Trust Your Instincts: Six Quick Asks

This activity is a great warm-up for other, more complex role plays. You can even use it as a warm-up before a meeting with a real donor. It’ll help you learn to think on your feet, which is a key skill for fundraisers. Facilitators love it because it brings instant energy to the room and it’s simple to organize.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Do This Exercise?</th>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because sooner or later you will have to answer the question “Why should I give?”</td>
<td>Anyone involved with your fundraising campaign: some combination of board, staff, and volunteers—especially those who are preparing for visits with donors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use This Exercise When</th>
<th>Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You are preparing people for face-to-face solicitations</td>
<td>A quiet room large enough for people to pair up, talk, and hear each other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Required</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30 minutes</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FACILITATING THE EXERCISE

1. First model the exercise. Recruit a partner to join you at the front of the room. Explain that your partner’s job is to ask you the question “Why should I give?” six times in a row. Your job, in modeling the exercise, is to come up with six different answers, customized to address what you know about your partner. For example,

“Why should I give?”
“Sally, our organization sustains the community programs your mother helped create. Your gift would be a great way to honor your family legacy.”

“Yes, but why should I give?”
“Our group is one of the most effective in the city, and I know you like to invest in groups that use money wisely and achieve tangible results. That’s why we’re asking you to consider a gift.”
“That’s good, but why should I give?”
“Sally, you’re one of our most dedicated volunteers—so you understand that volunteer labor isn’t enough to get everything done. Your gift supports the staff and training that makes volunteers like you so productive and increases our impact.”
(Continue with three more variations on “Why should I give?”)

If you like, encourage your partner to incorporate a few common excuses into the questions. For example, “I already support several organizations—why should I give to yours?” or “I don’t have much money at the moment—why should I give?” As you model the exercise, do your best to provide thoughtful responses to the questions.

2. When you complete your six responses, take a bow and enjoy the applause. Spend a few minutes on feedback from the group: what they observed, what worked, and what might be improved.

3. Provide the following instructions to your participants.

   a) Pair up; choose someone you don’t work with very often. (If both board and staff are being trained together, suggest board-staff pairs.)

   b) Within each pair, decide who will be first to ask the questions and who will answer them.

   c) The person being solicited asks the question six times: Why should I give? Variations on this question are encouraged. If you’re responding, do your best to come up with six different answers.

   d) Switch roles and repeat.

   e) Once you’ve completed the role play, take a few minutes to give each other feedback: What worked? What could we each do to make the case more effectively?

4. After the role play and feedback, reconvene the full group to debrief the exercise by asking some combination of the following questions:

   - What worked? What did you do well?
   - Who heard a good response to the question “Why should I give?” that you’re willing to share?
   - What do the most effective responses have in common?
One reason this exercise is effective is that with each subsequent reply to the question “Why should I give?” solicitors tend to come up with deeper, more meaningful answers, because they use the easy ones first. These later responses tend to have greater impact.

*We thank our colleagues at the Center for Progressive Leadership for sharing this exercise.*

**TRAINING TIP** The success of this exercise depends, to some degree, on how well you model the answers at the start. If you require a lot of preparation, set aside time to practice in advance with a friend or colleague, or even in the mirror. Talk into a voice recorder. You don’t have to be flawless, but you do need to be comfortable and authentic.

And if you’re one of those people who prefers improvisation to preparation, this activity was made for you. Jump in and have fun with it.