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 poisner.com/2013/10/outcomes-schmoutcomes/

I am a big believer in nonprofit organizations measuring the outcomes they achieve.

It's an essential tool for any staff/board to know they're having the impact desired over time.

And if not, to adjust their strategy.

I also understand quite a few foundations are looking at demonstrated outcomes as part of their grant criteria.

However, I recently had the experience of having a nonprofit Executive Director tell me (and separately tell one of their board members) that their biggest challenge with major donor fundraising is they haven't measured outcomes, so they can't go make the case effectively to potential donors.

To that I say "outcomes schmoutcomes."

In my 13 years of directly raising major donor money for a not-too-dissimilar organization, I can count on one hand the number of major donors for whom documented outcomes was a big deal.

This particular organization has a great brand, lots of long-term donors in the right age and income bracket to give, and lots of passion.

For donors giving at the \$500, \$1,000, and \$2,500 levels — which is where this organization is focused — the key factors impacting a major donation are: do they share a passion for the mission, do they feel personally connected to the person asking, do they feel the organization is generally competent, and do they feel a sense of urgency that the donation is needed now, not some far off time in the future. Emotion, not reason, is the dominant force in these donations.

Most likely, if the organization were to start talking with potential major donors with a focus on "outcomes," eyes would glaze over and major donor meetings would be even LESS successful.

If the organization is not achieving the success it should with major donors, almost certainly there is something else askew.