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What Women Want: ***Understanding the Needs and Objectives of Women's Philanthropic Giving, Including Planned Gifts***

Katherine Swank, J.D., Consultant, Target Analytics, a Blackbaud Company

Executive Summary

Women, as a group, are increasingly impacting fundraising efforts in the U.S.; however, their philanthropic objectives can differ significantly from men's. Women tend to focus on specific sectors and want greater accountability for their gifts. On the whole, women want to create new solutions, seek more contact and control, and want to be kept informed of the results from their giving. Many also seek social networks within the organizations that interest them. If women are among your majority donors, you may need to change the way you speak with them and start listening for their direction.

Women!

Only a decade ago, non-profit organizations were focused on finding the "millionaire next door." At that time, he was a 50-something-year old married man who owned his own business and drove a Ford Explorer.[1] But things have changed in just the past ten years. Today's affluent philanthropist is just as likely to be a woman as a man and she wants something different from her philanthropic giving.

Historically, women became philanthropists through marriage and inherited wealth. This tradition will continue as the World War II generation pass on their accumulated wealth (in the trillions) to their Baby Boomer children who will most likely add some of it to the philanthropic coffers they are already accumulating. But, in the past thirty years, female business ownership and investment earnings have led the most significant change in women's philanthropic interests as well as their motivations for giving. Nearly half of the top wealth-holders in the United States are women, including the more than 3 million Americans with annual incomes of more than $550,000. In less than a decade, they have increased their combined wealth by more than fifty percent and now have a combined net worth of over $6 trillion. Two of every five businesses in this country – over ten million enterprises – are women-owned and by the year 2010, women are expected to control 60 per cent of the wealth in the U.S.

Demographically, affluent women can be identified by several common characteristics. The "average" affluent woman is around 49-years old. She may have started her own business when she was forced to overcome a family or work obstacle, and frequently identifies her business affiliation as "self-employed". She is most often a homeowner and, if married, she might easily earn as much as seventy percent of the household income.[2]

Marital status plays a very significant role in philanthropic giving. According to the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, single women are significantly more likely than single men to make charitable gifts and married couples give more than single men. Women, on average, donate twice as much to charity and make three times the number of donations as their male counterparts. According to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, self-made women millionaires donate about seven per cent of their annual

[1] Stanley, Thomas J. and William D. Danko, the Millionaire Next Door, Pocket Books, 1996.
[2] Stanley, Thomas J., Millionaire Women Next Door, Andrew McMeel Publishing, 2004.

income. They are also more likely to volunteer - it is often the affluent women in our society who can be counted on to be the "charitable worker bee".[3]

Populations Facts[4]	Women	Men
Number in the U.S. (2007 figure)	153.6 Million	149.4 Million
Age is less than 42	Fewer	More
Age is 42 or greater	More	Fewer
Age is 85 or older	Twice as many	Half as many
Married	62.4 Million	
Widowed, Divorced or Never Married	59.8 Million	
Mothers (children of all ages)	82.8 Million	
Percentage that Volunteer	30%	23%
Bachelor Degrees Obtained among 25-29 Year Olds	32%	25%

Ethnicity and religious affiliation also play a role in philanthropic giving. While African-American women tend to be torch-bearers of philanthropy within their family and communities their gifts are often related to causes closely affiliated or supported by their church and legacy giving is infrequent. Caucasian women make legacy gifts at rates that exceed all other ethnicities. Jewish women have long-established giving patterns and are notably the most philanthropic when it comes to the size of their gifts; Catholics and Protestants have not yet established these habits to a large extent. Hispanic women tend to make gifts informally and concentrate giving to family, friends and small community-based organizations. Asian-heritage women are among our country's up-and-coming philanthropists and will, in the future, establish their own unique giving patterns and preferences.

[3] Nichols, Judith, Ph.D., CFRE, Pinpointing Affluence in the 21st Century, Bonus Books, Inc. 2001.
[4] "Meet the USA: Generations of Women Moving History Forward" @ http://germany.usembassy.gov/germany/usa/women08.html

If you can easily identify affluent women among your constituents you are already well on your way to reaping the benefits they may want to provide you. If you cannot, you may want to purchase demographic data to assist in identifying key women philanthropists. Consider data appends such as:

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Religious affiliation
- Household income
- Liquid asset estimates
- Business affiliation
- Marital status.

What Women Want

While I can't claim to know what all women want in every situation, over twenty-five years in philanthropy has taught me that what women want is simple: to be asked their opinion and for their answers to be listened to and acted upon. They seek equality in the workplace, an ever-equal sharing of the 'load' from their male partners and counterparts, and to make the world a better place, both close to home and half-way around the world. Elementally, women want *their* lives to make a difference in the lives of others. To accomplish this through philanthropy makes women feel empowered.

The topic of women in philanthropy is finally gaining its due study. Several books and a growing number of philanthropic institutes have helped us to see a clearer picture. One resource focuses on the "Six C's" of women's motivation for giving.[5] Which are:

1. To ***create*** new solutions to old problems.
2. To use their financial power to effect ***change*** rather than to preserve the status quo.
3. To make a commitment (or ***commit***) to the organization's vision.
4. To enjoy a personal ***connection*** with the institution or organization.
5. To ***collaborate*** and work with others as part of a larger effort.
6. To ***celebrate***!

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[5] Shaw-Hardy, Sondra C. and Martha A. Taylor, Reinventing Fundraising, Realizing the Potential of Women's Philanthropy, Jossey Bass, 1995.

In a Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University study of thousands of donors who had made gifts of $10,000 or more, men reported their philanthropic giving as “practical”, perhaps filling in where the government does not or cannot. Women, however, see their gifts as “emotional” or even an obligation to help those with less. In concert with these motivations, women are seeking greater control of the resources they have produced and therefore expect greater accountability from the nonprofit organizations that they support.

Be transparent in your communications. Report your results proudly and frequently. Personalize your communications so that your donors get a greater understanding of the impact of their individual gift.

What Women Support

Three out of every four people living in poverty in the U.S. have been identified as women and children. This statistic has not been lost on benevolent women. Women make charitable gifts to a variety of causes, but research shows the majority is designated for:

- The needs of children
- Opportunities for women
- Education, and
- Health issues.

Their gifts mostly go to support grassroots nonprofits or are restricted to grassroots programs if the gift is given to a larger or national-level organization. Nearly three-quarters of respondents to a national survey indicated they were more likely to support an organization that would benefit their own communities versus one that went beyond their community.

Over 80 percent of grants made by women's foundations go to women and girls with low or no income. It’s not just affluent women who make gifts, however. Women with annual incomes of less than $10,000, who are often homemakers with children at home, gave 5.4 percent of their adjusted gross income to charity.

Affluent women see the broader needs of the community and the world and often support causes that provide economic opportunities for all, promote diversity, support the arts, and support the environment as well. Challenge grants and matching gifts are embraced by female donors. They see it as a way to leverage their own donations and insure that their interests, as well as their financial resources, are matched by others. When it comes to increasing gift size and promoting unrestricted giving, consider starting donor education programs. Studies show that women who participate in these programs and learn about the charity’s goals, objectives, programmatic offerings and future plans are more likely to give larger gifts, unrestricted gifts, develop long-term gift planning and hold leadership roles within the organization.

Women are less likely to want their names on things and more likely to give as part of collectives or drives that include other women. “Giving circles” or collective giving is emerging as a new force in philanthropy. Because they are a flexible form of philanthropy, giving circles take a variety of structures and sizes, ranging from informal potluck dinners to highly organized circles requiring minimum contributions to pooled resources of thousands of dollars and multi-year commitments. New Ventures in Philanthropy took a recent 'scan' of 61 giving circles. These groups represent more than 5,300 donors who have raised and made grants of more $23 million.[6] Apart from their structure they are a high-engagement form of philanthropy that seems to have a special appeal to women. Members take part in collective decision-making and educational activities and the circle's grant-making functions may include formal Request for Proposals, proposal reviews, and site visits. Women Moving Millions, which aims to encourage individuals, mostly women, to donate $1 million or more is another such collective. This group's goal was to raise $150 million in three years and instead raised $180 million! For some, these social networks seems to offer a more enriching and rewarding philanthropic experience than more passive "checkbook" forms of philanthropy. For some, philanthropy and participation in a community larger than themselves is the motivator. Research conducted on behalf of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund reveals that creating a family charitable legacy is a priority for many women.

Regardless of the charitable sector under which your organization falls, you probably have programmatic interests that are of interest to women. Find out what those are and provide information on them in a manner that motivates these donors: Allow them the opportunity to *create* new solutions and use their financial power to effect *change*. Ask for their commitment and provide a personal *connection* with your organization. Show them how you are *collaborating* with other nonprofit partners and *celebrate* their gifts and the impact they have.

How to Talk to Women

If you want to know how to talk to women, there is one sure-fire way to find out: **Ask them!** Women often like to communicate in a round-robin, give-and-take fashion. Interactive events such as women's dinner clubs, investments groups and giving circles facilitate the socialization women seek with each other.

Larry Stelter, president and CEO of The Stelter Company, a national planned giving communications firm and a long-time friend and planned giving colleague of mine, has convinced me that gender-slanted publications sent to women-only lists are more effective for this group than gender-neutral ones. His company has conducted focus groups that have concluded both donors and potential donors respond to publications and donor-examples that most closely mirror how these individuals view themselves: in age, in physical appearance, financial status, interests and values.[7]

He points out that single women likely make up a growing portion of the 65-and-older audience. Three out of every four women ages 85 or older is widowed. Couple this fact with two more: women tend to marry men a few years older than themselves and they enjoy a longer life expectancy, and it is clear that major gifts made in later life years and final legacy gifts will largely be made by women. When it comes to giving it away and passing it along women are the more generous gender: nearly half of all women

[6] New Ventures in Philanthropy, Giving Together: A National Scan of Giving Circles and Shared Giving, 2005.
[7] Stelter, Larry, How to Raise Planned Gifts by Mail, Emerson & Church, 2008.

who have estates worth $5 million or more leave a charitable bequest, while only one-third of wealthy men do.[8]

Reflect on Larry's well-informed advice in this area and seek to identify with your female donor base. Consider using informal or formal focus groups of the women who represent the audience you are trying to reach. Ask them:

- What interests them in your organization?
- What do they think your most important programs are?
- What would they most like to see their gifts support?
- What do they think you could be doing better?
- What kinds of information and communications they would like to receive from you?
- How often they would like to receive those communications?
- What other ways would they like to be involved in the organization?

Younger women are often motivated to give by their peers and are increasingly interested in giving circles and other structured activities. They are also more open to giving online. If there is a significant amount of younger women within your donor constituency you should also inquire into their interest in organization, promoting and participating in giving arrangements such as these. Constituent-led outreach and solicitation software already exists in the marketplace for this purpose.[9]

Marketing Planned Gifts to Women

It is estimated that women donors will now or in the near future control between two-thirds and three-quarters of all planned giving assets. According to a study by Partners in Philanthropic Planning[10] a majority of charitable bequests and charitable gift annuity donors are women and slightly less than half of all charitable trust donors are women. With the average planned gift ranging somewhere between $30,000 and $80,000 in the U.S., you can't afford to overlook the power of legacy giving.

If you have gathered a group of representative constituents as previously suggested, this is an excellent opportunity to also assess their willingness to consider making a planned gift to your organization. Since targeted marketing is the key to using your financial and staff resources efficiently and effectively, you might consider contracting with analytics vendor to examine your prospect base and identify your best prospects – including women. Such an investment will most likely be earned back with increased current and planned gifts within a few months to just a few years.

[8] Nichols.
[9] Vendor products include Convio Personal Events and Blackbaud's Sphere Events featuring Friends Asking Friends.
[10] Formerly the National Committee on Planned Giving, www.pppnet.org.

The Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund survey around family charitable legacy provide insight on using more persuasive language in making the case for planned gifts. Forty-eight percent of those surveyed said "It's critical that my children continue our tradition of giving." Nearly all of those surveyed admit that they research how much money goes directly into funding programs rather than into overhead.

If your group's response to making planned gifts is positive also find out what planning vehicle they would use. Ask them if they would consider making a bequest or trust gift? Over 90 percent of all planned gifts fall within this area. Bequests are easy to create and easy to understand. Wills are among the first estate plans that most people create – make this predominate planned gift vehicle the basis of your marketing program and grow gradually from there.

Describe charitable gift annuities and other life income gifts to your target group and see if these methods appeal to them. Also inquire about gifts of stock and real estate, gifts from a retirement account or life insurance policy. If their response is overwhelming positive to one or more of these gift vehicles, test the marketing of these gift types for 18 months to 3 years. If you find that their enthusiasm at your suggestions exceeded the reality of making these gift arrangements, consider dropping or re-examining your promotion.

Fiscal conservatism is not uncommon among women, and you may find this is true of your test group. If so, limit your promotion of planned giving products to those that reflect women's need for stable, long-term income in addition to the promotion of bequest gifts. Consider marketing:

- Charitable gift annuities both immediate and deferred
- An annual series of gift annuities to reach a specific total giving amount
- Perhaps, charitable remainder annuity trusts

Finally, find out from these women in what manner they would like to celebrate their own gifts and find out about the gifts of others. Typically, women like to be part of a group and they do not want to be seen as giving more than their peers. Women often seek to be less public about their donations than men and traditional donor stories, media announcements and public recognition are not always desired.

The answers to these questions will guide you in your communications, gift solicitations and recognition efforts with your women prospects.

Build Your Relationships with Women

Building donor relationships that result in planned gifts have always been one of the most rewarding parts of my career. Many women like the ability to connect with the organization and it's our job as development officers to provide those opportunities. Like building any relationship, there will be nervous moments and hesitations about 'what to say' or 'coming on too fast', but in the end connecting to your female donor base to describe and talk about the impact of planned gifts can end with a very close, loyal, and satisfying relationship between the donor, you, your organization and the people who lead it. Let's take a look at the steps.

After you identify your prospect group of female constituents, it's time to go for it! First contact can take many forms; whether you approach a prospect at an event, respond to a reply card seeking information about a specific gift type, or call to say "thank you" for a recent annual gift, your objective is clear: You want to ask her for a personal visit. When she accepts your invitation to talk about your organization, you have an important clue — she cares enough about your mission to want more information.

Wording a verbal invitation that suits your personal comfort level and style can take time to refine. Until you have developed your own, try these opening lines on for size and see if one of them fits. Always begin by introducing yourself and stating the full name of your organization:

> *"I'm calling to thank you for your recent gift. You've been a long-time supporter of our organization, and we're reaching out to women like you to ask your opinion of some of our future plans. I'd like to take the opportunity to say "thank you" in person and to fill you in on what's happening here. Would you be available to meet with me for lunch next week?"*

> *"I am calling to introduce myself. My role here is to get to know our donors and personally thank them for their support of our work. You have been very generous to us and our work; I would like to have the opportunity to find out more about why you give and get your opinion on how we are doing in your eyes. Would it be possible for me to set up a time to meet with you for 30 minutes or so?"*

New development officers may actually have an added advantage when securing an appointment because they can rely on the desire to meet and get to know the organization's supporters. Consider this example used by a colleague of mine if you are new to the field of planned giving or are new in your current position. You can use your new situation for a matter of months — even up to a year — if your prospect pool is a large one:

> *"I am new to the organization and to the area and hope to meet as many loyal donors as is possible in the next few weeks. The president has suggested that you would be a very important person for me to meet. I'm hopeful that you might have 30 minutes in the next two weeks to meet me for breakfast, lunch, or another convenient time."*

Not everyone is comfortable enough to issue an invitation into their home, and others will feel it too soon to be invited to your offices unless you represent a unique facility of interest such as a garden or museum. Often a neutral setting, like a café, coffee shop, or casual restaurant, works well. Differing times of day should also be offered. Regardless of how you approach it, your purpose should be known. Most constituents are keenly aware that your invitation will ultimately move toward a gift solicitation. You should be prepared to discuss your position responsibilities in a tone that is honest but not intimidating and to assure your guest that your current purposes it not to ask for a gift. Here is what a few colleagues have found useful to offer:

> *"I am not coming to ask you for a gift. I would like to introduce myself and learn about your association with us and update you on what is currently going on with the organization. I don't feel it would be proper to ask you for anything at this visit. I can*

assure you that I will keep my promise to you and not ask for nor accept any gift at this time."

"During our meeting, I hope to learn more about your interests and the stories behind your loyal support. Although I will be thanking you for your giving, I do promise not to ask you for a gift, nor accept a gift if you wish to offer one at this time. I am most interested in learning the reasons behind your loyalty and the ways in which we may help you to enjoy a stronger relationship in the future. I would be most grateful for your time and assistance."

You're meeting your prospect for lunch. This meeting is usually informal, and your objectives are to find out why she is involved with your organization and to explore her interest in legacy giving. While you might take along a general brochure, an event schedule, or a president's report, I suggest you leave it in your briefcase or purse and use it only if it's asked for. Think about a first date. Would your date feel comfortable if you handed him or her your resume or the full-length manuscript you've just written? More likely, they would be delighted to hear about your accomplishments or get a brief outline of your yet-to-be-published murder mystery, but handing them the written piece, as if it was a foregone conclusion that they wanted it, might be considered pushy. Instead, use a series of open-ended questions that keep the conversation going and on topic. At this point in the budding relationship, you accomplish more through give-and-take dialog than you do through a written case statement. Here are some questions that I and other development professionals have found useful:

"What first brought your attention to our organization?"

"Do you mind if I ask, what is your connection to our mission?"

"What have been your past experiences with the organization?"

"Are you receiving any of our publications? Did you see the latest update? What article or story was most interesting or hopeful for you?"

"How do you feel the organization is doing in terms of meeting its mission?"

"What do you think we do best?"

"Where do you think we could improve our services or programs?"

"Are there any thoughts you'd like me to take back to share with our CEO/president/ executive director?"

"Is there any area within the organization where you could see yourself becoming more involved?"

Take the opportunity before you part company to arrange a second meeting. Thank your guest for her time and ask directly to meet again. I haven't met a donor yet who told me everything there was to know in one meeting. An invitation to hear more of her opinions or to share recent developments about your programs or services will usually be accepted.

At your second meeting, don't let the opportunity get by you. Take the lead and consider the following greeting to set the agenda:

> *"Thank you for our last visit. I appreciate your willingness to meet again so we can continue our earlier conversation. Perhaps at this visit I can share with you ideas on how others have been able to make a significant impact on the programs/services that we've been discussing. Again, I don't want you to feel compelled to make any decisions at this meeting. Rather I'd like to get your thoughts on our mission funding."*

When meeting with women, it will be important to share the story of your own personal gifts and planned gifts. Come prepared with the stories of other women's gifts and be certain to share the results of those gifts. For example, if a $25,000 gift annuity created today could provide scholarships for young women in the future, share how one gift annuitant's thoughtful legacy is at work today. Visual aids like pictures, and stories or testimonials also work well.

It's never been difficult for me to share the story of my legacy giving and to ask others to join me with their own thoughtful future gift. If planned gifts are important to the organization, then ***your deferred gift is one of the most important and it should already be completed***. Consider leaving a bequest in your will or trust, designating a five or 10 percent remainder of a life insurance policy or a retirement account for this purpose. When you are a planned gift donor, you are automatically an advocate for the gift method — not a just a solicitor. Here's an example of how I might begin:

> *"I'm delighted to have this additional opportunity to discuss our organization with you. Meeting with people who are so connected to the mission is one of the best things that come with my position. I've found the mission so compelling and the programs so meaningful that a few years ago I made a planned gift because I wanted to make certain that my support continued into the future. Other people I've met have wanted to make sure that their support continues as well and have let us know that they've made legacy gifts too. Could I take a few minutes before we're finished here and tell you, briefly, about our legacy giving program and how we plan to use these gifts?"*

Let's face it — asking a donor to consider making a commitment to your organization can be uncomfortable. The possibility of rejection is why we hesitate. But your prospect is now an institutional friend and at this point, your question should not be unexpected. She is ready to be asked! Here, more than at any other stage in building a relationship, your confidence must be apparent. Let's review how you have gotten to this point:

- You have targeted likely planned giving prospects with information about specific types of legacy gifts.
- Your prospect has responded favorably either to a written offer for information or to a verbal invitation discussing the topic.

- You have had a series of “dates” which have brought her closer to the organization and you know from your discussions what mission components most interest her.

- You have told the story of your own planned gift and have described the various ways that the organization accepts legacy funding.

- You have shared information about the levels of funding that are needed to support her areas of interest.

- Where appropriate, you have introduced your prospect to organizational leadership and key players.

Your solicitation is just part of the ongoing conversation you’ve been having with your prospect. Although it is rare, you may find that your first meeting is the right time to ask the question; conversely, you might find that a series of meetings are more appropriate. If you are asking someone to consider a very large planned gift commitment, you should treat the cultivation and solicitation as you would with a major donor, and your solicitation will most likely be formal and may include a written proposal. In most instances though, you will probably make a verbal request. Consider the following suggestions when asking your prospect to make a planned gift:

> *“As you plan for future gifts, would you consider making a planned or legacy gift to us?”*
>
> *“In addition to your ongoing gift support of our mission, would you join me as a member of our Legacy Society by making a planned gift?”*
>
> *“Of the types of planned gifts that we’ve talked about, which one would you consider?”*

If the response is positive or tentative, be certain to set a reasonable follow-up date. Making a planned gift takes time, and day-to-day activities can begin to take precedence. So be persistent, and also be helpful! Be certain to address only the specific giving vehicle that you’ve settled on in your discussions.

> *“What assistance can I offer you?”*
>
> *“Do you have a financial or legal advisor I should forward information to on your behalf?”*
>
> *“Would examples of specific giving opportunities be useful?”*
>
> *“I have specific examples of language that might be helpful. May I share them with you?”*

Approaching Women in Economically Strained Times

If your female constituents are telling you it’s just not the right time…. What can you do? First, don’t get discouraged. More than men, women usually need a sense of security and making large gifts or creating a legacy gift during economically uncertain times may just be a matter of timing - if not this month, perhaps in the near future. Most recessions and slowdowns last less than a year, a few others have lasted less than two years and none since the Great Depression have ever exceeded two years.

Take this time to seek out, start and build those relationships that will result in planned gift commitments in the near future.

It's the perfect time to ask your women constituents to participate in focus groups like those described in this paper. Each month or every few months you could accomplish one of the following activities as well:

1. Review your marketing materials to make certain they reflect the planned gift types that are of most interest to your constituents.

2. Review marketing materials offered by vendors to see if they offer you a good fit for your objectives and the messages you want to share.

3. Review your website pages for clarity of message, ease of navigation, visual components and donor stories that show the impact of planned gifts rather than the technical components associated with them.

4. Gather new donor stories, testimonials and photographs. Reaching out to donors who have already made planned gifts is an excellent way to steward these generous gifts as well as to continue to build the organizational relationship.

Summary

Many charitable organizations either have misperceptions about female donors or they have decided just to do things they way they always have – which many will admit is no longer working. Women increasingly choose charitable interests separate and distinct from their spouse or family and it would be wise to approach them, not as part of a couple or a unit, but as an individual donor. It's time to identify and understand your female constituency, to speak them differently, to ask for their involvement both financial and with their time and to consider them as one of the most important components of your donor base.

About the Author

With more than 25 years of legal and nonprofit management experience, **Katherine Swank** has raised approximately $215 million for national healthcare and public broadcasting organizations, as well as an independent law school. Prior to joining Blackbaud in May 2007, Ms. Swank was the national director of gift planning at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, where she provided fundraising consulting services to the Society's chapter leadership and development staff for six years. She is an affiliate faculty member of Regis University's master of nonprofit management degree program in Denver, Colorado, teaching classroom and online courses on wealth and philanthropy and is a frequent speaker and authors industry white papers on the same topics. She holds an independent studies degree from the University of Northern Colorado and a law degree from the Drake University School of Law in Des Moines, Iowa.

Author Contact and Additional Information:

Katherine Swank, J.D., Consultant
Target Analytics, a Blackbaud Company
2000 Daniel Island Drive
Charleston, SC 29492

Phone:	800.443.9441 x3926
Email:	Katherine.swank@blackbaud.com
Twitter:	@KatherineSwank
LinkedIn:	Katherine Swank, J.D.
Website:	http://www.blackbaud.com/targetanalytics
Additional Papers:	http://www.blackbaud.com/resources/white-papers.aspx