

The Fundraising Case for Support – Pushing a camel through the eye of a needle?

It would be a miracle if a camel could be pushed through the eye of a needle - by analogy, a good case for support is a 'miraculous' document that should be standard equipment for all your expeditions throughout the fabulous world of fundraising.

What is 'miraculous' about a case for support? Well, hardly any other document must bring such contradicting contents under one roof as a case for support. On the one hand it is a business document based on numbers and planning, on the other hand the case for support opens visions and tells stories.

There is another document which is constructed similarly: The *case for business* which –at when fundraising was still in its infancy – provided the template. It is important not to lose sight of this, because a good case for support is based on a solid case for business, anything else would be downright unethical.

Unethical? Yes, because every person who in good faith invests in your good cause, be it small or large sums, has the right to have the project well thought out, planned and reliably implemented down to the last detail.

The case for your fundraising project must therefore meet the criteria of a business plan - and more. A good business plan consists of an idea, a resulting product development, cost and income planning. The figures that result from your market analysis determine the cost and income planning - as a buyer on the cost side and as a seller on the income side. Based on this, you work out a schedule with milestones, and this schedule is typically described in detail for the first year.

Based on that, you will create your case for support. And now, we come to the part that is about your donors' emotions. You want to raise concern, build trust, generate enthusiasm and prompt action. Therefore – in a well-tested and tried structure – an effective case for support addresses the following questions:

1. What is the problem you are solving?
2. Why is the solution to this problem important?
3. Why are you, as an organization, particularly suited to implement this project?
4. What is different when this problem is solved?
5. How can donors help?
6. What specific change do your donors bring about with their support?

1. What is the problem you are solving?

There are many forms how to present a problem, but it is most effective when it tells or suggests a short story. Child XY cannot go to school because she has to fetch water from afar. Patient XY suffers terribly because none of the drugs work against the multi-resistant tuberculosis germs that have infected the lungs. A student can develop her creative thinking because she no longer has to finance her studies with part-time jobs.

This is about emotionally engaging the reader for the topic. You can find an approach to any topic that appeals to emotions - compassion, hope, community, beauty, security, etc.

2. Why is the solution to this problem important?

In addition to the consequences for the individual it is helpful to point out the social changes and benefits that will occur once the problem is solved.

In answering this question you are addressing the human need for a better world, for more community, for belonging.

3. Why are you as an organization particularly suitable to implement this project?

In order to build trust and confidence in your ability to solve the problem you share your successes handling comparable projects in the past and why your organization is particularly well suited to successfully implement this project due to its history, structure and expertise.

4. What is different when this problem is solved?

Here you describe what success means and how it will present itself for the individual and beyond. The famous "impact" as a lasting positive change, as opposed to the temporary relief of the symptoms of the actual problem. (Note: There are crises where symptom relief is the stated goal; most often they fall into the disaster relief category. However, these are situations where a sophisticated case for support is not critical because the problem and urgency are obvious.)

5. How can donors help?

You explain here what kind of support is required and effective. Support us with the sum X, with expertise, with a donation campaign among your friends, etc. This is your "call to action".

6. What specifically do your donors change with their support?

Here you explain what can be achieved with the sum X and, if applicable, which total amount is required to complete the project. It is particularly useful to state the total amount if the target amount is within short reach.

In order to be able to adequately address major donors, your case for support must meet a few important additional criteria:

If you want to mobilize large individual donations, it is not enough to state that with much more money you can achieve a lot more of the same. Rather, it should explain why and how major gifts have a special, indispensable place in this project.

Major donors will expect the above-mentioned business case, setting out a clearly defined project, limited in time, sustainable and linked to a realistic financial goal, and showing exactly how you will be spending the money.

In order to generate a major donor's excitement about a project, it is of utmost importance to present a vision, a breakthrough, a quantum leap - for the work of your organization, for a group of people, for a region, for a topic, for society.

Last but not least, we recommend that you put yourselves through the challenging exercise of condensing your case for support into the so-called elevator pitch. Here is where the camel might really push back against the eye of the needle. However, by the end of this process, you will have successfully distilled what is really important. So as you travel on, you will have different elixirs of your elevator pitch readily available to pull out of your saddlebag at any given opportunity and thus - perfectly dosed and composed - stir in the travellers you meet on your expedition a zest for action and: cause a miracle.