

## ELEMENTS OF THE ASK<sup>1</sup>

The number one reason that people don't give money is because they are not asked. Whether your candidate is asking a prospect to make a contribution face-to-face or over the phone, the elements of the ask are the same.

1. **Establish rapport** with the prospect. The best way to establish rapport is to determine what type of relationship the candidate has with the prospect. Briefly discuss common interest or mention the individual who suggested you contact him or her. Remember to focus on the donor, not yourself.
  - **That was a great win by your favorite sports team yesterday.**
  - **Sunil Datt suggested I contact you. I understand you attended university with Sunil. We are also old friends.**
  - **I heard your daughter just turned five years old. My own children are X years old, time flies when you are raising kids!**
2. **Make a compelling case** for support. Frame your argument based on the candidate's personal relationship with the donor, mutual interest in winning or shared ideology. Explain why you will win based on recent endorsements, polling, and how much money you have raised. Answer any questions that the prospect has about the campaign and your positions on the issues. Explain how expensive it is to run a winning campaign and that the donor's contribution will be used to communicate with voters. It can also be helpful if you convey to the donor that their contribution will be used to purchase specific items, such as mail, phones, radio or television advertising.
  - **Tell them how they will benefit from your victory.**
  - **Prove that you can win. Share polling data, endorsements, press clippings, amount of money raised to demonstrate viability.**
3. **Establish the urgency** of receiving the contributions by setting a deadline. This could be the next deadline with your board of elections, a deadline to purchase

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from NDI Fundraising Tips resource.

mail, phones, radio or television advertising, or an internal deadline in order to meet cash flow projections.

- **Encourage prompt donations by establishing a deadline: reporting deadlines, upcoming event, etc.**
4. **Ask for a specific amount.** If you ask for anything except a specific dollar amount, it isn't worth wasting the time making the call. "Can I have your support?" or "Will you make a contribution to my campaign?" is not good enough. Donors are often looking for the candidate to guide them toward an appropriate contribution and without a specific pledge you are unable to accurately project cash flow.
    - **Will you support my campaign with a donation of \$XXX?**
    - **A donation of \$XXX will help us reach 1,000 more voters via mail solicitations, can you pledge that amount?**
  5. When making a personal solicitation, after the ask **pause so that the prospect can reply.** Don't talk over the prospect – he or she may be making a pledge as you speak. This can be uncomfortable and seem to last forever. A useful trick is to keep a glass of water nearby so that you can take a sip after making the ask for a brief break in the conversation.
    - **Wait and LISTEN.**
  6. If the prospect says no, **negotiate.** Before you attempt to reduce the original amount of your ask, ask the prospect if they would be willing to satisfy their pledge over a number of payments. Then, ask the prospect to give half the original amount. If he or she is still uncommitted, ask if you can send him or her some additional information about the campaign and call them back at a later date. Pin down a specific date and time to call back.
    - **Yes: Make arrangements to collect the funds as soon as possible.**
    - **Maybe: What would convince you? Can I call back at a specific date and time?**
    - **No: Why not?**
  7. Once a pledge is received or the donor has definitively said no, say **thank you and move on.** Donors are busy people and continuing the conversation is like trying to win the same vote twice. Follow up with a confirmation letter for donors and thank you note signed by the candidate.

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8. **Follow up!** Call back prospects that said maybe. Re-solicit donors for another contribution later in the campaign when you have new information to share.