

## Being a social worker and a big game hunter at the same time

Can it be done? Look for family dynamics and read non verbal cues while every fiber of your being is poised to take down the big trophy? Fund raising requires both.

Of course, big game hunting is the wrong metaphor. A donor is not prey, and no weapons are involved. Over and over again I have seen donors basking in the delight of having written a check that empowered a non profit organization to change the world for the better. It is counter intuitive that solicitation is a favor to the donor, yet I have seen it proven many times in many different kinds of organizations.

Why, then, the safari analogy? Because a solicitor must be driven by a powerful force to be an effective conduit for a bold dream. It takes ambition and focus to get over the internal hurdles, insecurities, and doubts. It takes ambition and focus to persist in crafting and presenting opportunities for the donor to get close to the organization. It takes ambition and focus to express the conviction that this cause is a worthy conduit for the donor's altruism. Although I have never picked up a hunting rifle in my life, in my mind big game hunting expresses that energy.

The social work side of fund raising is where all the skill is. Listening between the words, reading between the lines, recognizing patterns in conversation, sensing the moment to ask a provocative question, asking permission to broaden the range of a relationship – these are the social work skills that are essential to fund raising success.

The social worker's skill, without the hunter's ambition and focus can get you a long way toward fund raising success. It can get you just short of success. This is called being a professional visitor.

The hunter's ambition, without the social worker's skill, won't get you anywhere. Nowhere.

To hone your social work skills, try this.

- When you are planning a visit with a donor, spend as much time thinking about what you want to learn as you do thinking about what you want to tell.
- At the end of a donor visit, ask him or her how you are doing. Say something like, "I am trying to sharpen my interpersonal skills – how am I doing?"

- Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen, listen. Then ask clarifying questions to make sure you heard what you thought you did.

Here are some tips to access your inner big game hunter

- Modesty does not serve anyone.
- If you contemplate the question “What would happen if we got a gift equal to our annual budget?” there is a chance that someone will help you realize that dream. If you don’t envision it, it won’t happen.
- Imagine a donor writing a check with a very large number – first the digits, then the same number spelled out in words – signing it with a flourish, and handing it to you with a big smile. Then think backwards to what needs to happen first.

So, can you be a social worker and a big game hunter at the same time? Your fund raising career, your organization, and your donors, depend on it.