

Fundraising 101

(a brief lesson on how to ask for what you want and get it!)

Some basics...

IDENTIFY WHO YOU WANT TO CONTACT – AND GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

- **Coordinate your efforts.**

In this case, the right hand does need to know what the left hand is doing! You don't want members of your team contacting the same people. Either designate one person to handle all fundraising efforts, or, as a group, come up with a list of tasks and divide it among the team members.

- **Do your homework first.**

You want to find out as much as you can about a company so you know the best way to approach them – the Internet is perfect for this! However, if they don't have a web site, check out the yellow pages, ads they may have placed in newspapers and other publications, talk to someone who's dealt with them before, etc.

- **Make sure that you get the “right” person to talk to.**

Sometimes this takes a little looking into and/or calling the company to find out. If it's a small company, the president may be the person who handles this kind of stuff. In larger companies, it's often the marketing or PR departments. Some companies may have “community outreach” divisions.

- **E-mail may be the best way to make the initial contact.**

Especially with busy people – this gives them time to read and comprehend your message – and think through a response – on their own time. They may appreciate this better than having you “put them on the spot.”

- **Relate it to something they are familiar with.**

This was certainly easy to do when it came to *Depth Charge: Underwater Robot Challenge* – **everybody** knows about Battlebots! Oftentimes people aren't familiar with ROVs, but they are familiar with robots – and the Titanic (Bob Ballard used an ROV to explore the wreckage – and so did Jim Cameron) – and maybe MBARI (MBARI scientists use ROVs to explore Monterey Canyon).

- **Make sure you're asking the right company for the right donation.**

If the company makes propellers, you ask them for propellers, not underwater video systems.

- **Be specific about what you want – and be realistic.**

Don't just call and ask for “stuff” – list items and quantities. If you have parts' numbers, list those too. People are more apt to comply – and appreciate

knowing exactly what you're looking for, which saves them time and energy – with a specific request. However, following from that, be realistic – don't ask for the sun and moon! See the next bullet...

- **Don't ask a small company for a large monetary donation.**

While Mom & Pop's hobby store may really want to help you, if you ask them for a 100% discount on their entire inventory, you're not likely to get it. You may really turn them off to the whole idea, or they may think that wow, they just can't give like others are giving so, rather than be embarrassed about giving little, they won't give anything at all.

- **Use the fact that other companies have donated items as leverage.**

So many times people ask me if their competitors have given and what/how much! For smaller companies, let them know that they will be up there with the big guns – Oceaneering International, for instance. Make sure to pick a company that they may be familiar with.

You can also tell them about the tie to Jim Cameron's new 3-D IMAX movie, Ghosts of the Abyss, and how Mike Cameron and possibly Jim will be there in person. (Hey, use the Hollywood connection to your advantage!)

- **Let them know that they will be recognized and their contribution acknowledged.**

They will be listed as an official "2003 ROV competition sponsoring organization" on the MATE ROV competition web site, in ads place in industry journals, and on the many other competition materials (posters, brochures, etc.) that we produce.

Once they given you a donation, ask them for an electronic copy of their logo (saved as a jpeg or tif at at least 150 dpi) and a brief (2-3 sentence) description of their company that we can use on the web and in printed materials.

THE MESSAGE

"I am so-and-so from over there and..."

Introduction –

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?

Quick and to the point!

The pitch –

- Why?

Meaning, why are you contacting them? What is it that you want from them? This should also be quick and to the point. Most likely you'll be talking to busy people who don't have a lot of free time. They will appreciate you if you're brief. If they want to know more, they'll certainly ask! Just don't overwhelm them with information right off the bat.

FOLLOW-UP

"I'm going to call you next week..."

And do it! Unless they give you a specific date to call or a date when they'll get back to you, tell them that you'll be getting back in touch with them at such-and-such a date. Usually a week – 5-7 working days. If they tell you that they'll get back to you, politely ask them when you might expect to hear from them. Let them know – again, politely – that if you don't hear from them by then, that you'll be calling.

If you don't get them the first time you try to call back, call again in a few days...and again in a few days...

However...

NO WHEN TO QUIT

Tenacity is one thing, but pushing it and becoming a pest is another! If you haven't gotten a firm commitment after calling back a few times, put them aside and move on to the next.

REMEMBER TO SAY THANK YOU!

Beyond recognition on the ROV competition web site and other competition materials, I'll also send out a "formal" thank you, complete with photos, after the competition. However, you may also think about sending out thank-you notes from the team. Let your supporters know how much you appreciate them!