

## COMMUNICATING WITH CONSTITUENCIES

With few exceptions, non-profit organizations bemoan that "*no one knows what we do!*" .... "*we're the best kept secret in town!*" .... "*our light is always under a bushel basket!*" Sound familiar? When I hear these laments I suggest the following communication perspectives.

- ***Repetition is Essential***

An adage in the advertising business is that when account executives are getting bored with a client's advertising "message" the public is just catching on.

You and your Board know what's going on, and feel that you've let others know as well. But don't presume others have paid attention at the precise time your newsletter or annual report arrived. Repetition of key goals and points is an essential part of communicating your organization's mission and results.

- ***Change Requires Patience and Persistence***

The process of changing people's perspectives, whether negative or ambivalent, takes patience and persistence through repetitive messaging.

- ***The Ripple Effect from Personal Messaging***

Public relations studies show that the average individual personally interacts with 200 to 300 people a year; the more prominent and successful the individual the more personal interactions.

When one of your Trustees voluntarily asks someone to consider a gift to your organization, with the rationale clearly-articulated, that message will likely be repeated, many times over, whether or not a gift results. Multiply that impact by the number of your Trustees, and you can't fail to be successful in soliciting support!

- ***Major Donors Fund the Future, not the Past***

While a record of accomplishments and financial stability are important, it's the future not the past that most interests major donors.

- ***Major Donors are Interested in Helping People rather than Institutions and Programs.***

It's assisting, helping and improving the lives of others that most inspires major giving; not the organizations and programs designed to deliver those results.

- ***Talking "Loud and Proud"***

The most effective communicators of messages are volunteers who talk "loud and proud" about their organization; not professionals who are seen as paid to persuade.