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### **Mining the Gold from Current Donors**

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Successful marketing strategists teach success is the result of following a solid “Market Penetration” strategy. For the PGO this means success comes first from the identification, cultivation and solicitation of current donors. It also involves offering existing planned gift opportunities to your naturally existing market. All too often a PGO may get caught up in the excitement of creating new products and bringing them to new individuals but this means they will be pursuing a much more difficult “Market Diversification” strategy.

To begin the PGO should work closely with the gift records individual or department to understand how gifts are classified and recorded. Here detail is important as the PGO needs to abstract from the entire donor universe a list of valid planned gift “suspects;” so he/she can further refine the universe to qualified planned gift “prospects;” so they may eventually become certified members of the planned gift donor society.

Knowledge of the how the donor base may be segmented will help the PGO decide which planned gift program, technique or strategy will be a natural fit to the characteristics of the donor base. Successful planned giving lies in developing close donor relationships with qualified planned gift “prospects” and soliciting them strategically.

Donors may be classified in several different ways depending on the nature of the charity and the capabilities of the data base software. Key donor classifications to examine are: total cumulative gift amounts, average annual gift amount, gift type, gift frequency, and the type of gift appeal which generated the contribution.

Some charities have more extensive donor base characteristics than others and will have key personal demographic data to help refine the potential “suspect” universe. Colleges can easily segment individuals based on the age of graduates from school records and/or graduating class. Hospitals may easily segment former patients using patient demographic records. Other charities without clear personal demographic data will have a more difficult time identifying their “suspect” universe.

Research and experience has shown consistency of giving is an important key indicator of an individual’s ownership in the mission of the charity. Not surprisingly it is not the dollar value of contributions but the number and consistency of gifts that is the strongest

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indicator of a potential planned gift prospect. Remember as individuals progress through different stages of their financial life cycle it is not surprising annual contribution amounts may decline as they enter retirement years. A good gifts recorder will spot this change and bring the individual to the attention of the PGO.

Individuals who self identify themselves by responding to mailings, magazine articles, ads or seminars should also be included in the “suspect” pool. Cross checking them with the donor base to uncover their gift history is important when expanding the solicitation pool.

In smaller communities consider forming a small prospect review committee. The committee could be helpful in qualifying prospects and donors by age and capacity. The goal would be to determine an individual’s suitability for inclusion in the “suspect” pool.