

During this time of Covid-19 shelter in place I have had time to review some old files and topics which effect planned gift programs.

I came across a 2000 flyer from Retriever Development Counsel <https://retrieverdevelopment.com/> the comments are relevant today and are a way to do a quick audit of your program.

I have condensed, adapted and updated their comments to fit into this newsletter format.

- 1. Lack of access to volunteer leadership.** Planned giving is a team effort, no one persona can do it all. Board members, volunteers must be involved and help you reach more prospects. Planned giving connections often result from listing when people give you the clues to their thoughts and financial issues. Expanding the number of listeners is important for success. Today, cultivation of financial advisors is essential.
- 2. Lack of focus.** Too often those charged with developing an active planned giving program are diverted by well-meaning boards or executive directors. I have seen this happen often over 40+ years of experience. You need time to develop a good planned gift program which has sufficient time visiting donors, develop promotional strategies and material, and personalizing estate and life income proposals.
- 3. Insufficient or unprepared staff.** When staff are mismatched to the task they may fail to listen to donors and fail to understand what they have been told. Every conversation is an opportunity for an estate gift of some type if the staff knows how to present the opportunity for consideration. Hard charging sale-oriented individuals have a hard time with planned giving where the prospect has to consider how and when their planned gift fits into their financial situation.
- 4. Unrealistic expectations.** Planned gifts are for the long haul and expecting immediate execution is unrealistic. Family always comes first as donors plan their estates. Planned gift success needs to be measured over time. It may take an individual between 3 to 5 years to make sure the proposal fits their needs. A good start is to measure face-to-face meetings and donor proposals.
- 5. Goals born of ignorance or no goals.** Planned giving is driven by the events in the lives of donors, not someone else's arbitrary fiscal year end date. Goals must be born in reality, established over time and recognize success is the result of concerted effort over time.
- 6. Insufficient budget.** Consistent donor communication with potential donors is critical. Estate planning must be featured in all appropriate communication tools to keep your message in front of probable donors. I often say the road to success is the result of persistence and consistent activity tailored to your mission. Today, communications may rely too much on digital and social communication options. I have seen donors hold on to printed communications for many years before making a gift decision. Don't miss out on gifts by skimping on your budget. Planned gifts represent a big payoff down the road.

7. **Lack of a donor friendly or donor centric program.** Build your program around a Legacy Society program. Steward donors to the program they are your best advocates. Recognize all gift intentions in appropriate ways. Personalize all proposals to show donors the impact of their gifts. While documentation may not be possible in all situations, respect donor intentions even verbal intentions.

8. **Resource conflicts.** Your CEO has to have the support and commitment from top leadership or you may be trapped in a mediocre program. Planned giving success is a team effort born on good marketing and finished with personal visits. Fighting for space in newsletter should never occur as it is a waste of value donor visit time.

I trust you did not see your program efforts in the 8 items above. If you did a midcourse correction is needed. It is always about relationships and it is always the donor's money.

This article is being sent to you as an informational service of Connell & Associates. For a confidential proposal for any charitable estate or life income gift send details to the email address below.



ABOUT JAMES E. CONNELL

James E. Connell FAHP, CSA of Connell & Associates, Pinehurst, North Carolina, is a respected gift planning consultation firm with over four decades of experience offering a broad range of charitable estate and gift planning services to non-profits throughout the country. He heads CONNELL & ASSOCIATES, Charitable Estate & Gift Planning Specialists in Pinehurst, North Carolina. Contact him to help your organization analyze the value CGAs may provide.

Contact James at 910-295-6800 or james@connellandassoc.com or fax him at 910-295-6866