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Reflecting on Fundraising in the News

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Reflecting on Fundraising in the News

It's a funny old world.

One week there's a clamour for fundraisers to raise money for the latest crisis: the next week we are vilified for fundraising too aggressively. The Government wants to roll back the public sector and expects charities to raise the cash to pay for public services, but now we may be regulated as if we are doing something wrong.

I often see myself as a bit like Robin Hood but recent news paints me as the Sherriff of Nottingham.

In reality society is divided, they want us to fundraise but not *too* effectively or expensively. Partly, we have brought this on ourselves. Inevitably, volume fundraising will incur mistakes. Sometimes we get it wrong such as when people are approached by too many charities.

So let's welcome most of the Etherington Review and put our weight behind anything to make fundraising better, but regulation is only part of it.

Try these three ideas.

First let's encourage the Institute of Fundraising to defend fundraising more vigorously.

Secondly, we need to stop worrying so much about being "professional" and remember that fundraisers have three ethical responsibilities. First is to the people we help, the second is to those who trust us with their money and thirdly to the charities who employ us - ***in that order***. If we keep that in mind we will not go far wrong.

Finally let's get realistic about who gives the most money. The Office for National Statistics says that 10% of the population has average assets of £967,000 including their home and the top 1% have £2.8m on average. Focussing on those who have money chimes well with fundraising experience which suggests that 10-20% of donors give more than half of the amount raised for most fundraising techniques.



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We must do more to encourage larger gifts from major donors and legacies. Mass marketing and community fundraising are valuable but as fundraisers we need to go where the big gifts are. This is a smaller group of people and hopefully we can treat them as friends and equals not simply cash dispensers.

At Prospecting for Gold, we have worked with over 1400 not-for-profits. We strive to keep to the spirit of the law and regulations as we go about our work to support major gift fundraising.

We help the not-for-profits we work with understand their supporters better as individuals (not numbers). This is how we expect our research to be used. Engaging supporters this way builds the personal relationships which yield major transformative gifts; gifts which are transformational for the donor and the recipient.

Identifying and understanding who your best prospects are is common-sense. So please stand up for prospect research and wealth screening in your organisations.

We have seen how the media misunderstands the sophistication, professionalism and efficacy of modern research-based fundraising; the very tools which reduce fundraising cost ratios.

This storm will pass but, throughout history, philanthropy, when done well, offers unique opportunities to realise our most fundamental human needs. To do so it must be managed with due respect and sensitivity - no small task in the rapidly-evolving cultural landscape of the 21st century.

Detailed aspects of the Etherington Review's analysis and recommendations are being keenly debated. We are, like many others, looking forward to the debate. We all have a role to play in safeguarding the British public's regard for charities. In the meantime, if you have any particular questions about how Prospecting for Gold operates, such as handling any data shared with us, please do get in touch.

Now let me go and find Robin Hood's trusty longbow.

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