



Asking: A 50-Minute Guide to Everything Board Members, Volunteers, and Staff Must Know to Secure the Gift

Jerold Panas

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Fine. Minimal shelfwear. No markings. Pages are clean and bright. Binding is tight.

Asking: A 50-Minute Guide to Everything Board Members, Volunteers, and Staff Must Know to Secure the Gift Details

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Author : Jerold Panas

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From Reader Review Asking: A 50-Minute Guide to Everything Board Members, Volunteers, and Staff Must Know to Secure the Gift for online ebook

Alan Mills says

You've been asked to help raise money for a not-for-profit. You panic, "I can't do that. I'm no good at asking for money." Guess what, no one likes asking for money. Everyone feels uncomfortable. So what do you do? Reading this book would be a great place to start.

Our new Director of Development and Communications gave me this book as homework last night! Exactly as promised, this is a good "59 minute" read which lays out the basics of fundraising. Specifically, how to ask individuals to give your organization money. Loaded with good tips, it's real value is to persuade you that asking may not be comfortable, but it is doable, and can be really rewarding!

Jeff Bobin says

Excellent book on raising capital funds and it is a simple quick read.

Each chapter is only a few pages and gives a simple thought to keep in mind and help you with being confident to make the ask.

Well worth the short time it takes to read.

Andy says

Good for anyone working in and or around the fundraising world

Lori says

Would have liked to see some information about asking for smaller gifts. Also, the book has some useful information/ scripts but is out of date.

Cary says

A must-read for anyone who gets to ask for money as part of a job or volunteer involvement. Really creates the positive spin on what you're doing in a way that makes you feel honored to raise money for causes you love.

Paul says

A few months ago, I was given a book to read. In my review of that book, the Alchemist, I wrote about my dissatisfaction with its telling me everything the author wanted me to think and feel. When I pick up a bound collection of pages, I expect a certain form of narrative. I expect a well-crafted story, something that has been created to share that writer's perspective on the world. At least, I'm looking for that writer to even be thinking aloud. When I'm presented with a series of declarative statements about The Truth of Life, I grow bored and disinterested.

But sometimes, I need a textbook. Not every collection of pages is written to encourage contemplation. Sometimes, I just need to learn. So that's why even though Asking is disappointing as a book, it's great as a textbook to give readers a first step into the world of development.

I've not made any large-scale asks for financial support. Sure, I've asked friends (and people I hadn't talked to in years) for support - but only at a small level. Making one-off asks is easy enough because you can get in and out without much investment at either end. But when you want to go bigger, you need to take it seriously. This book provides emotional support, guidance from an expert and concrete steps to take. Coupled with knowledge of the cultivation cycle I've learned from my colleagues, the tips in this book will serve me well in my cultivation of donors.

Deane Barker says

A practical book about fundraising -- it explains the step-by-step process of setting appointments, laying out your case, and asking for money.

If you're nervous about fund-raising, I don't think this book will help. It has a number of scripted exchanges that, frankly, freaked me out a little and confirmed my worst fears of being the pushy guy who wants money from everyone.

But, as a practical guide, it's solid information. Short read.

Becca says

Some good, though dated, guidelines and practical examples for a Board member or organizational leader wanting to improve their major gifts asking. Really did just take <59 minutes to read, and engaging and funny enough that I laughed out loud a few times - at a joke, or recognition of some of the feelings of a fundraiser.

Stephen Lack says

Packed with information for new and experienced fundraisers. Quick and easy to read. Highly recommended.

Sean McMahon says

Asking: A 59-minutes Guide to Everything Board Members Must Know to Secure the Gift by Jerold Panas provides general tips on how to successful ask for donation as well as emotional support for those fearful of asking. More importantly, Panas provides a formula for successfully securing the gift.

To begin, Panas describes the traits every solicitor should have when they ask for a donation. After interviewing many donors, Panas concludes that “empathy, energy, and enthusiasm” were fundamental aspects in securing the gift. He describes empathy as listening to the donor, probing them for questions and listening to their concerns. Panas notes that when one listens to a person, a donor feels that the solicitor understands him and his needs. When someone is listened to, they feel that the person cares about them. In fact, most prospects will not be consciously registering your message until they believe that you understand their perspective. Though asking for the gift is crucial (if one does not ask, one will not receive), it is far more important to listen: one should “listen the gift.” By listening, one can respond to the concerns which the donor may have about the mission or the donation. Often serious concerns can be resolved merely by allowing the potential donor to express his displeasure about something. Panas relates the story of an individual who began by stating that he hated the hospital but concluded with a donation. The ability to express one's opinion is cathartic. Even after the desired amount has been named, Panas cautions against the urge to fill in the (perhaps uncomfortable) silence. One must give the donor time to respond.

Similarly, the energy and enthusiasm which the solicitor demonstrates helps establish the cause as one worth supporting. These traits, when genuine, are contagious and will help convince the donor to give the gift being requested. Of course, it is imperative that one's enthusiasm be expressed also in action. There is nothing as compelling as providing a testimony of one's own personal gift to the cause. At the same time, there is nothing more off-putting to potential donors then to discover that the solicitor himself has not even donated. However, though these traits are important, Panas observes that nothing is as important as integrity. It does not matter how important the cause nor how much empathy, energy, or enthusiasm the solicitor shows if a perception of integrity is lacking. Though Panas does not explicitly says this, the implication is that the empathy, energy, and enthusiasm should be genuine. People easily see through fake emotion.

In addition to these three necessary traits, Panas provides emotional support to those feeling paralyzed by asking for a gift. He notes first of all that in raising money the most important aspect is not how one asks, but rather that one asks at all. Likewise, once one has secured a visit to meet with a potential donor, the donor is eighty-five percent of the way to giving a gift. Hence, one of the easiest parts of fundraising - asking for a visit - is mostly responsible for securing the gift. By the time the gift is actually asked for, most of the important work has already been accomplished. This realization no doubt will comfort those who hate actually asking for money.

As for the actual asking for the gift, Panas recommends that it be done only in person. When scheduling a time for the visit (visit rather than appointment as the latter sound ominous), one should first send a letter briefly detailing one's reasons for visiting. After a sufficient amount of time has elapsed for the reception of the letter, it is necessary to call the prospect to set the actual time for a visit. Prior to calling, Panas suggests

that one's opening is practiced. He suggests that one may even wish to write out the opening. Nevertheless, it is important that the opening sounds spontaneous rather than scripted which requires additional practice. Similarly, it is important to have a calendar ready with potential days and times selected. Right before calling, mentally resolve to throw oneself into the call. During the call smile when you talk and stand up or pace around the room, thereby generating energy and warmth in your tone. The conversation should be brief as the purpose of the call is to merely set a date for the visit. When proposing a date, suggest two or three options as this increases the probability of a positive response. Likewise, be upfront about the time you will need. Nothing will turn people off more than significantly overusing the time proposed. Finally, and most importantly, don't make the sell over the phone regardless of how tempting it is. One will be far more effective in person.

Once at the meeting, open by informing the donor that you will be not asking for a gift during this visit. This will put the prospect at rest and allow you to build rapport with him. When describing what the money is needed for, do not sell the organization's needs. Rather describe how the donor's gift will impact lives. Of course, ensure that the description is personal. Facts and figures are boring but the story of an individual in need of assistance is compelling. By selling the impact of the gift on others, the solicitor is showing the donor how the gift will benefit himself. In other words, the solicitor is showing the donor how he can save and change lives - the donor is doing something for himself as well as for others. Overall, the entire presentation should not take more than 11 minutes thereby giving plenty of time for the donor to ask questions and express any concerns he may have. As a general rule of thumb, Panas suggests that the solicitor should only talk for one quarter of the scheduled time.

At the conclusion of the first visit, instead of asking for a gift, ask to schedule another meeting to discuss the gift. Most likely, the donor will say that a second visit is unnecessary and ask how much you are requesting. When responding use the phrase, "I thought you would want..." rather than the conventional "We would like you to donate..." After naming the size of the gift, ensure that the amount does not dominate the conversation. If the donor seems hesitant, it is imperative to discover if it is the institution, the project, the amount asked, or the timing that is the cause for the delay. Once the concern has been identified, the solicitor can determine the appropriate response. When responding, it is helpful to use the words "feel, felt, and found" in order to establish rapport with the donor. It may be necessary to schedule another visit after requesting the gift in order for the donor to consider the request. After the gift has been secured, it is imperative that the solicitor follow up with a thank you.

Panas concludes by noting if one follows this formula one will be far more successful in acquiring gifts. Of course, one should expect rejections. One is not asking enough people if everyone says yes. While some rejections are inevitable, some result from improper preparation or divergence from the formula. Panas lists the top mistakes in asking for a donation as: failing to make the initial call, lack of preparation for the call, anxiety, assuming too much about the donor, failure to ask questions, failure to listen, failure to discuss benefits and how the gift will impact lives, premature selling, and failing to ask for the gift. Of course, even with these rules, nothing will prepare you for successful asking like practice.

Carmen says

It almost feels like cheating, adding this to the list of books I've read this year – it was so short!

Jeez. Jerry likes his random references (he quotes athletic coaches, Native American chiefs, condiments jars

in his fridge...)

I got it myself was very helpful – as someone that has worked in almost every field of not-for-profit work, development is still a bit daunting to me as I've never had to make direct asks. I'm so good at selling a mission and talking about programs, but summoning the gumption to actually ask for tens of thousands of dollars has never been my forte. I think this book had some very helpful tips in it that are directly applicable to development.

Kristi says

There were some good points, but it was really repetitive. Instead of being a 59-minute book, it could've been an infographic. I did appreciate all the relevant quotes, though.

Katherine Wertheim says

I can't believe I had to add this book to the Goodreads database. I assumed that it would already be in there, as it is the #1 book I recommend as a fundraiser to people who want to learn fundraising. It's very straightforward and to the point, and it's short and a quick read.

In *Asking*, Jerold Panas tells you exactly how to ask for and get large donations from individuals. This is the easiest kind of fundraising to do, and yet most people find it very emotionally challenging. There's no fluff in this book, just how to go out and ask for money. If you use his methods, you can raise a lot more money in a lot less time than virtually anything else you can do.

If you're looking to raise money for a cause, this is the one book you must read.

Nicole says

Solid principles to work from (in the end, my experience with fundraising is that it's all about relationship-building), but outdated information for fundraising in our current state. Still, the book gives a solid foundation to learn from.

Donna says

This book has short and simple chapters, so it's very easy to read. The author shares good insights from long experience. I learned several things, including that it's majorly key that the a person who loves your organization and who knows the prospect fairly well and who has him/herself made a significant donation to the project be central to the process of the ask.
