

Consider this....

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Fundraising for the Cause

Young Shluchim and Shluchos perform miracles. They make “deserts bloom” and they “resurrect the dead.” They don’t have degrees in social work or business administration, nor have they studied demographics. They do wonders because they don’t think that it can’t be done, so they just do it, and achieve the impossible!

These idealistic Shluchim know one thing: the Rebbe has empowered them with their Shlichus to transform the world through Torah and mitzvos and to bring Moshiach. The world is being transformed, dramatically, and Moshiach is on his way.

Kol hascholos kashos (Mechilta, Yisro 19). (All beginnings are difficult.) Many young, new Shluchim perceive fundraising as their greatest challenge. Small projects cost money; bigger projects cost more money. Maintaining their own households requires money too. The need to ask others to give them money makes them feel like schnorrers. This feeling is disconcerting for some; it is debilitating for others.

The young Shliach might think: “This balabos, the potential supporter, doesn’t quite understand what we’re trying to accomplish; with his limited Jewish background, how could he? And he’s a real modern, sophisticated American (Canadian, Tasmanian, etc.). And who am I? I’m just a yeshiva bochur. I don’t have a college degree; my English is unpolished; I don’t even know how to knot my tie. Why should he want to write a check from his hard earned money for my projects, other than out of rachmonus? Well, I really

don’t want people to have rachmonus on me; I’M NOT A SCHNORRER!”

Let every young Shliach know that he is not a schnorrer, he is an ambassador, representing the empire of Lubavitch. As Shmuel HaNovi said to Shaul HaMelech: *Halo eem koton atah b’einecha, rosh shivtei Yisroel ata (Shmuel I, 15, 17).* (Though you may be small in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel?) The young Shliach must carry this awareness with self-respect and dignity, and with profound humility.

The esteemed chossid Reb Shmuel Dovid haLevi Raichik a”h was a loyal Shliach of the Frierdiker Rebbe and of the Rebbe. Everyone who knew him knew what a humble person he was. Yet when he was sent to Los Angeles, California, in 1949 while still in his 20s, he was instructed to “go and sit in

mizrach,” in the shul seats reserved for dignitaries, “because of whom you are representing.” It was clear to all that it was not his kavod that he sought.

I’m not suggesting that every young Shliach push himself to mizrach. I am suggesting that every young Shliach think of himself not as insignificant but as a humble servant of a great master and to be cognizant of the sacred trust that comes with his appointment.

Now, regarding fundraising, I want to share a perspective that should ameliorate some of these concerns.

People give because they want to give, not because they are guilt-tripped or manipulated into giving.

Why should a person want to give away his hard-earned money to another person or to a good cause? From a Torah perspective it is an obligation.



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In communities of old, people could be taxed to fulfill that which the Rov/community council deemed necessary. Frum children today are raised to know that "The Very Best Place for a Penny" is in the pushka. There is no return for this expenditure; it is simply the fulfillment of one's duty.

Many would find the attitude that tzedokoh is simply an obligation noble and admirable, but too altruistic to sustain. People want a return, albeit a spiritual one, if not a tangible one. We have been raised to perceive that by giving tzedokoh we are fulfilling a most fundamental mitzvah — and that is our return.

The IRS knows this too. The IRS mandates that to document a tax-de-

Sure, you need money for the project, but your project is one that benefits the Jewish community of Somewheresville, and he, through his donation, can make it happen. Suddenly, you're not a beggar or a salesman; you're a broker, giving him an opportunity to make the world better. Furthermore, you will be his administrator, making sure that his donation will not be squandered and will be spent wisely. If you can convey all this, you will have become a dignified facilitator, and he will thank you for having given him the opportunity to support your cause.

Do not think of fundraising as asking for money you do not deserve. Think of fundraising as an exchange;

long it will last, how little it costs... and why "you should buy it!" Others focus on the potential customer's home, how nice it is, how proud he is of it and how challenging it is to keep it *really* clean, but that this vacuum cleaner that is available to buy (...which works so well, lasts so long and costs so little) will maintain a clean home that he can be proud of. This salesman is not selling a vacuum cleaner; he is selling the homeowner a clean home; his own! If he makes the sale, the buyer is thrilled that his home will now be cleaner and with less effort than ever before!

The Shliach needs to be able to articulate to the donor how by supporting you, his Jewish community will be improved, and he will be a bigger and better person for it.

They will pay you to do the work that they appreciate but cannot do themselves.

ductible contribution, the text of the thank you letter must state, "No goods or services were provided in exchange for your contribution," but can include, "An intangible religious benefit was provided to you in return for your contribution."

Some people can only relate to paying for "goods and services," but cannot identify with this nebulous "intangible religious benefit." Thus, where the sense of duty is as yet weak, and the "intangible religious benefit" is, well, intangible, the motivation for one to give must be bolstered by you, the Shliach, providing the return in a manner that the donor can relate to.

Instead of focusing on your needs, think about *your donor's needs* and how you are actually helping him.

you are doing good work for the local community (via the school, program for college students, Shabbos services and dinner, Friendship Circle, etc.) so you *warrant* the community's support. Your challenge is to articulate what you are doing and how it helps the community (creates a more moral society and/or stronger families; prepares children to be better people; makes the world a better place; fulfills G-d's master-plan; brings Moshiach) so that the people you are addressing will want to exchange their money for your work. They will pay you to do the work that they appreciate but cannot do themselves.

Think of vacuum cleaner salespeople. Some focus on their vacuum cleaner and how well it works, how

Reb Shmuel Dovid haLevi Raichik was a shadar (shlucha d'rabbana), a major fundraiser for the Rebbe and his organizations. In the 1970s, he used to call me and encourage me in my then-Shlichus, which included some serious fundraising. At a time that the Orange County, CA, Jewish community appeared to be hostile to our work, he used to say to me, "Gershon, s'eez duh Yeeden een Orange County vos betten zich, 'keem tzee mir; ich veel deer gebben gelt far der yeshiva.'" ("There are Orange County Yidden asking for you, saying, 'Come to me, I want to give you money.'"). At that time, I heard him superficially, and perceived what he was saying as hyperbole, not realizing the truth and depth of his words.

Be aware: Fundraising should not be viewed as a necessary evil which we must do since there's no other way. Fundraising is part of Hashem's master plan and your Shlichus, to stimulate you to reach out and touch the donor's heart, to influence the donor to become

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part of your holy work. Just as it is fundamental to put Tefillin on with one who doesn't do so regularly, so it is religiously important to touch the heart and soul of a fellow Jew to motivate him to donate to a worthy, Jewish cause, including yours.

Here are some very specific practical suggestions to help you avoid some common mistakes:

You have to ask for it: Do not think that people will see what you are doing and write a check. Unless asked, people will assume that you have support. For every person who sends you an unsolicited check (and there are such angels), there are ten who would do the same if they were asked.

Ask for a specific sum: Whether you need \$100 or \$100,000, do not ask for "support for this most worthwhile cause," but rather say, "I want you to donate (\$specific Sum) to....." The donor cannot read your mind, and if you're thinking big he needs to know it. It is much harder to be specific, but if you take your mission seriously, you will do so, and the results will be tan-

1) you may get it; 2) you may get \$500 (which you wouldn't have gotten otherwise); and 3) there will be no hard feelings since everything was on the table and a successful compromise was reached.

After your pitch, do not say another word!

After you complete your presentation and conclude with your request for a specific sum, be silent. Fundraising masters say, "The next one to speak — loses!" The moment of decision is a very tense one and there is a tendency to want to break the tension with a quip, a further explanation, or a back-track; DON'T!

I remember the first time I asked someone for a \$100,000 donation and followed this rule; the ensuing 60 second silence felt like an hour and the tension in the room was palpable. Only when the donor said, "By when do you

need it?" did I breathe again.

Know your facts! You need to be very knowledgeable about what the project will cost and how the donor's \$100, \$1,000 or \$100,000 will enable it to happen. Your donors are partners in your holy work and are entitled to transparency in the areas in which you

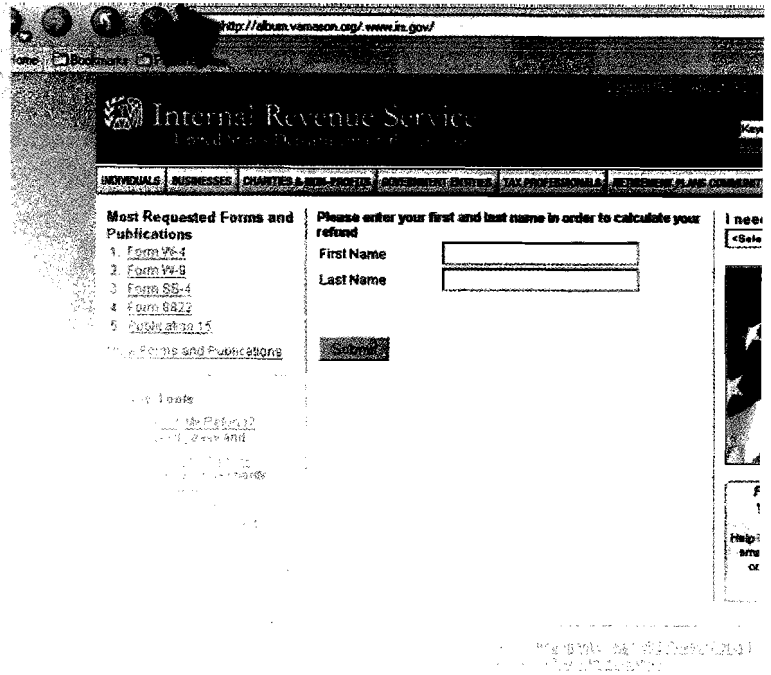
want their support. If your presentation and ability to respond to follow-up questions are vague and evasive, the reaction of the donor, too, will be vague and evasive.

Thank before you bank: Basic mentschlichkeit aside, there is no one so altruistic that he doesn't want and need to be acknowledged. A thank you note makes the aftertaste of the donation a sweet one (and, thus, primes the pump for the future). Failure to do so jeopardizes your relationship for the future. A good practice is not to bank

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gible.

Let's say you want \$1,000, and the last time the donor gave you \$100. If you put your heart into the non-specific solicitation and the donor gives you \$250, you will feel let down, and the donor (who can read body language) will be surprised and hurt. On the other hand, if you ask for \$1,000,



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rate. "I hope to see you this Friday night," "Have you checked out our really spiffy website?" or, "Your gift really helps," is worth 1,000 words of the form thank you letter.

And bank it soon: Deposit it shortly after you receive it even if it is only \$18. If the donor's check isn't deposited during his monthly banking cycle and he notices this when reconciling his account, he may conclude that you don't really need it that much.

Don't neglect small donors: Small donations add up to large sums. If you can get 10 people to give you \$18 monthly, you've raised (10 X \$18 X 12 =) \$2,160 by the end of the year. If, instead of \$18, it is \$100, you've raised (10 X \$100 X 12 =) \$12,000. Small donors usually become bigger donors, sometimes even major donors, especially when you treat them right.

Moreover, today's major donor wants to know that you have a broad support base; that you are not dependent on him and a few other large givers only, but that he is part of a team. They like to be on top of the pyramid, but, as in a pyramid, they need to feel that there's a broad base below them; otherwise they feel that they are like a tall, slender and lonely reed, swaying in the wind...

People will say no: If you don't have people say no to you weekly, you're not asking enough people. Do not internalize the no as a rejection of you or of your cause. Often the person is simply saying, "I'm busy now," "I don't understand what you are doing well enough yet," "I'm conflicted because I'm not Orthodox and certainly not Chassidic," or many other similar rather innocuous objections that can be overcome another day.

Your reaction to the no is very important. If you take it as "not now" and "not yet" and leave on a positive note (e.g., "Thank you for seeing me; let's meet again in a while to continue the conversation") and with a smile, your foot is still in the door. If you leave crestfallen and, figuratively, slam the door on your way out, you have ended the relationship.

Remember, people hold you to a higher standard: Never forget that you are held to a higher standard. Make sure that you are responsible. Arrive on time. Dress neatly. Underpromise and over-perform. By all means keep your word to the letter. People do notice. If you act this way, you will gain entry into people's hearts, homes and checkbooks.

Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Aizik Chodakov a"h, the Rebbe's right hand man for over a half a century, told the 770 bochurim before going on Merkos Shlichus: "If you make an appointment, people should be able to set their watches by your timeliness. Since people will size you up in their first glance from the bottom up, make sure that your shoes are polished and that the rest of you is neat and proper."



A Shliach whose responsibilities include fundraising follows in the footsteps of an illustrious group of chassidim. Reb Hillel haLevi Paritcher (who raised money for the Miteller Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek), Reb Yitzchok haLevi Horowitz (known as Reb Itcheh der Masmid) and Reb Shmuel Dovid haLevi Raichik were all esteemed chassidim and shadarim. They were charged with *zaien ruchnius un kleiben gashmius*, to plant ruchnius and to harvest gashmius. They would *farbreng* and bring a spiritual message, and they would raise money.

When the Shliach's activities and demeanor convey the core of his mission, he has prepared the soil for his secondary role, that of fundraiser. He will have earned the respect of his balabatim and they will have become predisposed to support his valuable activities. Then the Shliach, together with his balabatim, will focus on their true mission and will join together in making the world a *diroh b'tachtonim*, with the coming of Moshiach, now! ■

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