



**“Just Tell Me What You Want”
Marshall H. Ginn, CFRE and Joy Myers**

BRIDGE CONFERENCE
JULY 9, 2015

SCENARIO 1: You’re in a meeting with a prospect. You set this meeting up a few weeks ago over the phone, and you were very clear that your purpose was to talk about the campaign and to bring him up to speed on several key projects already underway at your nonprofit... You’re sitting there in your prospect’s office. You’ve gone through the introductory pleasantries. You’ve thanked the prospect for his time. You’ve even had the opportunity to start talking about some recent achievements at your nonprofit of which you – and the board – are very proud.

All of a sudden, before you can even transition to the role that the campaign is going to play, the prospect politely interrupts you and says, “That’s sounds great, just tell me what you want.”

You can use these moments as tools to learn more about the prospect!

- Keep them engaged in a two-sided conversation - for example, you could say: *“I can see that you’re really passionate, tell me more about what most interests you about our organization?”* Or *“What are you thinking about this project right now?”*
- You could also keep them talking by responding to “Just tell me what you want,” with the same question: *“What do you want for _____, our community, our organization, this project? Do you think that this campaign is going to make that possible?”*
- People loved to be asked for their opinions, consider telling them that you want their opinion on 2-3 things and tell them you want to come back and talk about specific dollars. *“What I need today is 1. Your reaction to this project 2. Your thoughts about this important next step in the organization and 3. A willingness to talk again about this project and your specific role in supporting its success.”*
- These moments are also opportunities for YOU to do some thinking about the situation.
 - You might try to wrap up the meeting more quickly and suggest a more personalized follow-up contact: *“We don’t want to take any more of your time today. [turn to one of your team members] George why don’t you give Robert [your prospect] a call in a couple of weeks to see if he has any additional questions or thoughts. Robert, would that work for you?”*
 - Sometimes the prospect is just really busy. *“It looks like you have a lot on your mind today; would it be better if we rescheduled?”*

SCENARIO 2: Your prospect is a very busy business leader. You’ve arranged a pre-solicitation meeting and you were sure that everyone understood that this was just going to be an opportunity to talk about the project, the need and the campaign. About 2/3 of the way through the meeting, the prospect, after looking a little impatient, says that this sounds really terrific, but she’s leaving town for several weeks to oversee the opening of a new office facility across the country, so there will be no way that she can do a site visit.

It’s dawning on you that you’re not going to be able to see this prospect face-to-face for a long time, and she was rated as one of your top prospects. You don’t want to waste this opportunity.

Even when you thought it was just going to be a cultivation visit you might need to quickly formulate an “emergency” ask. Here are some sample responses...remember, you should make up one that feels natural for you.

- *“This effort is going to require meaningful stretch gifts from us all, and I hope you will agree that this project is critical. I’ve gone the extra mile already, which is why I’m taking the time to talk to leading citizens like you. What I would like is for you to consider joining me in making a sacrificial gift to this campaign.”* This is good for a peer/volunteer.
- *“Thanks for being open to an ask already, but this capital campaign is very big project, and there’s more I want you to see before we get to that. However, we would really appreciate your getting involved now as a donor to our ongoing programs. Can we count on you today for a major donor level gift to the Annual Fund?”* Make sure you include a specific \$\$ amount.
- *“We would like you to join the other community leaders who’ve already shown their support by making a gift to this campaign. I know you care deeply about this issue, and I want to make sure you have the opportunity to play a part. Can we count on you today to do something special?”* This response might work well for the situation with the busy business executive.
- Additionally, depending on which of these you might have used, you could simply follow up by suggesting a clear course of action for the prospect. *“Tell me what works best with your schedule. Here are the next steps I see...1. Visit facility 2. Meet with CEO and 3. Consider financial commitment. Do you agree? Are there other steps you want to take? How do I best set these things up and communicate with you?”* Assume that there are going to be future contacts of some sort, and go from there. But be sure to suggest some form of action.

SCENARIO 3: Your solicitation visit is going very well. It’s the leadership phase of the capital campaign, you’re targeting gifts of \$10,000 and greater. You feel like your prospect has been rated carefully, but you felt that she was at the bottom end of the leadership gifts category. You finally get to the point where you ask the prospect to consider a gift of \$10,000 to the campaign, and she says, “Yes, no problem, we’d be delighted,” before you barely get the ask out of your mouth. Now you get the sense that your ask was way too low.

Is that it for that prospect?

Be ready take some simple steps to lay the groundwork for future gifts.

- Assuming that they said “yes” to a capital/endowment gift request, remind them that you hope this will be in addition to their ongoing support. – *“That’s wonderful, I’m so pleased you can play a part in this special effort. We hope that you will consider this gift as an addition to your generous support of our Annual Fund. We want to make sure that our programs retain their base of support even as we build for the future.”*
- If they say “yes” and it looks like they are getting ready to write a check to you right now, explore whether they can do that for a few years in a row. Remind them of the pledge payment period. *“Thank you for your gift; your ability to make it so quickly is going to build some early important momentum. Would you be in a position to make a gift like this again for perhaps 2-3 years in a row? It would make you a leadership donor to the effort, and your gift will have an even greater impact on our future work.”*

- Another option is to ask the prospect if they would like to be part of the campaign's ongoing success by servicing as a volunteer solicitor. And talk to them in greater detail about how you will keep them informed about the progress of the campaign effort.

Dealing with the “pre-emptive YES”

The prospect says OK to the gift, usually over the phone, so they don't have to do any more thinking about making a gift.

Your solicitors can certainly use their own pre-emptive response – and that's the enthusiastic “Thank You” with a quick follow-up phrase.

- *“Thanks so much, that's fantastic. Would you like to really demonstrate your support of our work by committing to make this same gift for 3 or 4 years in a row? We have a special giving club for sustaining donors.”*
- *“Thank you for being so enthusiastic. I can make this even easier for you by having you join our monthly donor society; it's a great way you can make a sustaining gift to our work. We have more than ___ donors who take advantage of this program, and I have a form I can email to you right now.”*

SCENARIO 4: You and the prospect have been discussing the campaign's goal and its underlying projects for about 20 minutes, and over the course of the conversation it's becoming clear that the prospect has not read any of the materials that were sent to him in advance, and that he's got one key point turned around in his head that is actually opposite from the way currently handled by your organization. While not angry, the prospect finally breaks in and says, “This doesn't really add up to me, if ABC is going on, then why do we need this major capital campaign. That's an awful lot of money! I just don't get it.”

It's clear that it's time to find an opportunity to regroup and refocus the conversation back on the facts and back on your strategy.

Sometimes you need to REDIRECT THE CONVERSATION to get back on your track.

- The prospect might simply be uninformed, may not have been listening or plainly is not on the same page. *“Oh, I'm sorry, perhaps I've been unclear, that's not what's going on at all, I can give you some more details if you like, and I'm so sorry if I gave you the wrong impression.”*
- *“This project is really important and has a range of critical components, and I think it will be worth your time to learn about them, plus I would really appreciate your feedback. Are there elements that I can help put into context for you?”*
- *“Before we get to that, I want to clarify a few points, for perhaps we're not on the same page, and I want to give you every opportunity to understand all of the aspects of this campaign. I would hate for us to be on different tracks and both be dissatisfied with the outcome of our conversation.”*
- When in doubt, thank them for their enthusiasm. *“Thank you for sharing that perspective.” “Thank you for being so enthusiastic.” “Thank you for helping us to know what makes you excited about this effort.”* Just that simple pause can be just the thing to pull it all back to where you wanted it to go. Thanking them can put you back in control of the flow.

Dealing with a prospect that has an axe to grind or who raises a sensitive issue.

- Remember that you as a solicitor are not there to solve all of the problems
- Solicitors should not even try to solve any problems.
- Thank the prospect for feeling confident to share and ask for permission to take their concern back to the right person. *“I appreciate that you feel strongly about this, and I am glad you felt comfortable to tell me about your concerns. These types of issues are never easy to resolve, are they? And while I can’t promise to resolve all of the issues you raised, I can promise to take your comments back to (the right person) so that they can be heard. Do I have your permission to share your thoughts with (the right person?)”*
- *“Again, thanks for sharing your concerns; I know you care deeply about this cause and the work that needs to be done. I do have some very positive updates on some of our recent accomplishments, and I think you would appreciate learning about them. Our work does go on, and I’m really pleased with what we’ve been able to do and the lives we’ve affected in our community. Would you like to discuss them?”*



Joy Myers
Arlington Food Assistance Center
Joy.myers@afac.org
(703) 845-8486



Marshall H. Ginn, CFRE
Capital Development Strategies LLC
www.capdevstrat.com
@MarshallGinn
marshall@capdevstrat.com
(703) 875-3000