



Somewhere Between 'Keekee' and 'Death'

Something happened the other day that reminded me about the two missionaries in the New Guinea jungle. They had to choose Keekee or Death when confronted by the chief of a fierce, wild tribe.

(What! You don't know what Keekee is. I'll explain.)

The first missionary, reasoning that nothing can be worse than Death, elects for Keekee. This turns out to be a protracted and horrible form of torture and mutilation.

The second missionary is offered the same choice. "I choose death," he says with resignation.

"Very good— death," grins the chief. "But first Keekee."

That's how some volunteers feel when they have to ask for a gift. That's what made me think of the story. I'm at a museum, one of our clients. An important member of the Board says, "I hate to call on anybody for a gift. I just hate it. I can't do it." For him, it's a question of choosing Death or Keekee. Anything would be better than calling on someone for a gift.

I tell him I know the feeling. I've been there, done that, too. I say it's a severe case of the dreaded disease— *doorknobophobia*. I explain that this is what I went through when I first started.

"Where am I?"

"In the hall."

"Where do I want to be?"

"In that man's office."

"What will happen if I go inside?"

"The worst is I'd be thrown back down the hall."

"Well that's where I am now, so what have I got to lose?"



Then I explain my “Golden Rules of Fundraising.” I tell him that if he follows these principles, he will get the gift.

1. Know everything possible about the institution, its mission and vision for the future, its programs and the project.
2. Make certain, in your heart-of-hearts, you’re completely committed to the “worthwhileness” of the institution and the significance and value of the project.
3. Learn everything you can about the probable donor you’ll be calling on.
4. Determine a specific amount you should ask for. This is after a careful assessment, with the assistance of the staff.
5. Give some thought as to how you’ll express the amount of your request. Say it out loud several times before your visit. This will build your confidence.
6. Now you’re ready to get the appointment. Setting up the visit is 85 percent of getting the gift.
7. Practice, practice, practice. I tell him I still write out what I’m going to say when I make the call.
8. Write out in advance all the reasons your probable donor may try to put you off. Practice how to respond.
9. When you make the visit, go in pairs.
10. Call on your best probable donors first.
11. Establish rapport in your early moments with the probable donor.
12. It is essential that you probe for concerns. Ask them questions. Listen.
13. Convey the benefit to the donor. It has to be a “win-win” for the institution and the donor.
14. Remember: It’s not about money and it’s not about the organization. It’s *all* about mission and the people who are served.



15. When you're finally ready to ask for the gift, use words such as: "I would like you to consider a gift of..."
16. Don't let objections rattle you. They are your best friends. Probe for concerns.
17. Get a commitment to something before leaving— either the gift or another date for a visit.

I finish my rules. I ask the Board member if this helps. He says he's still uneasy. "But I'm going to try. I think I can do it. Will you go with me to make the call?"

I explain that I won't, but there's a cracker-jack staff member who's a wiz at asking. She'll go with you.

They made the call and he got the gift.

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