

St. Vincent’s Foundation
Structured Approach, Dramatic Results



Scott Powell, Director of Development at St. Vincent’s Foundation in Birmingham, Alabama wishes he had a dedicated team of prospect researchers to support the Foundation’s development efforts. Instead, Powell explains, “everyone does prospect research to some degree” with success coming from a structured approach combining weekly grateful patient screenings, a comprehensive moves management program and careful examination of return on investment (ROI).

Following a \$23M capital campaign, St. Vincent’s applied the structured approach to retain campaign donors and to reach out to new prospects through their grateful patient program. The result is remarkable; pre-campaign gift levels averaged \$2M per year, post-campaign gift levels average 50-100% higher, per year. How did they do it? “It comes down to two possibilities,” says Powell. “We’ve either done a good job at retaining donors or our prospect research and moves management programs are highly successful. The reality is that both are true.”

Further examining the success of St. Vincent’s efforts, Powell took the average number of gifts made at both the \$1,000 and \$10,000 level made during the three years prior to their capital campaign and compared them to the average number of gifts made in the three years following the campaign.

Gift Size	Average Annual # in Three Years Prior to Campaign	Average Annual # in Three Years Following Campaign	Percent Increase
\$1000	147	184	25%
\$10,000	37	60	62%

With a 62% increase in \$10,000 gifts, the strategy is working. Says Powell, “Using prospect research to identify and target top prospects, employing open communication through moves management and applying aggressive retention tactics are now a way of life for us. It’s what we do, what we rely on and part of our standard process.”

Weekly Grateful Patients’ Screenings

In 2008, St. Vincent’s started screening approx. 3,500-4,000 patients on a weekly basis through WealthEngine’s WebExpress, a swift and systematic prospect screening tool for routine batches of donors and prospects. St. Vincent’s screened more than 182,000 individuals in 2009; predominately patients but also smaller groups of memorial gift donors, board members and donors to the capital campaign. The weekly screening combines patient lists from four care sites with a total of 800 beds. The lists are uploaded to WealthEngine every Friday, at midmorning, with the results returned by noon that same day. “Our strategy is to not waste any time—or opportunity. Today, almost all of our gifts come from our grateful patient program and every donor is screened before a gift is ever made.”

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Powell takes the results and uses WealthEngine's P2G™ score, a reliable metric that indicates a prospect's Propensity to Give, to prioritize and segment the list for various development efforts. Each week, Powell takes the top 50 prospects as identified by WealthEngine and shares the list with development officers during their routine prospect meeting. Any matches determined to be incorrect are removed with the top 50 profiles added to a master list shared with the board of directors every few months for peer screening purposes.

Direct Mail Success

The weekly list is further segmented by the P2G score, all of those identified by WealthEngine as qualified prospects are sent to the annual fund. Any below that threshold are culled from the mailing list. St. Vincent's first began mailing to the list after collecting two months of prospects. However, due to the success of the program, they have accelerated their program to mail to new lists every two weeks.

"After we started screening with WealthEngine, we looked at the acquisition rate of the mailing and the cost to raise a dollar," says Powell. "The results show three important findings. First, that by mailing to those identified by WealthEngine to be our best prospects, we have seen a higher response rate. Second, our cost to raise a dollar has gone down significantly because we no longer waste expense in mailing to individuals who are unlikely to give. Finally, our spring mailings traditionally have a lower acquisition rate, however, they are now at levels consistent with our best rates from our more successful fall pre-screening mailings."

Date	Acquisition Rate	Cost to Raise a Dollar
Fall 2007 (pre-WealthEngine screening)	0.8%	\$1.18
Spring 2008 (pre-WealthEngine screening)	0.65%	\$1.51
Fall 2008 (first use of screening)	1.5%	\$0.80
Spring 2009	0.8%	\$1.05
Fall 2009	0.9%	\$0.50

Screening prior to a mailing helps to cut mailing costs and better target the appropriate audience. For example, two donors responded to a grateful patient mailing with a \$100-150 first time gift. These gifts were high enough to raise attention and warrant more thorough research through FindWealth Online, where wealth and high gift capacity was confirmed in each case. Explains Powell, "In the first case, we noticed the individual had an affiliation to similar health-related organizations; critical information that helped with an ask that resulted in a \$10,000 gift. In the second case, we identified the donor's Circle of Friends and found a connection to one of our board members. We then secured a \$15,000 gift."

Streamlined Structure

"The value of regular screening and proactive prospect research is the constant influx of new, qualified and actionable prospects into the pipeline," says Powell. "WealthEngine identifies highly qualified prospects for us out of the mess of information that could potentially be a barrier to success. With 4,000 patients coming through our doors each week, we would never be able to rank and segment our best prospects for various initiatives, much less call them. Applying prospect research, particularly regular screening, to our grateful patient program provides structure, insight, convenience and action. It allows us to focus our limited staff resources on those with the highest potential and greatest gift capacity."

An additional benefit to prospect research is the credibility that it brings to the development office. "Prior to our use of screening, we briefed key members of the board on the product," notes Powell. "Today, not only does our hospital leadership know about prospect research, we've shown them the proof behind ask amounts for major gift donors and prospects. Often, we'll discuss a prospect with a board member and immediately pull up their online profile. The data gives us instant credibility and there is collective agreement among staff and leadership that the ROI is obvious—it's a valid use of time and expense."