can call on the help of in-house experts, such as programme or policy staff. As one university-based fundraiser explains: "I have to bring in a bioscience academic to get credibility when asking for donations in that area" (UK 27). But most charities are small, so becoming an 'instant expert' is another task that successful fundraisers are often obliged to take on:

*In all the charities I've worked in, the fundraisers are expected to have knowledge only second to the people actually doing the work. I enjoy that, I worked in children's charities for ten years and I understood all the policy side of things, then I moved to a medical research charity and that was a big change but I liked challenging myself. I didn't have a clue about [the disease] so the first thing I did was read everything I possibly could – I still am – that's part of what I love about my job, you're given the time and you're expected to get that level of knowledge. (UK 5)*

Karoff confirms the view that donors want enhanced learning opportunities, and 'intellectual substance about issues and programs', and that they expect fundraisers to play a key role in this regard: 'We think fundraising that provides donors with information that goes beyond the typical case statement into a true learning experience is where the field is going.' (Karoff, 2005, p.52)

Having successfully raised awareness of needs, the onus is on the fundraiser to reframe the intention of both the donor and the organization to find the convergences where the organization's needs will be met and the donor will feel their interests have been understood and they will feel excited about their gift. Interviewees indicate that sometimes this alignment might look like an unusual fit and requires sophisticated social and negotiating skills. It was noted that some donors have a simple concept of what their money will do whilst others have well-formed ideas of how they want to see an issue being tackled. Interviewees described the skill of being able to respectfully redirect a donor's intention and "very gently

*negotiate some refinement of that impulse into something that is going to really be meaningful for both sides” (Canada 3).*

A further re-framing by interviewees, involves questioning the implication in their job title that they simply ‘raise funds’:

*I don’t think ‘fundraiser’ is the right word... because it feels ‘money’ and we do so much more than raise money. In the course of our careers we will have done something to change the world a little bit, to change the fabric of our world in some way, shape or form (Canada 10).*

Whilst a UK interviewee concurs: *“The top motivation for fundraisers is belief in the cause, the same as it is for donors”* (UK 22), other interviewees talked also of the importance of being motivated by getting ‘dollars in the door’. For successful fundraisers, this is aligned with their passion for the cause; their desire to provide the resources to make things happen in their organization; and with their desire to see the donor pleased and excited in making their gift. Interviewees from both the UK and Canada talked of *‘the thrill of the kill’* (Canada 7, UK 34), others referred to *‘fire in the belly’* (Canada 15), and there was general agreement that successful fundraisers derive great satisfaction from being able to ask for and ‘close’ gifts. As a UK fundraiser explained:

*I love fundraising. The passion I feel about what I do is because I’m giving someone with a lot of money the opportunity to do the best thing they’ve done all year, or all decade – or ever! (UK 12).*

Despite a number of similar expressions of the ‘joy of asking’ (in conscious parallel with the better-known ‘joy of giving’), which is a direct function of knowing what impact the secured gift will achieve, many interviewees expressed concern that the motivation of fundraisers is assumed to be solely about hitting money targets. Yet interviewees believed fundraising to be a higher calling, more of a vocation than a ‘means to a wage’. The successful fundraisers interviewed believe that their ambition to raise money is not for themselves or for any personal benefit or gratification; it is, instead, for the cause and the impact that they work to advance. This is a further reason why simply asking is not enough: successful solicitation requires drawing on all available technical skills and personal resources in order to achieve the outcomes that advance their organisation’s mission.

### **Conclusion and implications for practice**

This paper drew on interviews with 73 successful paid fundraisers in the UK and Canada to demonstrate that the quality of solicitation is crucial to successful outcomes. The data shows that viewing fundraising as a binary variable, such that an ask either occurs or does not occur, is to overlook the complexity and subtlety of the fundraising function.

The findings in this study support Breeze and Scaife’s position that:

*Fundraising is a dynamic profession that will carry an ever-increasing responsibility during the coming decades for communicating the existence of need and the opportunity to make the world a better place. The job of a fundraiser is only superficially about ‘raising funds’. In fact, it is a far more*

*complex and meaningful job that is focused on encouraging generosity and creating opportunities for ordinary people to do something extraordinary.*  
(2015:592-3).

In sum, fundraising needs to be understood in the context of the relationships that fundraisers have with donors and with people in the beneficiary organisations. These relationships involve more than just asking; they involve this tripartite body of work:

1. **Making the case** by raising awareness of the cause and what can be done to advance it, making action seem practically possible and morally right.
2. **Making the match** between the donor and organisation – building relationships both with donors and within the beneficiary organization; playing the role of honest broker; working out who, when, how much and for what to ask; and either asking or supporting the asker.
3. **Making the experience** as rich as possible so the donor gives again – validating the gift decision, celebrating and demonstrating recognition and appreciation, and being accountable for the impact of the gift.

Fundraisers advocate for their organisations, educating about the existence and extent of need; they promote fundraising within their own organisations; they innovate new methods for asking and giving; they enable people to act on things that matter to them and maximise their generosity; they thank, elevate, steward and advocate for donors. Solicitation is clearly more than a binary variable that either

occurs or does not occur. As this data shows: the secret of success lies in the quality, not just the quantity, of asking.

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