

## Dream On

by Marcia Scowcroft, VP, Fundraising Strategy  
[mscowcroft@drsolutions.org](mailto:mscowcroft@drsolutions.org)

As 2008 draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on what kind of a year it's been overall. I have come down firmly in the "so-so" camp.

Religious teachings counsel (and console) us that those who are last shall be first, which although a comfort to many of us, must seem grossly unfair to a Tiger Woods or a Michael Phelps. So, it all depends on your point of view.

Though few of us in fundraising would call 2008 a great year, it may hold some valuable lessons such as perseverance and patience, that will stand us in good stead while we wait for the better times that are sure to come.

It's unfortunate that, for many, their 2008 fundraising efforts amounted to little more than practice. But perseverance, consistency, and adherence to "best practices" are vitally important to good donor communications, and a meaningful dialog with donors will help forge a tighter bond with your organization.

### Take a long view

Although it may not be apparent to you this year, cementing stronger bonds with your donors will ultimately increase their life-time value. So it's important to communicate frequently (but not excessively), ask for support periodically and show your appreciation regularly.

This is where a little perspective on 2008 is needed: those who maintained or adopted a disciplined approach to both talking and listening to their donors have prepared themselves, to the best of their ability, for the future — whatever it holds.

This is not exactly an epiphany, I know, but operating strictly to meet short-term goals is not a plan that will sustain non-profit organizations any better than it has helped big business. Was there a more chilling example in 2008 of how destructive a short-term strategy can be than the sub-prime mortgage market meltdown?

## Moving forward

Are there things you can and should be doing now? Listed in this issue are 15 ideas, approaches to consider and examples of how organizations just like yours are putting them into practice.

Persevere, keep reaching. Think again about the lessons of 2008. Don't get overwhelmed but remember, even if you fall short, your donor

communication program should aim high to help meet the lofty goals of your organization's mission.

We are here to help. Companies like ours are whole-heartedly in favor of well-planned donor communications programs. We love to structure, design, write and execute programs like these, and often do them with minimal client involvement.

Although sometimes the last shall be first, my bet is on those organizations with worthy, ambitious missions whose fundraisers have enthusiastically and clearly communicated their goals and accomplishments to those who will listen — regardless of how they finished 2008.

Dream on, fundraisers, but to improve the odds of reaching your long-term goals, I highly recommend that you also practice, practice, practice. ●



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Liz Brown  
VP, Creative Services  
508/313-1007  
[lbrown@drsolutions.org](mailto:lbrown@drsolutions.org)

Marcia Scowcroft  
VP, Fundraising Strategy  
508/313-1056  
[mscowcroft@drsolutions.org](mailto:mscowcroft@drsolutions.org)



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