

November 15, 2013

 poisner.com/2013/11/dont-make-this-membership-fundraising-mistake/

I recently was speaking with an organization that had gone to great lengths to identify different levels of membership benefits that would be received by their members based on the level of dollars donated as part of their membership.

Donate \$40 and get X.

Donate \$75 and get X and Y.

Donate \$120 and get X, Y, and Z.

Etc.

They wanted my advice on how to further boost up the X, Y, and Z to make membership more attractive.

My advice — start over and ditch the concept entirely.

This wasn't a professional association — it was an organization that could be loosely described as progressive and ideological. People aren't joining the organization to gain "benefits."

They are joining to advance the mission.

The difference between larger and smaller membership gifts isn't about offering them more benefits. It's about (a) the donor's capacity, (b) the donor's understanding of the organization and the impact it's generating, (c) the donor's emotional connection to the organization and/or the people involved, and last but not least, (d) whether the donor was asked to give more.

Instead of saying your \$75 gets you X where X is something the donor gets, you should say \$75 will help us make impact X — by framing it as part of a larger campaign.

And make them feel part of a larger community of like-minded donors so they'll feel emotionally connected.

If you get them thinking analytically about the size of their donation as one of costs/benefits to them, my guess is you'll almost always depress the size of their donation, not increase it.