

# What's In Store For Planned Giving..Tomorrow?

*Six fundraising experts discuss the future of planned giving and the movement to merge planned giving with major gifts and principal gifts.*

There's been a lot of chatter in recent years about the place of planned giving within the fundraising field. Should planned giving be its own specialty overseen by highly trained professionals? Does it need its own language only a few understand? Maybe planned giving (or gift planning as it's sometimes called) should be more integrated into major and principal gifts. Make it a team effort. What's right? What's best? What do donors want?

If your career intersects with planned giving, you are likely very interested in the answers to these kinds of questions. It's your lucky day! We talked with six of the country's top planned giving experts and rounded up their perspectives for you here in this special January supplement to *Planned Giving Tomorrow*. These folks bring in the big bucks presenting at national and regional conferences, but you get to benefit from their insights at no cost from the comfort of your own living room/office/favorite coffee shop. Enjoy! Then drop us a line at [success@plannedgiving.com](mailto:success@plannedgiving.com) and tell us what you think.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- 📌 What the car industry can teach the philanthropy sector.
- 📌 When is it time to "outsource" gift planning?
- 📌 The skillset that future fundraisers need to be marketable.
- 📌 The problem with "fully merged" major and planned gift programs.

## Meet Your Panel of Experts



### Jeff Comfort

Jeff is a national leader in the field of gift planning and a regular conference presenter. He joined the Oregon State University Foundation in 2013 after a distinguished eighteen-year career

at Georgetown University. He also spent eleven years in Denver directing the gift planning program for the National Jewish Medical and Research Center.

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### Scott Janney

Scott is a nationally known planned giving expert with over 30 years' experience in development. He has helped dozens of individuals and businesses make million-dollar-plus gifts. Scott is the

chief development officer at Bancroft in Cherry Hill, NJ. (*Kudos for receiving the AFP's New Jersey Southern Chapter Outstanding Fundraising Professional Award!*)

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### Scott Lumpkin

Scott is principal of his eponymous Scott R. Lumpkin & Associates, LLC. Previously he spent more than 30 years at his alma mater, the University of Denver. He started in annual giving

and planned/major gifts, then moved up to associate vice chancellor of gift planning and vice chancellor of university advancement.

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### Lynn Malzone Ierardi, JD

Since 2005, Lynn has served as the director of gift planning for the University of Pennsylvania, and on a limited basis as an independent gift planning consultant.

She has held gift planning positions in health and higher education, served as vice president with the Merrill Lynch Center for Philanthropy, and practiced estate planning and real estate law.

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### Camilyn K. Leon

Camilyn joined GG+A in February 2017 as the consulting vice president. She has over twenty years of experience in fundraising, gift planning, and counsel in the nonprofit sector,

with specific expertise in the legal aspects of philanthropy. Previously, Camilyn was the associate director of gift planning at the University of Virginia and an adjunct professor at UVA School of Law.

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### Lisa Repko, JD

Lisa is the assistant vice president of planned giving at Philadelphia's Thomas Jefferson University. She began her career at Pennsylvania State University's Dickinson School

of Law, where she received her law degree and served as the director of annual giving. She then joined the Jefferson team and was instrumental in developing a fully integrated planned giving program.

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**Q How do you interpret the current trend to incorporate planned giving under the field of major/principal gifts?**

**A Jeff Comfort**

The positive in this is that the highest performing gift planning programs have high collaboration with major gifts officers in programs. As for principal gifts, I see this for individual donors as the merger of planned and major gifts. When individuals first consider a principal gift, they usually next ask themselves, “If I do this, how will I do this?” I think it is critical to have gift planning at the table from the beginning of the conversation. Many principal gifts, if maximized, represent a basket of commitments, major outright and planned gifts. I think that growing prevalence of simple planned gifts like bequests and IRA designations has enhanced this trend.

**Lynn Malzone Jerardi**

This question has been posed for a number of years. Back in the mid 90s when I was the director of planned giving for the American Heart Association, we added major gift responsibilities and goals to my position. The profession has considered this question for a long time and in many ways we have adapted.

**Scott Janney**

I’m seeing the job title of Planned Giving Director less often, but an understanding of planned giving is becoming more important for people in positions like Chief Development Officer, Major Gift Officer, and Director of Principal Gifts. The negotiation, research, and

listening skills that were at the foundation of becoming a good planned giving officer are very important for most people who move up into those types of positions. They are essential skills for raising significant gifts. That’s where it’s going, but we aren’t abandoning planned giving. The field is strong, but not as many people will have planned giving as their title.

**Camilyn K. Leon**

I would love to study the car industry as a model for philanthropy. Successful car dealerships embrace teamwork, cost transparency, and lifetime service. Every member knows his or her role in supporting the sales person and making the client happy. Organizations that separate gift planning from major gifts are going to lose out on revenue now and in the future because gift planning is a means not an end. Working as a team is the only way to maximize the lifetime and after-lifetime value of the donor to the charity. A donor may want to make a big gift but doesn’t know how. Gift planning is there to help her figure it out, close the gift, and provide support afterwards. This structure enables the fundraiser to meet with more potential donors and maximizes the value of those relationships. By the way, my car dealer sends me cards every holiday and a gift basket after I trade in my old car for a new one!

**Scott Lumpkin**

Historically, planned giving has been viewed as a specialty, tied to the complex nature of planned giving strategies. There’s a plot about those strategies that can be pretty complex, which has been historically characterized and stereotyped. Assuming that’s the case, if those

complex strategies go away or are severely diminished, there’s almost an existential threat to planned giving. In other words, if the thing people associate with planned giving significantly diminishes, organizational leadership might think planned giving is no longer relevant.

**Lisa Repko**

In my opinion, this trend is due to the need for larger and larger gifts and prospect pools. Planned giving goes hand-in-hand with major gifts now more than ever. I think an increase in blended gifts can help donors give more over time, rather than a focus from all outright or all planned gifts. I’m also seeing more real estate gifts and other non-traditional assets.

*“Organizations that separate gift planning from major gifts are going to lose out on revenue now and in the future because gift planning is a means not an end.”*

— Camilyn K. Leon

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**Q What are the positives and negatives in this trend of combining planned giving and major giving?**

**A Lynn Malzone Ierardi**  
There are advantages to combining the two areas. After all, most major gifts are “planned.” As fundraisers we have become far more comfortable with the idea of blended gifts (current and deferred). Some of the best gifts from donors take this form so we can see results now—and endow a legacy with a deferred gift.

**Scott Janney**

Planned giving is less of a silo. Or at least we can say the people who want to focus exclusively on tax implications and esoteric gifts are occupying a narrower silo, while more of the largest gifts—the gifts that can really transform a fiscal year or an institution—involve some aspects of gift planning. I see this as positive. It’s about listening to people and helping them solve their problems. They want to accomplish a certain philanthropic outcome. If the fundraiser wants to push the latest product, that’s the wrong track. The fundraiser who wants to help the donor reach the donor’s desired outcome and who is willing to explore planned giving options to that end will be the most successful.

**Camilyn K. Leon**

I don’t see any negatives in this trend for the donor. People don’t think of themselves as “annual fund donors” one year, “major gift donors” the next year, and then declare that they really should be talking to gift planning people. I’ve worked in organizations where gift planning was integrated and where it was a separate office. The former is a much more efficient and satisfying environment—and easier for the donor. We talk a lot about relationships with donors in this business. The donor wants to work with decent people and have a relationship with the organization. She doesn’t care about having a relationship with me because I’m a gift planner or major gift officer or whatever. Staff collaboration enables charities to build the links and communication with donors necessary for transformative gifts. However, boards and management need to learn that fundraising is about measuring intellectual capital rather than how many donors were visited or dollars raised in a fiscal year. The timeline for transformational gifts is similar to a new invention or wonder drug. Integrating teams and collaborating across complex organizations takes leaders who understand sales, marketing, technology, and globalization. It’s hard to find people who can see the big picture, manage people, and serve a mission-based business.

**Scott Lumpkin**

Before, planned giving was siloed. Now, major gift and planned giving officers understand the power of incorporating planned giving discussions into their conversations. In my final campaign at the University of Denver, there was a leveraging partnership with major and principal gifts, and the results were much better.

**Lisa Repko**

As planned giving officers, this trend elevates the importance of planned giving to the entire organization. Regarding negatives, the organization may need different metrics for the two areas.

**Jeff Comfort**

Where I sometimes see issues in some “fully merged” major and planned gift programs is some lack of recognition of the importance of a depth of technical skills for more complex planned gifts. I’ve seen a number of programs where a full merger has been reversed to reincorporate a dedicated gift planning program while maintaining focus on collaboration.

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**Q How has the blending of planned gifts and major gifts affected your own work?**

**A Lynn Malzone Ierardi**  
In larger fundraising shops like Penn, we will always have a need for specialists in gift planning. The volume of our work can sustain it. In a smaller shop, the combined positions can make sense—and can provide successful results if implemented properly.

**Scott Janney**

I’m a chief development officer now. I work directly with the board members and most significant donors. I can discuss gift plans when that fits into the conversation, and that is an important skill.

**Camilyn K. Leon**

I would rather collaborate with my colleagues and meet donors when they need my help. A charity needs to be clear about what they mean when they say, “We need gift planning.” Is that fundraising focused on older donors? Is that gift planning support for the entire fundraising shop? Is that administrative and risk management for fundraising? I want to be evaluated on the value I bring to the process, closing, and documenting gifts. You don’t need a deep or broad understanding of gift planning to identify and visit 150 new prospective donors. That’s fundraising, not gift planning.

**Scott Lumpkin**

In my final ten years at the University of

Denver, we were able to keep the focus on conversations, to leverage those gift planning conversations with our major gift colleagues. As a consultant, I see one of the greatest needs out there for organizations large and small to focus on the conversations and those relationships. It’s exciting, it’s interesting.

**Lisa Repko**

The development has allowed for a team approach to prospects, more than a hand back-and-forth situation.

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*“The fundraiser who wants to help the donor reach the donor’s desired outcome and who is willing to explore planned giving options to that end will be the most successful.”*

— Scott Janney

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**Q What are the implications for the future of planned giving as its own specialty?**

**A Scott Janney**  
I think the skill set is more attractive to a larger group of professionals even though particular titles like gift planner, planned giving officer, philanthropic planner, could become more rare.

**Camilyn K. Leon**

Every organization needs gift planning, but not every organization needs a full-time gift planning specialist. We have to sort out the needs of different types of charitable organizations and the depth of technical knowledge that an organization needs. I know how to help a donor make gifts with cash, bequests, trusts, oil wells, hedge fund units, etc. Does it make sense to hire me full time? For a large charity, it might. For most charities, however, it’s better to outsource gift planning. All development officers need a basic understanding of what wealth is and how it can be transferred to charity. Then, they need to know who to call for the details. There’s a future for gift planning to be outsourced because consultants can serve organizations when they need gift planning. The charity doesn’t need to worry about hiring, training, and turnover. I also find that management doesn’t have time to

coach and train their staff because they are so burdened with fundraising goals of their own. This is also a real opportunity for independent gift planning experts.

Finally, look at the demographics. Fewer individuals control the majority of wealth. That means fewer mega-gifts. The population is aging and living longer. People are worried

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*“Planned gifts can become of secondary importance, and receive fewer resources, if issues like crediting and counting are not resolved.”*

— Lynn Malzone Ierardi

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about health care costs. We need more donors in this country. A bequest might be the first gift a donor makes, and then as their prosperity outlook becomes more positive, they decide to make gifts during their lifetime.

Gift planning embraces every prospective donor’s financial, professional, and familial constraints, and makes philanthropy possible even if they can’t write a big check today.

**Scott Lumpkin**

This trend has been so interesting to watch, and I think the change is totally natural. If you step back into the 1990s, that was an era of a huge push on complex gifts. Then 9/11 happened, and things started to slow down. Then the crash of 2007-2008 came and accelerated the adoption of institutions into blended gifts. We were talking about blended gifts before then, but after the crash, it happened out of necessity. Also after the crash, we started to see a decline in complex gifts, such as CRUTs. Across the board, at institutions large and small, we’ve seen a real decrease in the number of life income gifts overall. Major gift officers needed to turn to planned giving to have an impact to close major gifts. All this leads to conversations about bequests—and by that I’m referring broadly to a provision in a person’s will to a beneficiary of an IRA or life insurance policy. For me, it’s always been about the conversations, not the transactions.

**Lisa Repko**

It’s still important to have planned giving-minded or focused professionals

as these types of gifts require long-term stewardship to mature, and I often find that major gift officers and planned gift officers have different approaches and priorities. Both are valid and needed, and they work best in an organization that appreciates both and provides staff with credit on blended gifts.

**Jeff Comfort**

Barring significant tax law changes, I think there will continue to be recognition of the benefits of having focused gift planning officers on staff.

**Lynn Malzone Ierardi**

The risk of combining fundraising responsibilities is the often bigger focus on immediate dollars because of either financial needs, a lack of understanding, or both. Planned gifts can sometimes become of secondary importance, and therefore receive fewer resources, if issues like crediting and counting are not resolved. It’s also very important that everyone—including higher-ups and board members—is educated and informed about the integral role of planned gifts in the big picture. Only then can the two areas be combined successfully. ●

*Thanks to Dr. Rebecca Price Janney for talking to our experts to bring you this special report.*



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