



## **Build a Bridge to Major Donors**

[<http://napco.com/enewsletters/stories/frs/advisor/issues/285624122908542.html>]

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*By Abny Santicola, associate editor, FundRaising Success*

The No. 1 failure of development staff responsible for major gifts is a reluctance to get out from behind a desk, get out the door and see people, says Matthew Hugg, founder and president of FundraisingTalent.com. "It's a major problem," Hugg says. "It's very easy to get stuck behind the desk, sucked into internal projects, and have things take up your time that have nothing to do with actually visiting prospects and talking to them about your institution."

It could be due to staffers being out of practice or intimidated by face-to-face solicitation, or the fact that they've been handed 20 other things to do, Hugg says. He adds that when staff members are able to engage in face-to-face solicitation of major gifts, they should work to "build a bridge between the prospect and the mission, and then get out of the way."

The best way to do this, he says, is to tie the prospect to people who are carrying out the organization's mission. "Whether that's a faculty member in a college or university or the person who's out there actually working with the homeless directly ... your job is to build that bridge so that your prospects feel like they're making a meaningful impact on the object of the mission. Because, really, the object isn't necessarily, in the donor's eyes, to give to the organization," Hugg says. "The objective is to help the mission of your organization. Your organization is simply an intermediary."

An organization should, therefore, strive to be as transparent as possible. Approaching prospects in this manner makes them feel like insiders and conveys to them that they legitimately can have input in your organization's mission. Their role in the organization should increase proportionately with the level of support they give, Hugg adds.

Habitat for Humanity does an excellent job of this, he says. "They have a great way of making people insiders by actually giving them a hammer and having them work on a house. Not only does that accomplish their mission, but it brings people closer to what their mission is," Hugg explains.

*Matthew Hugg can be reached via [www.FundraisingTalent.com](http://www.FundraisingTalent.com)*