

Hartz & Minds 13: Donor Bill of Rights

In my work with public and private companies, public and private foundations, nonprofit organizations, and individuals, I encounter two sources of frustration, both equally valid:

1. Nonprofits sometimes feel that donors require too much of them or that donors engage monetarily, but not in other ways which could further their cause.
2. For-profits sometimes feel that nonprofits to which they donate do not give them enough information or voice in their ongoing operations or programming.

For financial donors, I would like to suggest two things:

1. If you care enough about an organization or cause to contribute your own money, consider other ways you can serve – hands-on time, professional service, in-kind donations, or simply leveraging your network to engage others in the nonprofit.
2. Take 5 minutes to read the Donor Bill of Rights below. This document was developed by a number of national organizations and endorsed by Independent Sector and other significant groups.

Donor Bill of Rights: Philanthropy is based on voluntary action for the common good. It is a tradition of giving and sharing that is primary to the quality of life. To assure that philanthropy merits the respect and trust of the general public, and that donors and prospective donors can have full confidence in the non-for-profit organizations and causes they are asked to support, we declare that all donors have these rights.

- I. To be informed of the organization's mission, of the way the organization intends to use donated resources, and of its capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes.
- II. To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization's governing board, and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities.
- III. To have access to the organization's most recent financial statements.
- IV. To be assured their gifts will be used for the purpose for which they were given.
- V. To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition.
- VI. To be assured that information about their donations is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by law.
- VII. To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature.
- VIII. To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organization, or hired solicitors.
- IX. To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share.
- X. To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful, and forthright answers.

For nonprofits, I would like to suggest two things:

1. Inform prospects and donors of their rights and ensure you can deliver.
2. Offer prospects and donors a variety of ways to contribute to your cause.

We are all in this together! Thank you, Jennifer Levine Hartz