Goal: To train people to become more comfortable and effective askers by providing an opportunity for them to find their own words and phrases. By serving as both an asker and a donor, they will understand the importance of asking questions and exploring with the donor.

Rationale: Most people don’t get enough practice asking, so the words don’t come naturally and they don’t have a large enough arsenal of questions. Asking questions is key – this is how we learn what interests our donors and what will help inspire them to give.

Specifics

Audience: Anyone who will participate in soliciting gifts in person.

Estimated Time: 60 minutes.

Number of Participants: You can conduct this exercise with as few as three people.

Participant Preparation: None.

Room Set Up: A room with flexible seating so people can form groups of three.

Material: Bell or other noisemaker, copies of Making the Ask Conversation Guidelines for all participants.

The Exercise

Facilitator: The facilitator is responsible for setting up the exercise, giving clear instructions, managing the debriefing, and providing a summary of key points at the end.

Introduction: “This is an exercise that will help you find a way of asking for a gift that works best for you, and to get some asking practice. You’ll also learn how to ask questions along the way that help you understand your donor better.”
Making the Ask Exercise

Instructions

1. Distribute the Making the Ask Conversation Guidelines to everyone and review them briefly. These are meant to give askers a start, but they should feel free to follow any line of question they find helpful.

2. Ask people to divide into groups of three.

3. In each group:
   a. They will conduct three solicitations of 10-minutes each.
   b. After each solicitation they will change roles, so every person will be an asker, a donor, and an observer.
      i. The donor should be someone who has given before and is being asked again.
      ii. The asker should first explore with the donor to learn more and then ask the donor to make a gift of a specific amount that is larger than the previous gift.
      iii. The observer should watch what happens and manage the discussion after the solicitation. The observer should not make judgments; just simply describe what is observed.
   c. The donor should not say yes immediately, but say “I’ll consider that.”
   d. The asker should find out what questions the donor has and what may sway the decision.
   e. Eventually the donor should agree to consider OR make the gift and the asker should wrap up the meeting.
   f. The observer should ask the solicitor and donor how it went and then provide any further insights.

4. At 10-minute intervals, ring the bell and give them five minutes to discuss each round.
Debrief

Bring everyone back together and ask each group to share two or three things they learned when they were askers, donors, and observers.

- What did you learn about the asking process?
- What was hardest to do?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Conclusion: Everyone has his or her own style and has to fundraise in a way that’s comfortable in order to be effective. We need to be prepared for conditional responses and continue asking questions to find out what will inspire a gift. Practice will help the words come more easily.