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The Gift Planner's Role

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A gift planner is involved in a complex process which involves philanthropic motivations, personal considerations and financial impact on the donor and the institutions served.

To understand the PGO role best look to the Model Standards of Practice subscribed to by both the National Committee on Planned Giving and the American Council on Gift Annuities (www.ncpg.org). Responsible gift planning involves balancing the interests of the donor, the donor's family, the needs of the charity, the expertise of significant professional advisors and the PGO's experience, personality and style.

Consider a matrix approach to understanding the constant and variable behaviors of a PGO in gift situations.

The Constants: PGO must be an unabashed advocate for the charity's mission, knowledgeable, confident, supportive, reassuring and enthusiastic about its current challenges and future needs. The PGO must adhere to the charity's gift planning policies and standards. All actions must be of the highest integrity, fairly and completely representing the interests of the donor and their charitable motivations.

The Variables: Gift planning is a process involving others in an ever changing legal, financial and tax environment. The PGO must strive to maintain a high degree of competence in legal, tax and financial matters providing guidance only in areas where professionally competent. A PGO must be a constant learner in the ever-changing financial markets, and the estate and gift planning process.

Donors make the gift planning process interesting, challenging and rewarding. The essence is they are sharing their life's work for the betterment of mankind. The PGO must assess each situation and act accordingly.

Some donors are financially knowledgeable while others are unsophisticated and depend upon advisors. Some donors need constant attention and encouragement while others are confident and independent. Many share highly personal information, touching stories about their family accomplishments and disappointments, aspirations for their children and motivations for their gift. The PGO may even be invited into situations where they become a surrogate family member. The PGO must guard against situations evolving from

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professional behavior to personal concerns or gain.

Advisors play an important in gift planning. Donors should be strongly encouraged to consult with advisors to discuss their plans. The PGO must make their expertise available to advisors to explain the nature of the proposed gift option. If an advisor is not knowledgeable about certain aspects of the gift options information and substantiation should be provided. The PGO must be aware of the advisors motivations in dealing with their clients. Some advisors are client centered and welcome options that fit into the client's goals and objectives. Others may be threatened by the real or imagined loss of personal economic benefit.

Extended family members must never be ignored. They may benefit from the gift option or it will have a detrimental effect on their inheritance. To protect the donor's interest the PGO may be called upon to explain the donor's motivations and gift structure. A full, fair and accurate representation of the strategy should be documented to avoid future challenges.