

I once talked to an Executive Director who resisted inviting major donors to volunteer or become more involved because “I don’t want to seem like I’m bothering them. Their gift should be enough.”

I thought that was backwards. Of course, you could make the ask poorly in a way that’s bothersome. But as a general rule, inviting people to get involved is a key way to enhance the commitment of your donors to the organization.

Here are 6 ideas for how to engage current/potential donors, in no particular order.

1. Hold a conference call briefing for them. New technology allows opportunities for people to be on the call and ask questions, without it being disruptive.
2. Invite them to volunteer on tasks that could be done by staff or board members, but don’t have to be done by staff. This will vary wildly by the type of organization, but could include everything from having them help out in the office, to assist with an event, to lead a hike or tour.
3. Hold a “focus group.” Whether as part of strategic planning or otherwise, pick some topic where input from those beyond the board/staff would be helpful and invite enough donors to have 8-10 participate and lead them through a conversation.
4. Hold a “Salon.” Pick a book, article, or even a TedTalk video for them to read/watch and have them join a board member at their home to discuss it over a glass of wine. Obviously, you’d want to pick a topic that’s relevant for the organization.
5. Participate in a committee. This could be an ongoing committee or it could be a short-term committee charged with answering a specific question.
6. Send them an online member survey. Ask for their feedback on how the organization is doing and priorities for the future.

I’m always looking for more ideas, so let me know what else your organization has done to make donors feel involved.