
How Do You Get the Information You Need for Your Case for Support?

Need to gather information for your case for support? First, I'd like to stress the importance of having one author of your case for support. That staff member or consultant should be the same person interviewing others, reading all source material, and then synthesizing everything—in other words, ensuring that all of their information is first-hand.

If you are the chief development officer this process will probably fall to you—and it will probably take a lot of your time for a month or so. If a consultant is hired to write the case, try your best to be part of these interviews. You will gain valuable first-hand information about your organization, the people who serve it, and your donors.

Space your interviews so you have time to go over your notes while everything is fresh in your mind. Don't run overtime during the interview. If you ask for twenty minutes, keep the interview to twenty minutes—by the way, asking for twenty minutes of someone's time sounds better than taking a half hour. Bring a piece a candy, pretzels, or a bottle of water for the person. They'll remember that you thought about them before you came.

Interview Skills

So, now you're ready. The interview process requires nothing less than the skills you would use when meeting with a donor, finding out what the donor needs, and asking for a gift. Bring your talents with people to the forefront for each interview.

Take a deep breath, step back, and *listen*. That's the first thing you'll do. Ask open-ended questions. Don't suggest answers—this their time, not yours. And never put words in their mouths. What if you don't agree with what they are saying? Keep taking notes. This is *their* time and you need to hear *their* perspectives.

As you follow through with these questions, you will begin to walk away with the words that become motivators. The answers to the whys, whats, hows, and tell-mes will give you words that motivate individuals to do something extraordinary for your mission. Start to list them or circle them. These are the words you'll want to use in the case statement.

In between the interviews you've probably identified several documents—old and new—for information. Start to circle common threads. These are words that are used over and over to

communicate your organization's mission. Did things change? If not, *why not?* If yes, *why?* Take a look at the environment. What happened in this year or that? Some of it may have nothing to do with you directly but maybe indirectly. This is important.

You'll Need to Answer These Questions:

- Why does this organization exist?
- What are some adjectives you would use to describe this organization?
- Tell me about your best day here and why it was.
- If you could ask for *one thing* to move our mission forward, what would that be—and why?
- How does this organization impact the community/clientele?
- What *one thing* are you dying to try?

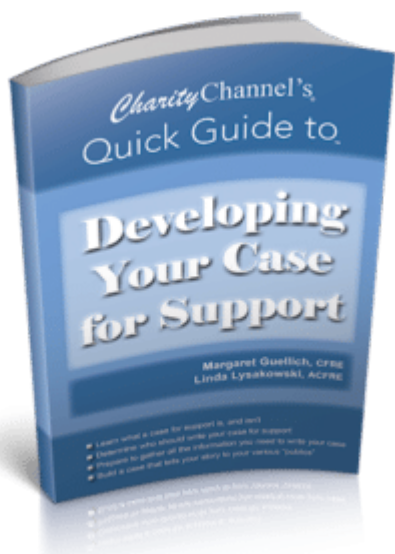
You've finished your interviews and reading of documents so my next article will discuss telling your readers who you are.

Homework for the Author of the Case for Support

Answer these questions:

- What information do I need?
- Who has this information?
- How long will it take me to get this information?
- What documents do I need and where are they?

Want to Learn More?



Linda Lysakowski, ACFRE is the coauthor of [***CharityChannel's Quick Guide to Developing Your Case for Support***](#) (CharityChannel Press 2016).

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