Why People Give

Six reasons people give, with short videos from Anne Murphy

You can care deeply about a cause and still feel awkward asking someone for money. Your history with money comes into the conversation with you. So do the rules you learned about what is polite, and the possibility of hearing no.

It helps to understand what the invitation means to the person receiving it.

> **"Our job as fundraisers is to connect willing donors with important causes and ask for their investment."**

A gift gives someone a way to contribute to something they care about. Your conversation helps you understand that connection and explain what their contribution could make possible.

Watch the Why People Give video series

Six reasons people give

Loyalty

Think about the person who wears orange and black everywhere. Their connection to an organization is part of their life, and they want other people to know about it. Give them a useful update they can share. Ask about their history with the organization before assuming you know what keeps them connected.

Crisis response

A crisis can make a need feel immediate. Explain how it affects one person and what a gift could change for that person. Use a story you have permission to share. Make the donation process easy to complete, and test it before inviting anyone to use it.

Being asked

> **"Most of us wake up wanting to make the world at least a slightly better place."**

An invitation gives that intention somewhere to go. Explain the opportunity and ask clearly. The donor needs to understand what you are asking them to make possible, and how to take the next step.

Legacy

Some donors are thinking about what will continue after their lifetime. These conversations can include hopes for their family and the values they want to put into practice. Be prepared to discuss the organization's leadership and financial stability, including how it plans for the years ahead.

Six reasons people give

Gratitude

Someone who received help may want another person to have that same chance. Listen to what the experience meant to them. Let them decide whether they want their story shared, and connect the giving opportunity to the people who could benefit next.

Tax advantages

Giving can be part of a donor's financial planning. If they raise tax considerations, make space for that conversation and involve the appropriate qualified adviser. Keep any tax claims out of your promise about what a gift will accomplish.

Before your next conversation

Choose one person and one thing you want to understand about their connection to the cause. Write down a question that will help you learn it.

One question from the Donor Conversation Guide:

> **"Tell me about the first time you experienced philanthropy — or saw someone make a difference in your community."**

Ask, then listen. Give the person time to finish. Use what they tell you to decide what to discuss next. Don't assign a motivation from a checklist.

If asking still feels weird

There are six common sources of discomfort: your relationship with money, uncertainty about your social skills, the belief that asking is impolite, fear of rejection, assuming someone else will do it, and not knowing where to start.

Choose the one that sounds familiar. Write down what you need before your next conversation. A practice session with a colleague might help. You may need a clearer explanation of the giving opportunity before you feel comfortable asking someone to consider it.

The donor gets to decide. A no may mean the timing or project doesn't fit. The amount may also be a factor. It may also mean no. Respect the answer and any limits they set on further contact.

Prepare for a conversation in which the person can understand the invitation and make their decision.

Watch Anne's Why People Give series on YouTube