

Strategies for Success

Smart fundraising ideas from Hartsook

The Four C's of Making a Case



Whether a nonprofit is a long-held treasure or a diamond in the rough, making a case for support demands the same attention to detail. Consider the four C's of diamonds as you develop your case:

Color

Diamonds come in virtually every color. The most well known are transparent, essentially colorless. If a diamond is intensely blue, red, yellow—great; but, if it is meant to be clear, hints of color will diminish its value.

When writing a case, intentional, colorful hooks and color commentary draw readers in; overpromising and maudlin sentiments raise eyebrows and turn readers off. Persuade confidently, but don't embellish.

Carat

Carat refers to weight, not size or volume. Diamonds of the same size may not have the same density. The same goes for case statements: Two documents may be the same size, but not carry the same weight. For a case to be weighty, by donors' standards, it should answer these donor questions:

- How much money do you want to raise and what it's for (say it on page one)?
- How will the money be spent (itemize it clearly)?
- How will the expenditures improve lives or a community I care about (give examples of past success versus anecdotal hopes)?

Clarity

A diamond's clarity affects its value. For a case, this means transparency, directness and precision. A case should answer questions before they're asked. Anticipate donor interests and concerns, and address them unambiguously, such as, "The existing building will be sold, with the proceeds going to..." or "The existing building will be renovated and repurposed to..." or "We are in discussion with realtors and architects about the best use of our current building."

Cut

Once color, carat and clarity are accounted for, cut-cut-cut. Two things donors always say they want from a case: "I wish it were shorter," and "I wish it had more details." Make an effort to achieve both goals.

Making a case for support is your nonprofit's chance to shine, and a carefully crafted case can be priceless.

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