

## **A Fund-Raising Model**

By Bob Young

### **Background**

Through the years, I have developed an organizational model that has functioned well to facilitate local evangelism. Described simply, the model categorizes contacts by level of interest or involvement, using a 5-4-3-2-1 approach. The model reflects the truth that evangelism is a process and not a one-time event. An important advantage of the model is the ability to identify where a person is in the evangelism process.

### **A brief description of the application to evangelism will be helpful.**

**Possible Interest.** When possible interest is noted, that person becomes a “5”. This can occur through a reference, spiritually oriented contact, hospital visit, or other contact. Note that this category is “possible interest.” Such people are placed on mailing lists, receive information concerning events, and are encouraged in a variety of ways to move to the next level. Communication at this level is often one-way, with the prospect as recipient.

**Initial Response.** When a person makes any kind of response, that person becomes a “4”. That response could be attending a church event, requesting a visit or contact, requesting information or a study, assisting with a church function or ministry, or any one of a number of other “involvements” or “interests”. At this level, communication has been reversed, and the prospect is actively involved and responding.

**Continuing Contact.** When a person requests or is willing to maintain multiple, continuing contacts, that person becomes a “3”. This can be regular attendance, scheduling a personal Bible study, or other indications of interest and increasing assimilation into the life and work of the local church. For a prospect to stay at this level, two-way communication must be maintained.

**Desired Response.** In the process of evangelism this step is represented by baptism, although it is really the result of much effort and is accompanied by faith, changed attitudes and lives, new commitments, and new life approaches. When a person becomes a Christian, he or she becomes a “2” in the organizational system.

**Consistent Commitment.** The ultimate goal of evangelism is to help a person incorporate their Christ-commitment into their lives so that the commitment is continuous and not sporadic. The significance of including this step in the model is that baptism is not the end, but is another step toward the ultimate goal. Persons in this “1” level can with confidence be moved to the responsibility of the shepherds who can monitor faithfulness and mentor and equip for increased service.

**This approach has interesting and exciting possibilities regarding fund-raising.** I believe one can use such a “5-4-3-2-1” approach in fund-raising. The approach will help the effective fund-raiser to know where on the scale each potential donor is. How would this work in fund-raising? There are many similarities, but also some differences to be noted. The steps as they apply to fund-raising are slightly different, but generally parallel. While I describe the process personally in reference to persons, the same principles apply to churches and organizations that represent numbers of people.

Developing Interest.

The fund-raiser is seeking persons who are interested in the work. The first step is to find a connecting point based on specific interests. Such persons will then be identified as initially connected—“5” on our scale. The fund-raiser seeks such persons and interests them through typical Public Relations and communication methods, e.g. newsletters, reports, special mailings, hard copy and email, website, electronic communication tools, digital media, etc. Such efforts are “interest focused” and personally relevant (not just facts, but human interest stories). The point is to find people who are interested in the work and people who will make a first response. One often does “cold turkey” mailing, especially since such can be quite inexpensive, but eventually communication will continue only with those who respond in some way and move to the next level. Requesting or requiring some response from those receiving information also allows the fund-raiser to move on to identify other potential donors. As in the evangelism model, most communication at this level is one-way, with the potential donor as recipient. Long-term failure to respond is a “no.”

Yes, I am or may be interested.

That a potential donor has moved to this step can be identified in a number of ways. Opportunities to express interest should be a part of the contact plan. That is, mailings and contacts should seek certain responses. The initial response may be a small gift, attendance at an event, request for continuing information, or other positive response. This level requires that there be some kind of response—a reversal of the communication direction.

I am a “friend” of your work.

This person desires and receives regular reports, updates, special opportunities to help or give to projects that they might support, etc. These likely give at least once a year. They are also likely to attend events in their area and to encourage others to become friends of the work. At this level, communication ideally is two-way.

I am a supporter/donor.

The person has now become a regular or frequent donor and supporter. People give to specific causes, so some communication should be in response to specific interests. People at this level must not be taken for granted. This person (or church) must not be taken for granted. Communication, reporting, updates, gratitude, and involvement must be nurtured continuously.

I am “in.”

These people are the core of any work, those who can be counted on for involvement and support in numerous ways—time, talents, resources, networks, and influence.