

## Le Moyne College

Team Focused Prospect Management  
Supports High Campaign ROI

# LE MOYNE

SPIRIT. INQUIRY. LEADERSHIP. JESUIT.

Having worked at Le Moyne College for over 20 years, Deborah Reinhardt Youmans has learned how to build value into a prospect research management program. When she first started as Director for Advancement Research, the College was spending significantly on prospect research and wealth screening tools but wasn't applying the information in a strategic and team-oriented approach to realize strong returns on investment. Today, her strategy involves routine donor and prospect screenings, internal data mining, ongoing prospect tracking, and more importantly, prospect management meetings in close coordination and communication with development officers.

### Communication

"The bottom line is that everyone involved in fundraising has to work as a team and that requires each individual to take responsibility for what he or she is here to do. You hold yourself accountable for the role you play on the team, as should those around you," says Reinhardt Youmans. "You also want to remember that philanthropy is a volunteer action for a common good, while fundraising is the ability to look through the eyes of a donor. Each member of your team needs to embrace that a joyful donor is your destination and, of course, enough of them to make goal!"

At Le Moyne, prior to any solicitation visit, the staff assigned meet with the Research Department and agree on the amount the prospect will be asked. "Yes, our profiles have the suggested ask and all the data and analysis to back it up," says Reinhardt Youmans, "But, I have found that this simple process of meeting prior to a solicitation helps to build the team atmosphere, boost the confidence of those going out, and forces a meeting of the minds. You may need to role play Scenario A and Scenario B with the staff assigned, while at the same time trust their ability to make the right judgment call during the visit."

*"I would rather have my heart rate accelerate because a development officer on the road contacts me to let me know that the visit resulted in a gift coming in on target with our solicitation strategy, than the alternative. It is an affirmation that our process of calculating gift capacity ratings is right on the money."*

- Deborah Reinhardt Youmans,  
Director for Advancement Research,  
Le Moyne College

### Building the Pipeline

Reinhardt Youmans is a firm believer that "screenings should be used to confirm top level prospects and identify those up and comers for the next campaign. If you are using a screening now to identify new major donors for your current campaign, you've missed the mark from a timing perspective." She adds, "While I expect Research

to continuously identify, screen and qualify prospects that is only one piece of the puzzle, as the most important step is moving those potentials into the pipeline to build relationships. Another important piece of the puzzle is the fact that relationships provide 'knowns to the unknowns' for additional pipeline movement."

Having been a team member for three campaigns at the College (Building on Excellence, Tradition with Vision and Achieving New Heights) she notes that the best-run campaigns for the highest return on investments (ROI) are those where each member of the team is knowledgeable and embraces the vision, mission and strategic plan. "That means that your alumni office is the point-guard for discovery, every office on campus is the point-guard for discovery, every event, every mailing, every email, every social media posting, every incoming response to the Annual Fund Appeal is a point-guard for discovery. If you are simply screening for capacity ratings without understanding the crucial aspect of building and maintaining relationships, you are blind to what is out there and what can be."

## Build Trust

Before you begin any forward-movement, advises Reinhardt Youmans, come together as a team. Understand the value and contribution that each role in the Division gives to your fundraising efforts. During a campaign, take the time to correct actions, recalibrate and celebrate. Post-campaign, come together and freely discuss, openly and honestly, what went right and what did not go as planned. "You have to reflect upon yourself, you have to discuss issues and then be willing to let go of any past hurt and grudges that often occur during the hectic pace of a campaign and the urge to make goal. As a group, you cannot move on to what you will 'become' or 'do' in the future until you are willing to spend time, resources, money and your own internal energy and emotions to make the decision to move forward as a cohesive unit."

## Move it Forward

Reinhardt Youmans advocates regularly scheduled meetings where those identified are added to portfolios based on 'agreed-upon' criteria that every member of the team supports. Portfolios can be built and fine-tuned based on the level of giving, the specific passions of the prospect and in truth, the personality and skill level of the development staff. One should include all relevant development staff in the meeting, as that heightens not only the team atmosphere, but forces open and honest communication. Tracking also helps Research evaluate how close their original capacity ratings were to the final ask, as this type of confirmation for the capacity ratings and ask amounts ensures that future requests are well planned and executed. "You learn when to push and when to pull as those added to portfolios are tempered with those that need to be removed. If you as a researcher are credible, your involvement and advice during these meetings is valuable. You have to remember that each member of the team is to be open-minded to provide constructive criticism and to accept it. When you have the right team atmosphere, specific talking points can 'smart' at times, but all is positively given and positively received."

Le Moyne's success is also due to the donor relationships nurtured by development officers. "We measure a development officer not by the number of donations they generate but by the number of visits they make to a prospect, because we have found a strong correlation between the frequency of visits and resulting gift," says Reinhardt Youmans.

Le Moyne's current prospect tracking process is based on several closely monitored factors:

- » Length of the average cultivation cycle
- » Length from initial visit to the ask
- » Proximity of the suggested ask to the final close and any variables
- » Common occurrences among prospects, at varying gift levels

"In the short term, it allows us a snapshot of where we are and where we are headed. In the long term, it is an invaluable tool for strategic planning towards the next campaign," explains Reinhardt Youmans. "Research should always be ahead of the curve, preferably two years out, and we need to start building the relationships now in preparation for the next campaign."

## Build Momentum

Le Moyne, established in 1946, has a relatively short history, compared to the other 28 Jesuit colleges and universities. Le Moyne is just now coming into its own as a strong fundraising entity as prospects have reached the higher levels of giving. Le Moyne's last campaign, Tradition with Vision from 1996-2001, resulted in the achievement of \$30.5M to their goal of \$25M and garnered their first \$1M gift. Their most recent campaign, Achieving New Heights from 2004-2010, experienced the College's first \$5M, \$4M, \$3M and \$2M gifts. "We were also fortunate to receive a \$50M bequest in fall 2008, but the moral of the story is not the amount, it is the fact that in over 30 years of contact and stewardship with the prospect, no one dropped the ball. That, in a nutshell, should be the outcome of prospect management."

"You have to keep moving forward and remember the mission of your organization." She advises, "The more that you can be a team player and work closely with your development staff, the better your response will be as you build trust and evaluate whether the gift capacity and actual ask amount are on target, time after time. The technical skills, art and science required for Research should never be prioritized above the mindset of what you are doing this for. These are some of the tools to help you get to the finished product; they are not in themselves the finished product. Your finished product is a loyal and well-stewarded donor with the recognition that it took a team of individuals to make it happen."