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# Nonprofit Strategies



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

## Donors give to causes they care about

*By Barry VanderKelen*

A report, "Money for Good," released in May ([www.hopeconsulting.us/money-for-good](http://www.hopeconsulting.us/money-for-good)), suggests strategies that will help nonprofits retain current donors and maybe expand their donor bases.

The report suggests rethinking donor relations, which is a longer-term strategy. Sprinkled throughout the report are tips that can be implemented immediately. Data were collected from 4,000 American households that have incomes of at least \$80,000 per year.

For example, one-third of the donors surveyed cited caring deeply about the cause as the main reason for making a donation. The second-most-frequent reason was how the cause impacted the person or a loved one. These two

responses link the mission of an organization to the motivations of donors. Focusing on the mission of an organization in marketing materials will motivate some people to donate.

One of the most striking findings is that three-quarters of all respondents conduct little if any research about the performance of the nonprofits they financially support. In fact, only 3 percent of respondents intentionally seek out and support the highest-performing organizations.

So while 85 percent of respondents say they want to support the best organizations, this report finds that most donors support organizations that are good enough. In other words, don't ignore your performance measurements, but don't rely on them to motivate donors.

Other findings reinforce existing research, including: donors want information about the impact of their gifts; their annual gifts are not motivated by tax benefits; bigger gifts come after getting engaged in the nonprofit's mission; and donors get turned off by being solicited too often.

The authors of "Money for Good" calculate that if nonprofits shift their donor relations to focusing on behavior rather than on demographics, the improved connections with donors will produce about \$45 billion more in donations.

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### Resource Use:

- Support nonprofit leadership
- Board development/training
- Strategic planning

### Nonprofit Business Column of *The Tribune*

Barry VanderKelen, Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation writes a bi-weekly column to help strengthen nonprofit organizations in the community.

*The Tribune* publishes the column every other week in the Business section.

Each column is reprinted as a one-page handout for use by local organizations. Barry can be reached at 543-2323 or by e-mail at [barry@slocf.org](mailto:barry@slocf.org).