

# INSIDE& OUT

Hello, and welcome to our Autumn Newsletter.

Not to be confused with the bluff ex-military character in the terrible hospital-based sitcom I'm writing, a Major Donor is – or at least should be – a very important person on a charity's radar.

We've noticed a lack of quality Major Donor fundraisers in the market recently, making us wonder what really goes into this particular discipline. Not all charities pursue Major Donors – perhaps because initial ROI isn't that high. But there can be so much more to a relationship than just asking for cash: the individual concerned might provide a connection to a potential corporate partner; have their own foundation; or simply link into their network of peers.

It's definitely not as simple as just asking the local millionaire to open their cheque book. We spoke to Hannah Du Gray, Interim Head of Fundraising at SeeAbility, to find out a bit more about the intricacies. She has experience from both the UK and US Major Donor markets as part of nearly 20 years in fundraising.

Now, where's that page introducing Sister Sister Mary, the nun who runs the ward?!...



Tim Iredale,  
Recruitment Consultant

## Carry on Major (Donor fundraising)!

We talk about Major Donor Fundraising with Hannah Du Gray, Interim Head of Fundraising at SeeAbility.

needs support. Major Donor fundraising involves the entire charity from the CEO to the most junior members of the fundraising team.



### What is your background and how did you get into Major Donor fundraising?

I have nearly 20 years of fundraising experience. I started out in donor development and community fundraising roles before moving into sporting and special event roles. I was working at The Children's Society as their Head of Events and Appeals in 2006 when they started to invest in Major Donor fundraising and began to look for a Head of Major Donors. A protracted recruitment period followed and they were unable to fill the role due to the lack of experience in the market.

After speaking to some American recruitment agents about the idea of hiring and relocating an American Major Giving specialist, we were advised that it

### Let's start with the most basic question: what is Major Donor fundraising?

Major Donor fundraising is about securing large gifts from wealthy individuals. Ultimately, it's about people and relationships and it involves listening to the donor as well as clearly communicating why your organisation



“What we are also seeing is that more and more Major Donors want to contribute beyond money”

might be better to find a suitable internal candidate and send them to the States to work shadow a successful Major Giving team. That person ended up being me!

I spent four months in San Francisco work shadowing the Major Gift team at the United Way of the Bay Area. I also attended various Major Gift courses at the Centre on Philanthropy in Indiana.

#### What do you enjoy most about it?

The relationship building – getting to know a donor, understand their motivations, and work with them to achieve their goals and ambitions.

**Philanthropy is a very personal thing. To be able to help people realise their vision is very rewarding.**

#### What changes have you seen over the last several years?

A merging of private and public campaign phases is probably the biggest change – more and more charities are realising that they need to go public to actually find donors.

There is more recognition that you need to get out there and ask for gifts rather than waiting for the best opportunity or perfect timing. What we are also seeing is that more and more Major Donors want to contribute beyond money; they want to be more hands on and help to solve societal problems rather than simply provide funding for organisations.

#### What kind of person makes a good Major Donor fundraiser – do you need to be well connected?!

Someone who is a good relationship builder and who has lots of emotional intelligence. You need to be able to see things from the donor's point of view. It obviously helps if you are well connected, but it's not essential. It's more important that your Board and Executive Team have the connections.

#### How might a charity go about setting up a Major Donor Programme?

Start by screening your database to see if you have any donors or contacts of wealth that have the potential to support the organisation in a bigger way.

**Find out if your board has connections with High Net Worth Individuals.**

Identify projects that would be attractive to Major Donors and develop a compelling case for support that demonstrates both the need you are trying to meet and how your project provides the best solution.

Set up a cultivation programme and start to meet and develop relationships with your prospects on a regular basis.

#### Having worked on both sides of The Pond, what are the main differences between the UK and US for Major Donor fundraising?

High Net Worth Americans are generally more philanthropic. US Major Gift fundraisers are much bolder at asking for gifts.

**All board members at charities are expected to give to the charity and take a leadership role in Major Donor fundraising. They are much better at the elevator pitch.**

At the United Way, everyone from the Chair of the Board to the most junior staff member knew the elevator pitch off by heart and were extremely passionate and articulate about their cause.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

**The bulk of vacancies these days require you to provide an application form, cover letter or supporting statement.**

Application forms will require some of the stuff that's already on your CV in addition to a statement section, whilst the other two are essentially the same with different names. In all cases, this is your first chance to make a good impression so remember a few key basics:

- Don't write endlessly; keep it to 1½ sides max.
- Make it easy for the reader by addressing the points on the person specification in order, giving examples for each from both current and previous employment, and relevant voluntary experience.
- Remember to include a summary of your reasons for applying for the post and wanting to work for the charity.
- Check over the document for spelling or grammatical errors.

For more information and handy tips [click here](#) to view the application forms page on our website.

## GET IN TOUCH

**We have been recruiting Fundraising, PR and Marketing professionals at all levels within the not-for-profit sector for the last 16 years.**

For knowledgeable and friendly advice on any aspect of recruitment, please contact Liz Grimes, Tim Iredale or Vladka Paligova.

020 7928 3434  
Info@kagep.com  
www.kagep.com