

## Why the Economic Downturn Provides Opportunities for Fundraising: A Nonprofit Stimulus Package

### 1. Competition Makes Us Better and More Creative at Our Jobs

There is now more competition than ever for foundation, individual, corporate, and government grants. There are literally no more “handouts,” automatic renewals are harder to sustain. For this reason, working with more creativity, speed, and focus while abolishing complacency will both help us during the recession and make us better at what we do when it ends. And yet...

### 2. As the Faint-of-Heart Become Reticent, Competition Will Decline

We have already seen a decrease in “askers” as certain charities and solicitors, for fear that their prospects will not be able to provide support (or of offending), don’t cultivate or solicit. That’s where the strong come in, and you may generate contributed income fallout.

### 3. Loyalty Will Be Tested

You will know who your donor friends are, and you will surface loyalty where you thought it didn’t exist. Individuals who were funding ten charities may now be funding three or four. How do you get them to continue to fund your institution? By putting yourself in their shoes and asking the question: “Why am I *really* giving to this organization” and then testing to see how loyal that donor is to those principles, values, and emotions behind the giving, you will have a stronger and more loyal base when the worm turns.

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#### **4. Following Analysis and Much Brainstorming, You Will Emerge Triumphant with a Stronger Fundraising/Solicitation Plan**

The recession is forcing all institutions and solicitors to coldly examine the manner in which they do their work. Whether you are a development professional or philanthropist/Board member who causes others to give, now is the time to reexamine your approach and your plan for cultivating and soliciting. Lessons learned during this time will become part of the fabric of the way you fundraise in the future.

#### **5. Self-Selection Isn't Always Bad**

While no organization wants to lose the longstanding loyal donor to the economic Armageddon, you may be glad for the self-selection of certain individuals who are not truly committed to the organization's mission. That "Dr. No" or negative force on your Board or in your donor group—who may be a challenge when it comes to receiving pledges or does not give at the appropriate level—is best being loyal elsewhere. From the other side, you may inherit Board members or donors from other groups as the plate tectonics that is the fundraising world shifts.

#### **6. A More Robust Volunteer Corps and Employment Pool**

Volunteerism has increased markedly since the recession began. If you are industrious, your organization will benefit from this new, committed work force. As for paid staffing, many of the talents no longer working in the financial sector are reexamining their careers and coming to the nonprofit world. This is a benefit as we bring different and new skill sets to our staffs.

#### **7. A Return to/Renewal of Values**

Speaking of plate tectonics, values systems have shifted. The root and cause of our work in nonprofits and fundraising—*-serving the greater good in the public's interest*—has taken on a revitalized caché. Principles and values are eternal—cash is fleeting. What better way to increase a prospect's interest than by harnessing this renewed energy?