

March 25, 2015

 poisner.com/2015/03/the-power-of-asking-good-questions/

When I'm asked what are the most important attributes for an effective major donor fundraiser, I often say: "nothing beats being naturally curious." Because a good fundraiser doesn't talk at a prospect, he or she has a conversation and comes away learning a great deal about the donor/prospect. For people who're naturally curious, this comes easily as they're full of questions.

Of course, not everyone is naturally curious. Others need to be more conscious of the power of asking good questions and think ahead of time about potential questions to ask.

Good questions accomplish a variety of goals within a major donor meeting.

- They elicit information about what the donor thinks about your work.
- They elicit information about what else the donor cares about.
- They evoke passion in the donor.
- They help the donor identify the connection between their personal values and the organization's work.

Here are some examples of questions that accomplish these goals.

What do you love about your work?

Why did you first get interested in X? (X could be their career, their volunteer work, a cause, a hobby, etc.)

Why does our cause matter to you?

Which of our programs are most appealing to you?

What's the best gift you ever made?

What are your top philanthropic priorities?

The list could, of course, be much longer. And perhaps importantly, you should prime yourself to ask follow-up questions as people answer these in ways that generate more questions in your mind.