



Practical fundraising wisdom. One small idea at a time.

5 Quick Wins to Improve Donor Stewardship

During the early days of the pandemic, our team divided up our donor list and started making phone calls. We weren't calling to ask for money. We simply wanted to check in and see how people were doing.

One couple on my list had given faithfully every year but had somehow stayed under the radar. When I called, the wife and I talked for nearly 30 minutes. I learned that she and her husband were both professors at UC San Diego, heard about their fascinating research, and learned more about why they cared about our organization.

We continued those check-in calls each month, and they became one of my favorite parts of an otherwise incredibly difficult time.

When it was time for their annual gift, we asked them to consider increasing their support. They doubled their gift—but more importantly, they became increasingly engaged in our work.

Those calls began with no strategy beyond simply caring about how people were doing. They reminded me of something I've carried throughout my career:

Some of the best fundraising happens when you're not fundraising at all.

5 Quick Wins

- 1 Call without an ask**
Sometimes the best donor conversation has absolutely nothing to do with money.
- 2 Get curious**
Ask about their lives, interest, and what matters to them.
- 3 Ask why they give**
Their answer may tell you more than anything in your database.
- 4 Don't overlook consistent donors**
You may not know their capacity or interest until you build the relationship.
- 5 Keep showing up**
One great conversation is wonderful. Relationships are built over time.



TRY THIS

Choose five consistent donors you don't know particularly well. Call one this week. No script. No ask. Just connect.

