

# Amanda K. Byrd

development + communications expert

17 years of nonprofit leadership experience | \$49 million raised | dedicated to low-income families

## Fundraising from the Heart



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# I Ricardo.

I almost flunked the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.  
I needed extra help, but my dad  
works the night shift and we  
couldn't afford it. EARN helped  
him save money for a tutor.  
Now I'm in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. I really want  
to be the first in my family to go  
to college. Thank you for helping me.  
Happy holidays from me and my dad.

-Ricardo F. Ortiz



I want to start by telling you about Ricardo. I love this story. This little boy writes...

This was the heart of my organization's mailing campaign in November 2011.

This card, plus a 1-page appeal letter and a 1-minute video that you can see in my portfolio on my website.

Meeting Ricardo and his dad, hearing about the impact my organization had on their future – I loved that. It made me really proud.

So for our annual campaign, I tried to give that same experience to our donors – the chance to meet Ricardo and to be proud of having an impact on his future.

This campaign raised \$118,000 from 250 gifts.

So apparently 250 people also love Ricardo.

That's fundraising from the heart, in a nutshell.

It's telling a story that you care about, in a way that hits the audience in the heart.

And you'll notice here that while Ricardo mentions EARN, this story is about him, not about the organization.

# People your results, not your program.

- Show, don't narrate.
- Choose one person.
- Keep the story simple.

People give THROUGH you, not TO you. You're giving people the opportunity to make the impact they want to make. I'm coming from a human services organization perspective, but even if you're an arts organization – people are not giving because they want to hand money to the legal entity that causes dance to occur. They like the performance, or they like being part of the social group.

So in general we want to emphasize the impact – what's different as a result of their gift – before we talk about what we do programmatically. Get them to care first, THEN tell them how it happens.

Because – funders are people. All funders are people. Even government funders are people. So show them why they should care, as directly as possible.

Show, don't narrate. Whenever possible, get out of the way and don't filter the message. Ricardo writes the note, not me writing about him. We see a photo of this cute little boy studying – that story tells itself.

Strangely, research shows people give more to 1 person than to 2 people. The bigger the need, the LESS people give. This makes our lives easier as fundraisers.

Even within 1 person – keep it simple. We're not journalists. We're marketers. It's OK for us to shape the story, to pick and choose within what's true and what's respectful of the person we're featuring.

Everybody  s a bargain.

“Your gift will have  
twice the impact!”

“We need \$500 more  
by Friday to unlock  
a \$5,000 challenge!”

Another way to get people excited and caring – everybody loves a bargain!

That’s what a challenge match is. It gives the donor more bang for their buck.

Take what your board is already giving you and call that your challenge.

Take a portion of a grant from a funder – ask their permission, they’ll be happy to do it.

People love the idea that their gift will go farther.

If your Board gives \$1,000 total and your goal is to raise \$10,000 at the event – say “if we raise \$10,000, our board will contribute \$1,000. Give now and your gift is worth an extra thousand dollars!”

And – you can set it up flexibly so your challengers will give you the money anyway, even if you fall short.

## How to find the people who you.

- Who already loves you?
- Tell them who you're looking for.

How do you find the people who will love you?

Start with the people who already love you. Your board members, people who buy tables at your events, people who already give at whatever is a high amount for you, people who have made multiple gifts.

Ask for their help. "I wish I could clone you! We really need more people like you. Can I please ask for your help?"

Specify what you want. "I'd love it if you would send a letter to people you think could donate \$100 or more. I'll write the letter and bring it to you to sign, if you'll just let me know who to address it to." Or, "I'm hoping you'll bring 2 people from companies that might sponsor a table at the next event."

## The of events. heartbreak

“ We worked for three months  
and netted \$10,000! Um, yay? ”

- It's not worth it unless they leave loving you.
- Remember, it's a show.

Events are almost never worth it in pure net income terms, unless they are really and truly volunteer-run. You work so hard and you come out with so little. Usually the net is just based on direct costs – we're not factoring in the cost of our time, if we're getting paid.

Even if we're not getting paid, what's the missed opportunity cost of the grant proposals I could have written in 3 months for much bigger amounts?

The only reason events are really worthwhile is for the long-term benefit of growing and renewing the group of people who love you. Whoever the “right people” are for you. Invite government officials if you need them on your side. Invite your foundation funders – for free – so they see you at your best and keep funding you. Have your table hosts bring the people you told them you're looking for.

And then make those people fall in love. Use everything I just said – directly show the impact on 1 person, have a challenge match, have your friends bring their friends – and put on a show.

Don't be boring. No proclamations.

Rehearse. Speeches, movement from seats to stage, everything.

You deserve . And money.

- *Ask.*
- Say the number.
- Have courage.

And then – at your events, in your letters, when you sit down with people –  
When you’ve shown them the results, when they’ve seen what makes you give your time  
and your life and your heart to this work – ASK!

And don’t just say, “I hope you’ll give.” Say the actual amount you want them to give. At  
your event, it’s “Please give \$100 or more right now.” In your letter, maybe it’s “Please give  
\$1,000, \$500, or \$100.”

And then – TRUST ME – just stop. Do not say “or whatever you can give is fine.” Do not say  
“or let us know if you’d like to volunteer”. Wait. Let there be silence in the room.

Just wait for them to write out that check or pledge form and hold it up for someone to  
come around and collect it.

Let them think about what you wrote in your letter. Have courage.

Because you are doing great work that you love, that you think deserves their love and  
their money.

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[www.amandakbyrd.org](http://www.amandakbyrd.org)



And you are RIGHT.

I have tremendous respect for the work you do, and the fact that this room is full of people who are making this community better for all of us.

Thank you for what you do. I hope I've helped you a little bit so you can go out there and do more of it.

I've posted this presentation on my website so you can go download it if it's helpful.

Thanks again.