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# The Art and Science of Major Gift Fundraising

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Founding Owner, Major Gift Solutions



# Agenda

- Introducing Bill and Major Gift Solutions
- Defining a “major gift”
- Introducing the “art” and “science” of major gift fundraising
- The Science of major gift fundraising
  - Finding the right donors*
  - Landing donor visits*
- The Art of major gift fundraising
  - Conducting a successful donor visit*
  - Crafting a successful major gift ask*
- Concluding thoughts



**William Myatt**  
Founder and CEO  
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Who Is Bill?

# Who is Bill?

- Theologian turned fundraiser. Pastor. Professor. PhD.
- Personally closed \$1 million gift via Zoom in 2020, towards a \$2.2 million annual budget.
- Consistently led my teams in outreach activity, visits, proposals submitted, and dollars raised.
- First gift officer at national nonprofit to raise over \$1 million from donors in portfolio.
- As consultant, helped raise over \$1 million 2x for local nonprofit with \$2 million annual budget.
- Have closed multiple 6-figure gifts at various organizations by combining a consistent work ethic with emotional intelligence (i.e., the art and science of major gift fundraising).



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Founder and CEO  
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What is MGS?

# What is Major Gift Solutions

- Boutique consulting firm
- Founded in October, 2020
- Serve nonprofits with annual budgets between \$300,000 and \$2 million
- Provide fundraising services that include
  - Mini-campaigns
  - Feasibility studies
  - Direct fundraising
  - Annual Appeal
  - Executive Coaching
  - Major Gift campaigns and strategy
  - Grant-writing



# The Art and Science of Major Gift Fundraising:



Poll:

What are your biggest challenges in raising major gifts?



## Poll:

What are your biggest challenges in raising major gifts?

1

Finding  
Time to  
Focus  
on  
Major  
Gifts

2

I don't  
know  
where to  
start

3

I don't  
like  
asking  
for  
money

4

Not  
enough  
major  
gift  
leads

5

Something  
else  
(drop it in  
the chat)

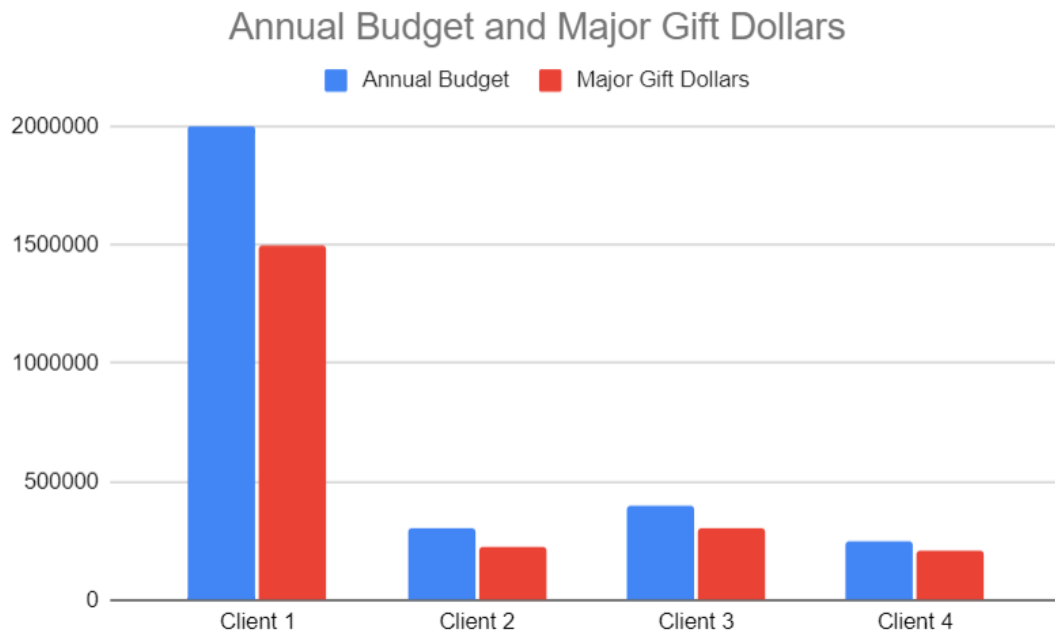
What counts as a major gift?

# What counts as a major gift?

- A major gift is a single donation or multi-year pledge that is in the top percentage of gifts made to your organization. Its value to the organization is significant enough that it warrants individualized attention from fundraising staff.

# The importance of having a clear major gift fundraising strategy

- ▶ For a small nonprofit, major gift fundraising work can be the single most important activity of your fundraising team.





Chat:

What are the most important qualities of a major gift fundraiser?

*Drop your answer in the chat*

What are the qualities of a successful major gift fundraiser?

# What are the qualities of a successful major gift fundraiser?

Art:

Science:

# What are the qualities of a successful major gift fundraiser?

## Art:

Disarming

Fearless

Listener

Good timing

Sensitive

Fortitude

Persistence

Positivity

Enthusiasm



# What are the qualities of a successful major gift fundraiser?

## Art:

Disarming  
Fearless  
Listener  
Good timing  
Sensitive  
Fortitude  
Persistence  
Positivity  
Enthusiasm

## Science:

Consistency  
Organization  
Follow through  
Hard work  
Understanding the qualities of a major gift donor  
Understanding the process of closing a major gift

# What are the qualities of a successful major gift fundraiser?

- ▶ *The best major gift fundraisers know how to combine both the art and science of major gift fundraising.*
- ▶ *The science of major gift fundraising will help you land visits with the right donors.*
- ▶ *The art of major gift fundraising will help you close gifts from those donors.*

# The SCIENCE of Major Gift Fundraising

- ▶ Finding the right major gift donors

*Once you find the right donors, the rest is easy!*



Chat:

What qualities does a major gift donor have?

# Finding the right major gift donors





Poll:

What strategies have you used to find major gift donors?

## Poll:

What strategies do you use to find major gift donors?

1  
The internet

2  
The newspaper or other media

3  
Public donor lists

4  
Community foundations or similar organizations

5  
We contracted a grant writer so I don't really worry about it

6  
Our own database

# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has



# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has

- ▶ Cash is king!

# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has

- ▶ Cash is king!

*The single most determining factor for a future major gift donor is a previous major gift donor.*

# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has

- ▶ Cash is king!
- ▶ Look at history of cash giving first
  - Single biggest gift
  - Most recent gift
  - Total giving
  - Annual giving last five years

*The single most determining factor for a future major gift donor is a previous major gift donor.*

# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has

|    | A           | B              | C               | D              | E              | F             | G             |
|----|-------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1  | Lifetime    | First gift amt | First gift date | Latest gift an | Latest gift da | Greatest gift | Greatest gift |
| 2  | \$4,650,000 | \$150,000      | 12/6/2006       | \$125,000      | 4/17/2018      | \$250,000     | 12/31/2009    |
| 3  | \$102,810   | \$5,000        | 2/2/2004        | \$50,000       | 4/14/2023      | \$50,000      | 4/14/2023     |
| 4  | \$50,000    | \$50,000       | 1/21/2022       | \$50,000       | 1/21/2022      | \$50,000      | 1/21/2022     |
| 5  | \$100,000   | \$5,000        | 11/2/2009       | \$9,000        | 4/8/2022       | \$40,500      | 4/8/2022      |
| 6  | \$25,000    | \$25,000       | 1/9/2018        | \$25,000       | 1/9/2018       | \$25,000      | 1/9/2018      |
| 7  | \$126,000   | \$25,000       | 8/24/2018       | \$25,000       | 4/19/2023      | \$25,000      | 8/24/2018     |
| 8  | \$75,000    | \$25,000       | 1/9/2020        | \$25,000       | 1/7/2022       | \$25,000      | 1/9/2020      |
| 9  | \$37,200    | \$100          | 12/5/2001       | \$25,000       | 12/26/2012     | \$25,000      | 12/26/2012    |
| 10 | \$62,500    | \$12,500       | 6/22/2018       | \$25,000       | 2/9/2022       | \$25,000      | 11/14/2019    |
| 11 | \$50,000    | \$25,000       | 4/19/2022       | \$25,000       | 4/25/2023      | \$25,000      | 4/19/2022     |
| 12 | \$50,000    | \$50,000       | 1/2/2020        | \$50,000       | 1/2/2020       | \$50,000      | 1/2/2020      |
| 13 | \$50,000    | \$50,000       | 1/2/2020        | \$50,000       | 1/2/2020       | \$50,000      | 1/2/2020      |

# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has

| H                  | I           | J          | K          | L          | M          |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Total last 5 years | 2023        | 2022       | 2021       | 2020       | 2019       |
| \$44,691.49        | \$32,325.00 | \$2,500.00 | \$2,891.49 | \$2,800.00 | \$4,175.00 |
| \$25,000.00        | \$25,000.00 | \$0.00     | \$0.00     | \$0.00     | \$0.00     |
| \$17,800.00        | \$14,150.00 | \$2,500.00 | \$500.00   | \$500.00   | \$150.00   |
| \$9,950.00         | \$3,000.00  | \$2,000.00 | \$2,000.00 | \$1,600.00 | \$1,350.00 |
| \$8,000.00         | \$4,500.00  | \$1,000.00 | \$0.00     | \$0.00     | \$2,500.00 |
| \$6,135.00         | \$2,550.00  | \$500.00   | \$1,050.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$1,035.00 |
| \$6,000.00         | \$5,000.00  | \$0.00     | \$1,000.00 | \$0.00     | \$0.00     |
| \$5,400.00         | \$3,650.00  | \$1,000.00 | \$500.00   | \$0.00     | \$250.00   |
| \$4,840.00         | \$2,340.00  | \$1,000.00 | \$0.00     | \$750.00   | \$750.00   |
| \$4,750.00         | \$3,250.00  | \$0.00     | \$500.00   | \$500.00   | \$500.00   |

# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has

*Before you spend time worrying about finding new donors, get to know the donors who already support you! ...even if they give at lower levels*

You will learn about the people who support your organization, why they give, how they see your organization, and how you may need to do to improve your organization.

And while you are learning all of these valuable lessons, you may close some major gifts in the process!

It is vital for everyone in your organization to know your donors, especially the Executive Director and outward facing staff.



## Poll:

On average, how many donor visits do you hold each month?  
(in-person and virtual both count)

## Poll:

On average, how many donor visits do you hold each month?

15+

10-15

5-10

1-5

I don't really  
meet  
individually  
with donors.



# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has

*THE single most important thing you can do to raise major gifts is to hold intentional, focused, regular conversations with the donors who already support you.*

# Finding major gift donors:

Easy strategies for finding major gift donors your organization already has

*If you are not holding regular meetings with donors, it is time to re-evaluate your fundraising strategy.*

# Finding major gift donors:

## Tips and Tricks for Landing Visits

- ▶ Work the ratios:
  - 1 visit for every 10 phone calls
  - 1 major gift for every 20 visits
  - To get one major gift, you may need to ask between 100 and 200 people for a visit.

# Finding major gift donors:

## Tips and Tricks for Landing Visits

- ▶ Consider using an email drip campaign
- ▶ Use all outreach methods
- ▶ Cooperate with administrative assistants and other team members to land visits with decision-makers.
- ▶ Request introductions from advisory board members, trustees, volunteers, etc.

# Finding major gift donors:

## Build an email drip campaign

- ▶ A successful visit request strategy will include between 3 and 5 planned emails and 2 to 3 phone calls
- ▶ Sample timeline
  - Day 1: Initial Email
  - Day 3: Follow-up Email
  - Day 8: Final Email

# Finding major gift donors:

## Build an email drip campaign

### Initial Email:

Hello {{FIRST\_NAME}}.

I hope you are doing well. We've been busy at ORGANIZATION. Spring is here, and the active season has begun!

I'd love to connect sometime and give you an update on the latest from our team. We recently completed our 2022 Annual Report [INSERT LINK]. It would be my pleasure to share it with you.

In fact, {{FIRST\_NAME}}, would you be interested in a 30-minute Zoom meeting? We've found that this is a great way to connect with our donors.

I am typically available between 9am and 3pm Central. If you could please let me know a couple of times that work for you, I will do my best to accommodate.

Thanks so much for your thoughtful support and encouragement. I hope we can connect soon.

Warmly,

Bill

# Finding major gift donors:

## Build an email drip campaign

### Follow Up after 3 days:

Hi, {{FIRST\_NAME}}.

Thought I'd follow up the below.

Any chance I can interest you in a brief meeting to connect?

ORGANIZATION has been hard at work. I'd love to tell you about it.

Feel free to drop me a note with some times that work – I'm typically available between 9am and 3pm Central – and we can schedule a Zoom meeting.

Thank you so much.

Bill

# Finding major gift donors:

## Build an email drip campaign

### Follow up after 8 days:

Hi there, {{FIRST\_NAME}}.

Thought I'd offer a final email follow up.

Can I interest you in a 30-minute Zoom meeting to discuss the latest from ORGANIZATION?

If so, let me know a couple of times that work for you, and I'll see if I can't move things around on my end to accommodate.

If you do not have time for a visit, I hope you will visit us online and partner with us again as a generous donor.

Thanks for being a part of the team!

Bill



# Finding major gift donors:

Build an email drip campaign



Woodpecker

Products ▾

Resources ▾

Pricing

Blog

LOG IN

GET FREE TRIAL

## Cold emails that start warm business conversations

Send cold emails and follow-ups  
with one of our **3 custom products**



Cold Email



Cold Assistant



Answer

# Qualifying major gift donors

Other tips for finding potential major gift donors  
(depending on the size of your fundraising shop)

- ▷ Donors who made a pledge
- ▷ Planned giving donors
- ▷ Personal qualities
  - Age 80+
  - Single never married
  - No kids
  - Cultural or personal connection to your mission
  - Availability to discuss philanthropy and genuine interest in your organization

# Qualifying major gift donors

- ▶ Follow other indicators
  - Gifts made from a retirement account
  - Largest gifts of \$1,000+
  - Gifts of stock
  - Odd values of gifts
  - Gifts from Donor Advised Funds
  - Gifts from employee matching campaigns

# REVIEW

*The single most important activity you can do to cultivate and deepen relationships with major donors is to engage them in 1-on-1 conversations.*

# REVIEW

*That means that the single most important activity of the successful major gift officer is*

**TO HOLD VISITS WITH MAJOR GIFT DONORS**



Chat:  
What are the elements of a  
successful donor visit?

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

- ▷ Listen
- ▷ Learn
- ▷ Engage
- ▷ Ask

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

▷ Listen



# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

## ▷ Listen

- Your goal should be to help the donor feel like they are a part of your organization and its mission.
- Ask them to share about their connection to the organization. How did they first learn about it? Why do they support it?

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

▷ Learn

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

- ▷ Learn
  - How do they give?
  - What tools do they use to give?
  - Do they have the personal factors typical of a major gift donor?
  - When do they give?
  - Are they are a part of a family foundation? If so, what is their typical timeline?

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

▷ Engage

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

## ▷ Engage

- Share stories of impact from the organization
- Highlight “the face” of your mission
- Draw from personal experiences you have had
- Be ready to answer typical questions:
  - What is the size of your budget?
  - How many staff are there?
  - What do you do?? (What is your unique value-add)

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

▷ Ask

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

*It is rarely wrong to engage a donor in conversation about their giving.*

*A philanthropic conversation does not have to be an “ask.”*

*But your main job is to raise money. Your donors should see you in that light.*

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

- ▶ Start by asking permission to discuss philanthropy. Donors will rarely decline.
  - “Mrs. Smith, would you mind if we talked about your philanthropy?”
  - “Mrs. Smith, I see that you have been a donor for several years to our organization. Can I ask you a few questions about your giving?”
  - “Mrs. Smith, you have been a generous donor for many years. Tell me, Why do you give?”
  - “Mrs. Smith, we’ve got a few minutes left in our Zoom meeting. Can we talk about giving?”



# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

- ▶ Do not be afraid to make an ask.
- ▶ You can use direct or indirect asking strategies.

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

## ▷ Indirect asking samples:

- “Our board has challenged us to find 40 donors who can make 5-figure pledges. Do you think this is a realistic goal?”
- “It is so helpful for our finance team to know the future plans of our donors. Would you be comfortable sharing your plans for the future?”
- “You have given \$XXXXX dollars each year in the past. Where do you see your giving in the future?”
- “Mrs. Smith, we have drafted a new donor proposal, and I would love to get your feedback on it. Can I send you a draft?”

# The ART of major gift fundraising: Facilitating a Successful Visit

## ▷ Direct asking samples:

- “Mrs. Smith, you have been a generous donor for many years. Will you partner with us again by making a commitment of \$XX,XXX?”
- “Mrs. Smith, we are looking for XX donors who can give us \$10,000 a year for the next three years. Would you be able to make that pledge?”
- “Mrs. Smith, it is clear you care about our organization. I’d love to share some opportunities to support our work at higher levels. Can I send you something in the mail for your consideration?”

## HOMEWORK:

Draft three ways you could make an “ask” during your next donor visit.



# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

# REMEMBER...



You are making a difference.

**\*\*Keep the main thing the main thing\*\***

# REMEMBER...



You are making a difference.



Don't apologize for your mission or your role.

You are doing great work that is important!

# REMEMBER...



You are making a difference.



Don't apologize for your mission or your role.



Don't be afraid to ask.





YOU CAN DO IT!

# Visit us online for more resources

[www.majorgiftsolutions.com](http://www.majorgiftsolutions.com)

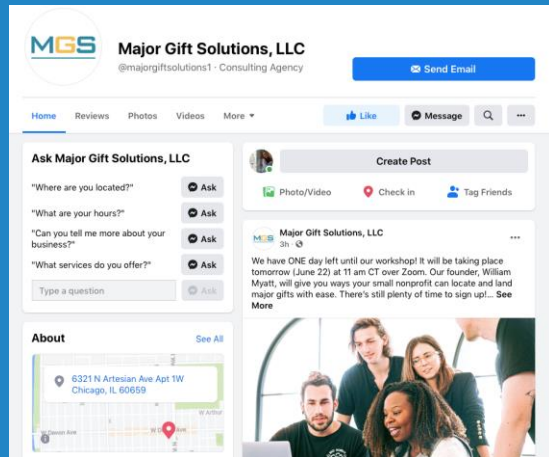
[myatt.William@gmail.com](mailto:myatt.William@gmail.com)

(773) 383-4997

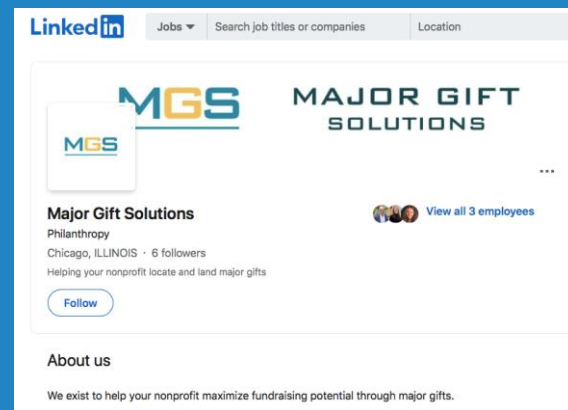
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