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Robert Burdinski Annual Giving

Bob's Latest Annual Giving Departures

January 2004

Happy New Year, and best wishes for annual giving success in 2004. My travels this past month included Colorado College, where Dr. Seuss wrote the year-end appeal letter (more or less), Barnard College, where Anna Quindlen wrote the year-end appeal letter (It's nice to have a Pulitzer-Prize-winning board chair), and St. Olaf College, where the annual Christmas Festival (which The New York Times called "one of the 10 Christmas events not to be missed") was in full choral bloom.

I also rendezvous-ed in Chicago for a session at CASE 5 with three friends featured in my annual giving "Departures" book (or as I now call them, three of the dearly departed). Gordon Dowell (Kansas State), Anne Remington (Iowa) and Kris Meyer (Michigan) entertained and enlightened a large audience with their stories from the annual giving front lines. Gordon was a particular hit with his new phonathon student caller recruiting video, which prominently features one caller being awarded a new car - just one of the "incentives" for the 1,600 students that volunteer their participation each year. All three were great - and here's to even more innovative annual giving in 2004!

The Latest Departures:
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"Innovations In Annual Giving" Available At the Case Web Site

CASE Online Series To Feature Annual Giving "Innovations"



The Bob CASE book, Innovations in Annual Giving, will be featured in 2004 as part of the ongoing CASE Online Speaker Series. The first session, scheduled for Wednesday, April 14th, will feature an overview of the book, as well as a special discussion on donor surveys and their use in annual giving.

The on-line series allows the "audience" to listen to the presentation via telephone and follow along visually via the webinar page on the Internet. The audience additionally has the opportunity to ask questions and interact with session speakers.

My special guests for the April 14th session will be Laurent "Lo" DeJanvry of the University of California- Berkeley Cal Fund, and Mari Aylin of St. Olaf College. Both schools have recently conducted alumni giving surveys and Lo and Mari will discuss some of their findings.

We'll also ask their opinions about annual reports, non- donors, Internet appeals, and other burning annual giving issues of the day. Make plans now to be with us -- from your desk!

[Read more about the CASE Online Speaker Series here...](#)

As Seuss Might Say, "At Year End, A Clever Card To Send"

Many people hunt for a good annual giving letter as if it were a lost treasure -- once they find the perfect one (or something hopefully close), they figure they'll be able to use it for every appeal they ever conduct.

In reality, your annual giving audience is a perpetually- moving target. Their decision to give can be impacted by your capital campaign, the economy, personal circumstances, your previous appeal letter, the way they were thanked for their last gift, or all or none of the above. The best appeals depart from the conventional and anticipate the moods and mind-sets of their audience.

A dash of timely and seasonal creativity can help. As the Colorado College annual giving staff considered the design of their annual year-end reminder mailing to prospects, they took note of the big publicity surrounding the year-end release of the Cat in the Hat movie. With famous Dr. Seuss rhyme schemes fresh on many people's minds, the staff saw an appeal theme in the making.

The result: A clever and tongue-in-cheek year-end gift reminder in classic Seuss verse. Fewer gifts in December? Here's a lesson to remember: If your mailings are stale, they're liable to fail!

[Download a copy of the postcard here... »](#)

BGSU's Staff Appeal Grew Because of (And In Spite Of) Its Staff



Bowling Green State University's annual "family" appeal faced a set of daunting circumstances when the development staff launched it in 1998: A skeptical president, even more skeptical deans, a poor development office campus image... and faculty and staff who had just received low pay raises.

The development staff persevered, and the 2003 appeal has reported gifts of more than \$800,000, reflecting 1,600 gifts (50% participation) from faculty and staff, including retirees.

What's more, many faculty and staff who initially opposed the appeal are now a primary reason for the appeal's success. The appeal relies upon a significant volunteer network that includes more than twenty "cabinet" members and a minimum of one volunteer from every department on campus. The program uses planning and training sessions, a kickoff event, e-mail updates, a family "honor roll" and a donor appreciation event to support its large volunteer staff. What was once unthinkable has become an increasingly popular statement of support for the university.

As she reflects upon the appeal's growth, Associate Vice President For University Advancement Marcia Latta believes that no time would have been ideal for launching the staff appeal. Her advice to others: "Damn the torpedoes" and work hard to create the staff giving culture you're looking for at your institution. It doesn't happen by itself.

[Read more about the BGSU annual Family Campaign here... »](#)

College Donations Make A Comeback



(AP) -- In what could be another sign the economy is rebounding, colleges are reporting an upswing in donations from corporations and alumni.

Some experts caution, however, that the comeback is fragile. They say any number of major events -- such as a downturn in the stock market or a terrorist attack -- could prevent the upturn from gaining momentum.

"People don't know what to make of it, whether it's a sign of the (recovering) economy or something more short-term going on," said Richard Ekman, the president of the Council of Independent Colleges. "But it is noticeable at several institutions."

"We're seeing a nice bounce," said Mark Richter, the vice president of development at the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. The Terre Haute, Indiana, school has raised \$12 million so far this fiscal year compared to \$10 million over the same period. Richter said alumni giving is up by 4 percent over last year.

[Read the full text of this AP/CNN article here... »](#)

At Carleton, The Annual Fund Board Lends A Big Hand

Carleton College

I visit with many colleges that spend long hours managing class agents - particularly reunion volunteers. It can be a difficult job - volunteers who aren't getting the job done often don't want to see your e-mail address in their mailbox. If you're getting burned out managing your volunteers, consider using some of your volunteers to help you out.

Carleton College can claim one of the highest alumni giving participation rates of any private college in the United States. While the Carleton annual giving staff certainly spends its share of time managing hundreds of class volunteers, a critical element in Carleton's success is its highly-involved alumni annual fund (AAF) board.

The AAF board takes an active role in monitoring the activities of Carleton's reunion giving and class fundraising programs. Board members serve in a combination of class decade and reunion year supervisory roles, with responsibility for those class agents in their decade or reunion group. They serve an important function by providing a peer-to-peer "nudge" that keeps class agents on track. In addition, volunteers have a stronger overall ownership of the annual fund program because of their hand-on leadership role.

If you're getting frustrated because poor volunteers won't return your calls, recruit their peers to help you keep them engaged. As Carleton's 57% alumni giving rate can attest, a productive annual fund board can help lift your alumni participation to new heights.

[Read more about the Carleton College Alumni Annual Fund here... »](#)

New Study: Giving Makes Your Donors Healthier



If you're hung up on ideas for an appeal letter for the new year, how about your donors' own good? The old adage that it is better to give than to receive is more than just biblical wisdom or a mother's chasten to her child -- science is proving it to be the key to a healthier, happier, even longer life.

A flurry of research is showing that giving has a whole range of health benefits, including fewer aches and pains, better mental health, lower stress levels and improved protection against illness.

And if one study has it right, the best gift you can give is yourself. Benevolence, it found, can be better than not smoking or exercising four times a week if it is long life you seek.

Stephen Post, an American bioethicist examining the growing body of evidence linking altruism to improved health, says people have always understood that giving has benefits. But no one has quite figured out exactly why that is.

[Read the full text of this Ottawa Citizen article here... »](#)

Subscribe To Fundlist And Join The Discussion

FundList has existed for ten years and is the largest email listserv for fundraisers in the world - with more than 2,000 subscribers. It's my third year serving as the moderator of this great annual giving resource. Subscribing is easy, and message postings are completely spam-free!

If you're not familiar with a listserv, subscribers can post questions to the FundList mailbox. Your question gets sent out to FundList's 2,000 subscribers, and you'll receive responses in reply from those who have something to offer. It's a great way to keep abreast of the latest issues in annual giving, and a great way to keep informed about the best new ideas as well.

FundList subscribers additionally enjoy access to the FundList Briefcase - an on-line repository of direct mail pieces, telemarketing scripts, program plans, and hundreds of other samples shared by dozens of institutions through FundList over the years.

Give it a try - It's all free.

[Learn more about FundList here... »](#)

Catch Bob at Upcoming Conferences



Here's an up-to-date list of upcoming speaking engagements. In addition to these dates, I will be a part of the CASE Online Speaker Series on Wednesday, April 14th.

February 8, 2004 - CASE 2 District Conference, Philadelphia Marriott, Philadelphia, PA - Innovations in Annual Giving

February 13, 2004 - Independent College Advancement Association Winter Conference (Members Only) Cherry Valley Lodge, Newark, Ohio Innovations in

Annual Giving

July 19, 2004 - Sharing the Annual Fund Fundamentals (STAFF) Conference at Union College (Members Only) - Reactivating Lapsed Donors

[Add Bob to YOUR conference agenda... »](#)

"Innovations In Annual Giving" Available At the Case Web Site

Writing for "More Innovations in Annual Giving" is underway, but here are some recently-received testimonials for the first "Innovations:"

"Innovations in Annual Giving will provide those managing mature annual funds in the UK with a host of ideas and a broad focus to consider how they may wish to take their programmes forward." Hamish Stewart, Head of the UCL Annual Fund, University College London

"Besides the furor of new ideas it has generated, the book itself has become invaluable when approaching the many different academic units that we support and offering alternative options to the standard approaches." Laura Lucas and Tim McLaughlin, Mizzou Annual Fund, University of Missouri

"More Innovations in Annual Giving," featuring ten international "departures," will be available in December, 2004.

[Order "Innovations in Annual Giving: Ten Departures That Worked" here... »](#)

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