

Building donor relationships



**FORMS**

Qualification Visit Worksheet Template

PGB3-0901

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WEEK 9

Starting the Planned Giving Conversation

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| --- | --- |
| **BACKGROUND** | Where Do I Start? |
|  | Step One: Send a Letter or Email |
|  | Step Two: Prepare to Make the Call |
|  | Step Three: Place the Call |
|  | Step Four: Ask for and Confirm the Meeting |
|  | Step Five: Overcome Objections |
|  | Conducting the Qualifying Visit |
|  | Scripts That Solicit Donor’s Personal Information |
|  | Scripts That Solicit Information on Donor’s Relationship to Your Organization |
|  | Scripts That Solicit Information on Donor’s Financial Capacity |
| **PROJECTS** | Develop a Qualification Visit Preparation Worksheet |
| **DOCUMENTS** | PGB3-0901 – Qualification Visit Worksheet Template |

**Time required:** 1 hour

**What it covers:** Introducing planned giving to your prospects on qualification visits

**Why:** Most fundraisers struggle to introduce planned giving in one-on-one conversations. A few conversation starters will help break the ice.

**How to get it:** [www.PlannedGivinginaBox.Com/PGB3-0901](http://www.plannedgivinginabox.com/PGB3-0901)

BACKGROUND

Now that you have identified the right prospects and done your homework about them, it is time to start approaching identified prospects about your mission and how planned giving can help support it for the long-term.

*“Where Do I Start?”*

We have provided you with the **criteria** to identify and rate planned giving prospects. We have also provided you with the means to **understand** these prospects, their thinking, and events and circumstances which might make them open to the planned giving conversation. Finally, we shared how to **further qualify** these identified prospects, doing your homework before reaching out to them personally.

* By now, you should know enough about your top rated planned giving prospects to select certain ones to call, the ones most open to the message and who are ready to talk to you about it.

*If you still feel unsure about who to call, make a start with your highest-rated planned giving prospects with no children. Among the loyals, this group is often the easiest to convert to a completed planned gift. So you can approach the project with* ***more confidence****.*

*The “Cold Call”*

There are really **no “cold calls”** in planned giving.

All of the identified prospects **are loyal** to your organization and invested in your mission. They know your charity and may very well be wondering why you have not asked them to make a planned gift before.

With your **qualified list** in front of you, don’t panic, *you can do this*. There is an easy five-step process you can follow to schedule your qualifying visits.

**Step One: Send a Letter or Email to Prepare the Prospect for Your Call**

**“Take the Curse Off the Call”:** A preliminary letter/e-mail takes the curse off the face-to-face call. When your prospect knows that you will be calling, he or she is more likely to accept the call. Ideally you will send the note just **a few days before you call**, so that your prospect has not forgotten it by the time you call. Just send a few of these at a time so you can make a few calls every day. *This is a marathon, not a sprint.* If you send a few notes and make a few calls every day, you will see results very quickly.

**Use Personal Letterhead:** Prospects will be more comfortable if you *handwrite the note on your organization’s note paper*, with your **name and title** printed on it. It makes it less likely that you are not who you say you are.

**Make It Short:** Keep the letter short, not more than one page, and make it as personal as possible. You want it to be memorable.

**Anticipate Objections:** You should expect that your prospect may not be available or have other concerns about the meeting. Have your calendar handy so you can discuss alternative dates, the preferred location of the prospect, or other possible worries.

**Provide Contact Information:** Include all of your contact information, including cell phone and e-mail so that the prospect can reach you if desired.

**“Who Are You?”** If you are unknown to the prospect, consider if the letter should come from someone else in the organization who has a relationship with the prospect, be it another staff member or a volunteer.

**Step Two: Prepare to Make the Call**

**Review the Record:** You and your team spent the time to put together a profile. Review your prospect profile and other information you have on the prospect now **before picking up the phone**. Make sure that another person is not actively soliciting the prospect. (Nothing frustrates prospects more than *when an organization seems not to know what its different divisions are doing*.)

**Practice, Practice, Practice:** Since you have not done this before (and even if you have!), **stand in front of a mirror** and *try out different phrases and scripts*. Put **a smile** on your face, stating in **succinct language** the reason for the visit. This information should come *easily and naturally* out of your mouth.

**Got Your Clock and Calendar?** Have your letter/email, a clock and a calendar ready *before you make the call*. You want to keep the call short, ideally around five minutes. Time yourself with the clock. The longer you stay on the call, the greater the likelihood that *the prospect will feel the matter has been covered fully and turn down the visit*. By having a calendar handy, you are ready to schedule the actual visit if you reach your prospect.

**Step Three: Place the Call**

**Stand and Smile as You Dial:** A smile will help you project happiness and energy when you speak to the prospect. By standing, you increase your energy which makes it more productive call.

**Mirror Pace and Tone:** Match the pace and tone of your prospect. If the prospect speaks slowly, do the same. If the prospect seems in a hurry, speak more quickly.

**Explain in Your Opening:** “I’m calling to follow up a personal letter.” Most prospects **will not remember** your letter, but you can use it jog their memories. If you describe the letter content, they are *more likely to remember it*.

**Be Nice to Gatekeepers:** Be flexible, personable and persistent with gatekeepers. Gatekeepers can be *spouses, personal assistants and even answering machines*. When speaking to a gatekeeper, that person has the ability to help you gain access to the prospect. **Treat the gatekeeper as you would the prospect** and even if you don’t get the visit this time, it will help for the future.

**Be Aware They Know:** Most prospects *know why you want to visit.* This is not a secret and **you should not make it one.** By being upfront and saying that you want to chat with them about long-term support of your charity’s mission, you will help to move the conversation forward and only obtain visits with interested prospects.

**Step Four: Ask For and Confirm the Meeting**

**Ask for the Meeting:** You need to **develop a mental script** with which you are comfortable. We have used lots of approaches over the years. Normally we say something along the lines of: *“I help supporters of XYZ Charity to invest in our long-term future through legacy gifts. The service we provide helps people like you, our most loyal supporters, to make gifts that typically cost nothing today but eventually make a huge difference in carrying out our mission. I’d like to come by and visit with you to discuss your connection to XYZ and see if there might be opportunity to help you meet your goals while also supporting ours.”* There is **no “right” way** to do this; what’s most important is to come up with something that feels natural for you.

**Confirm the Meeting:** Hopefully the prospect will take the meeting. Assuming the answer is yes, **send a note or email** confirming the *time, date and location* of the visit

**Repeat Your Contact Information:** Provide your contact information with the confirmation you send for the meeting. The prospect may have to cancel and *you want him or her to be able to reach you.*

**Reconfirm the Meeting:** Call the day before the meeting to confirm the time and location. Sometimes prospects simply forget!

**Never Make Your Prospect Wait for You:** When the meeting is not at the prospect’s home, *arrive 10 minutes early* and have your calendar with you, in case the prospect needs to reschedule at the last minute. Being early will also give you a chance to **scope out the location** and find *a quiet place* for your visit. When the meeting is at the prospect’s home, be sure to arrive ten minutes ahead, but don’t knock on the door until the appointed time for the meeting. You don’t want to put your prospect *on the defensive* by arriving **too soon**.

**Step Five: Overcome Objections**

**A Scheduling Conflict:** Have multiple dates ready. If the prospect turns down a series of dates, *he or she is really saying “no” in a polite way*. **Disqualify the prospect** and move on down the list. Many fundraisers have a hard time “disqualifying” a prospect. But if the prospect is making it clear that your charity is not a priority, *it is time to move on* to prospects who value your mission, even if they have a slightly lower net worth.

**Not Enough Time:** You can help **create time** by offering to meet the prospect when he or she might otherwise have downtime. Some of the best prospect visits have been accomplished *on the sidelines of soccer games* or *while waiting to catch a train*.

**Personal Circumstances:** Sometimes it is **just the wrong time** for the prospect to have this kind of meeting. In such cases, ask *when would be a good time* to follow up, and then **actually call back** at that time.

**Indifference:** Sometimes even the best prospect evaluation tools are wrong. If the prospect is truly indifferent, it is OK to disqualify the prospect, remove him or her from the prospect list, and move on to the next person.

*Preparing for the Visit*

The single biggest mistake most fundraisers and volunteers make when conducting qualifying visits is **failing to prepare**. You already have a good prospect profile, so what else do you need, right? Wrong. Preparation pays off.

*I was able to increase the effectiveness of my qualifying visits by over 30% by using a written agenda* ***that I prepared ahead of time****, instead of relying upon my “mental checklist” when going into a qualifying visit.*

PROJECTS

**Project 6: Develop a Qualification Visit Preparation Worksheet**

The written qualification visit preparation worksheet is the ideal way to gather your thoughts and intentions before you complete a visit. Download the template at [www.PlannedGivinginaBox.Com/PGB3-0901](http://www.plannedgivinginabox.com/PGB3-0901).

By creating your own worksheet, you will capture **on one document** the key information you need to conduct a successful qualification visit. You typically do not want to bring your *entire prospect profile* to the meeting -- imagine if you left it behind and it was read by your prospect! By just carrying the worksheet, you have enough information to keep you on track.

Once you create your own version, use it for every qualifying visit you conduct.

**Conducting the Qualifying Visit**

Whenever we speak to Board members about the need for them to have planned giving conversations, they go diving under the table (or least refuse to make eye contact) in an effort to **avoid the issue**. It seems that *the idea of planned giving conversations* makes them uncomfortable. The same can be said for many charity CEOs, chief advancement officers and even major gift officers.

The question is, “Why?”

In most cases, it is because the planned giving “community” has made planned giving *seem so complicated* that they are **afraid to make a mistake**. Rest assured, if you ask your most loyal donors to include your organization as a beneficiary of their will, retirement plan or life insurance policy, you will not be making a mistake.

The easiest way to overcome this fear is to develop internal scripts for yourself and your volunteers. These are **open ended questions** that you ask to *move the conversation forward*. Over time, you will also develop internal scripts to answer the **most common questions** presented by your prospects when you talk about legacy gifts.

These scripts should be in simple, lay language. To help you get started, let’s consider open-ended questions **which you can use as you make qualifying visits** on your identified planned giving prospects. The following are examples of questions that will directly or indirectly lead prospects *to share information* that could be helpful in determining their interest in planned giving with your organization:

**Scripts That Solicit Donor’s Personal Information:**

* What do you/did you do for work?
* Where do/did your children attend college?
* What do your children do for a living?
* What ages are your children/grandchildren?
* What other charities are important to you?
* What sort of volunteer activities do you participate in?
* Where were your born/raised?
* What has happened to your neighborhood over the years?
* Where do you like to vacation?
* What are your plans for the holidays?

*Keep in mind that many of these questions are quite personal and may or may not be appropriate for every situation. If you would be uncomfortable being asked the question, do not use it! And don’t forget our rule – if you are asking to satisfy your* personal curiosity *rather than to enhance the donor’s relationship with your organization,* ***just don’t****.*

**Scripts That Solicit Information on Donor’s Relationship to Your Organization:**

* How/why did you get involved with our charity?
* What are some of our activities or events that you have been involved with?
* What have been your most positive experiences at our charity?
* Have any of your family members or close friends been involved with our charity?
* What information do you receive from our charity? Is it helpful to you?
* What other information could our charity provide that would be valuable to you?
* What are your long-term hopes for our charity and its mission?
* If there was one thing you could change about our charity today, what would it be?
* What do you think of the job the President and current Board of Trustees is doing?
* *Specific questions for educational institutions:*
  + - How did our school help lead to your success?
    - Did you participate in any activities while a student? What were they?
    - Describe your favorite moment(s) as a student.
    - Have you been back to campus recently?
    - Do you read the magazine? What is your favorite part?
    - Do you stay in touch with friends from your days as a student?
    - Tell me about your favorite faculty member.
    - What was your favorite class? Why?
* *Specific questions for healthcare organizations:* 
  + - Tell me about your care at the hospital.
    - Do you have a favorite doctor or staff person at the hospital?
    - What do you consider to be quality health care?
    - Which of our services do you utilize the most?
    - If you were to tell others about your care at the hospital, how would you describe it?

*You’ll notice that some of these healthcare questions might be considered too personal and potentially embarrassing by your prospect. You are also getting close to the subject of* ***mortality****, which* always *has to be handled carefully when what you’re really trying to sell is* ***immortality****. This is where fundraiser empathy and the “personal touch” are critical.*

**Scripts that Solicit Information on Donor’s Financial Capacity:**

* Tell me about your career. What do you do? How long have you been with them? How has the industry changed since you started?
* What was it like working for your past employer?
* I understand that you started your own business. How did you get started?
* Are these pictures of your children? Tell me about them. Where was this one taken? How old are they? Do you have any grandchildren?
* You mentioned that you like to travel, where did you go this year? Who did you go with?
* If I wanted to reach you during the winter, do you have an alternative address, or are you here year-round?
* What are your interests outside of work? Do you have any hobbies?
* When you think about your life, what are your financial priorities?
* What do you think the market is going to do in the next year?
* Where do you get reliable information on financial, estate and tax planning?
* What sort of retirement plan does a company like yours offer its employees?
* What strategies do you think are effective in helping parents plan for the cost of their children’s college education?
* Do you support other charities in addition to ours?
* How do you determine what level of support to make to charities?
* If we were to demonstrate our commitment to an area that is important to you, would you consider increasing your giving?
* Where does our charity fall on your list of charitable priorities?

*Note that inquiries about the prospect’s business, travel, hobbies, etc. are* indirect *ways of assessing financial capacity. Asking for financial information directly is usually not appropriate until your prospect has made a gift commitment and needs help in structuring the gift. Until that time, using these questions will provide you will valuable insights into the prospect’s financial capacity without* ***alienating*** *the prospect at the start.*

Many of these questions may seem superficial, and they can be. However, we have found that if you **listen carefully** to the answers, you learn a great deal about your prospect, what motivates the prospect, and whether a planned gift can help meet her *personal planning objectives* while also supporting your charity.

* Most of these questions can be asked in a **very non-threatening way** as part of casual conversation. Who doesn’t like to be asked about their children or grandchildren?
* Having these scripts in mind means you won’t suddenly find yourself stuck with nothing to talk about except the weather!

By gathering this information, you begin the process of **building relationships** between your prospects and your charity that can *eventually result in planned gifts.*

*After the Qualifying Visit*

Write down what happened right away!

* You will be amazed how much more information you remember in the 20 minutes after the visit than you do just a few hours later.

This information needs to get entered into your database and **recorded for the benefit of your organization**. Once it is, you can create an updated prospect profile and begin to *strategize on next steps*.

* If the prospect was interested, do the follow-up and set up your next meeting.
* If the prospect was not interested, disqualify the prospect, change the rating, and move on to the next person.

This discipline will help you to ask lots of prospects to consider planned gifts and raise significant revenue for your charity.

*To ensure I don’t forget the salient points of the conversation, I typically ask the prospect if I can* ***take notes****. If the prospect prefers that you* ***not*** *take notes, as soon as you leave the meeting you should get out of sight and do a quick “brain dump” of the information into a digital recorder, so you capture it. If you are taking notes, in many cases the prospect will prompt you to record what is important by saying something like “Did you take that down? I don’t want you to forget it.”* ***Don’t try*** *to surreptitiously take notes or record the conversation without permission; this rarely works and often will offend your prospect.*

DOCUMENT PGB3-0901

Qualification Visit Worksheet Template

Prospect Name/Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_\_

Visit Location: Time: am/pm Date:

Materials Sent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prospect Ratings: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Summary of Prior Moves with this Prospect: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of this Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

At the end of this meeting, I will know: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What outcomes do I desire?

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What questions will I ask? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Materials/items to bring: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Likely objections and my responses:

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Directions: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_