

Seven ways to deal with difficult donors

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Skeptical. Controlling. Underappreciated. Some descriptions of your donors can sound like a list of the Seven Dwarfs gone wrong.

But you should be looking at how your donors feel and communicate with them based on those emotions so you and your donors can live happily ever after.

Sarah Burdi, assistant vice president of InovaHealth System Foundation in Falls Church, Va.; Bruce Wenger, vice president of client services and senior consultant for Henderson, Nev.-based IDC, Ltd.; and Jessica Harrington, vice president of Schultz & Williams in Philadelphia, explain how to deal with your Seven Donors:

- **Skeptical.** These donors might not think your organization is a government conspiracy, but they don't always believe you. Try to be transparent and honest about how fundraising helps the mission.
- **Informed and involved.** They want to learn more about your organization and get their hands dirty along the way. Give them as much information as possible. Provide volunteering other opportunities to get involved.
- **Outcomes focused.** They want the details. Try to give these donors concrete numbers about what their donation is doing. For example, tell them that a \$10 donation can give a family an emergency kit or that \$30 provides a low-income child with school books.
- **Underappreciated.** They love your organization but aren't feeling the love back. Thank these donors and provide some follow-up. They might show their appreciation with another gift.
- **Too many choices.** Donors are bombarded with hundreds of different asks. These donors might be so overwhelmed with decisions that they ultimately don't give at all. Give them unique opportunities to give and focus on timely issues that give deadlines.
- **Do their homework.** They have your federal Form 990 and go over it with a highlighter. Be transparent and offer easily accessible information on your Web site and in other materials. Don't let them feel like you are burying information.
- **Controlling.** These donors don't like feeling helpless in their relationship with the organization. Provide communication options so they are tailoring the relationship they want with you.