



ASKING STRATEGIC QUESTIONS[®]

During a Time of Crisis

During a crisis reaching out to your donors makes excellent sense. After 9/11 and during the Great Recession, those organizations and institutions that encourage staff to pick up their phones and call to check in on their donor families not only survived those times of crisis but thrived.

You want to know how your donors are managing. You want them to know you care. Just saying hello, however, is not enough. You know your donors. This is a time to think about what you will say and what you will ask before making the call. How can you tailor your inquiry? Are they vulnerable because of a recent illness? Did they have a big event planned that may be in jeopardy? Do they tend to worry a lot? Might they be concerned about their employees or business? Take time to think about your conversation, but not so much time that you hesitate and don't do it.

Asking strategic questions and listening to understand are at the heart of relationship building. It is proven practice. Here are some questions to get you thinking before you reach out to check in with your donors and volunteers.

1. We are concerned and wanted to check in. How are you?
2. How is/are your family (your business partners) (your workers) coping?
3. This crisis reminds me how grateful we are for all those who invest in us with their time, ideas, wisdom, and treasure. I wanted to reach out today, to say thank you again for all you do. How are you managing?
4. What worries you the most?
5. How are you addressing those issues? What's working for you?
6. Is there any way we can be of assistance?
7. You've always given us such good advice. We're working remotely and trying to keep it meaningful and productive for our team. May I ask, how are you managing your team? What do you see working?
8. With so many events cancelled, we are still trying to stay in touch with our (alumni) (volunteers) (philanthropic investors) (board members). I've always found you strategic and creative. How are you accomplishing that with your clients (partners) (customers)? What suggestions do you have for us?
9. One of our biggest concerns is the impact on the people we serve. I know you care about many causes. How are you thinking about your philanthropy and volunteer service during these troubling times?
10. To stay in touch and keep our stakeholders informed, we're hosting several online events over the next few months. May I run some of them by you and hear your thoughts?
11. We just emailed you a message from (name of sender – CEO, board leader, program person, well known donor). Please look at it. Once you've read it, may I check in and get your impressions (thoughts) (suggestions)?