
Revisiting a Development Officer's 2008 Professional Resolutions

By Jay Angeletti, AHP Mid-Atlantic state representative

Just yesterday, after skipping my trip to the gym for the seventh straight day, I revisited all of my 2008 resolutions. With that in mind, I thought I would use this opportunity to share with you my top-10 list for professional growth in 2008. Beginning tomorrow morning, I have committed myself to talking with my colleagues and clients about the following:

Let's resolve to...

1. Carry with us at all times our list of top twenty-five prospects (the old-fashioned way on a piece of paper in our pockets so we look at them at least every morning and every night). Furthermore, let's make sure that we interact with these prospects regularly, at least every six weeks, and provide them with quarterly updates on projects they fund.
2. Write debriefs of our meetings with these prospects within twenty-four hours of each meaningful contact. These debriefs do not need to include perfect prose or a detailed description of the topography that leads to their homes. These debriefs should include, however, pertinent facts these people shared with us. These facts will be invaluable in our next interactions with these individuals and also will benefit our successors as they interact with these prospects going forward. These debriefs also will include next steps with timeframes.
3. Provide written briefings to our solicitors forty-eight hours before they solicit one of our prospects.
4. Arrive five minutes early for every meeting we attend. In addition to showing respect to the people who have taken time to meet with us, doing so will help better prepare us since we will arrive focused instead of distracted by the stress that comes with racing from place to place and worrying about getting there on time.
5. Actually follow-up with people we meet at events. Whether you prefer personal notes, e-mail or a phone call, it's important to do at least one of them.
6. Include planned gift vehicles in every possible gift discussion; whether alone or a component of a campaign commitment, planned gifts can tie people to an institution very effectively and can help people dramatically increase their support.
7. Produce case statements that our volunteers like as much as our designers. Professional awards for creativity are nice, but the best case statement is the one your campaign cabinet will use. Period.
8. Set realistic, ambitious and quantifiable goals—and revisit them almost as often as we revisit our top twenty-five prospect lists.
9. Read the Chronicle of Philanthropy cover to cover—from THE FRONT.
10. And, if you can only handle one of these resolutions, remember that old fashioned list mentioned in number one.

So there they are. Remember, especially when you're exasperated, that the work all of us do is critically important. And best practices, systems, metrics—they're all important. Most important, though, is that we do our work diligently and consistently, every day. As we move through the year, let's keep each other on track. It's better for us, and better for the organizations we serve.

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