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What is *planned giving* today?

It isn't exactly what we thought it would be when the National Committee on Planned Giving was founded in 1988. At that time, we expected there would soon be a planned gifts specialist working in every nonprofit, conferring with the "best" donors to transform highly appreciated assets into highly beneficial, complicated, and somewhat mysterious charitable gifts. Twenty years later, we find that nonprofit priorities are often focused on current and outright gifts, discussions about philanthropy don't always include both advisors and charity, and donors don't necessarily depend on any advisors when information is available at the touch of a mouse. What can we expect in the future? How can NCPG help gift planners not only survive these challenges, but actually lead the charge?

In July 2006, the NCPG Board of Directors appointed a special task force to research and recommend strategies for "increasing the quality and quantity of charitable planned gifts" as we move into the future. The task force's responsibilities were to evaluate the current charitable gift planning environment, determine trends and needs of the gift planning community, and recommend changes in membership, structure, focus, brand, and/or policies that should be made in order for NCPG to provide value to the practice of charitable gift planning.

In its frank and sometimes difficult assessment, the Strategic Directions Task Force defined the changes in the planned giving environment since NCPG was founded.

- 1) "Planned Giving"—originally a specialized focus on a set of tax tools—has morphed into the process of charitable gift planning. As one NCPG member put it, "The term 'planned giving' puts the emphasis on gift instruments—things like CRTs, gift annuities, pooled income funds, and the like. To say that many small nonprofits offer 'planned giving' gives the impression that we have the knowledge and technical ability to use those instruments. But, charitable gift planning means (to me) that we can help donors evaluate their charitable goals *and* their financial means in order to make gifts. As a part of that, I should know enough about planned giving tools to recognize when one or more of them might be useful or appropriate in this planning process. And I can bring in whatever special technical expertise may be needed to help execute that plan."
- 2) While charitable gift planning continues to be practiced by full-time planned giving professionals, the majority of gift planning is done by those who work only part-time in this area—it is a special expertise that they have within their fundraising job or professional practice. At the same time, many charity leaders still perceive planned giving as deferred. There is an increasing emphasis by charities' senior management on current dollars and the bottom line, with a resulting shift in resources. A small top tier of charities have sophisticated planned giving operations, while the majority of charities have few if any fundraisers who specialize in planned giving.
- 3) Charitable gift planning is increasingly facilitated by for-profit professional advisors. In many cases, charity has little or no role in these conversations. How can good philanthropic planning happen without an intimate discussion of philanthropic mission?

From July 2007 through July 2008, the NCPG Board engaged NCPG members and key constituents in considering these issues and others, through focus groups, conversations at planned giving councils, dialogue at NCPG Leadership Assemblies, and reports in *Gift Planner Update* and *The Journal of Gift Planning*. That engagement supported the work of the Strategic Directions Task Force and verified four areas as critical priorities:

- 1) Engaging broader constituencies
- 2) Providing unique programs and services
- 3) Implementing new models of collaboration and partnership
- 4) Re-branding the organization

NCPG has been working on all four of these tasks simultaneously. The first step and most pressing need were to create a new brand that could support the other three key priorities.

Unlike many of NCPG's 501(c)(6) sister organizations that exist to serve groups of professionals, NCPG's new brand needed to acknowledge that our organization is a 501(c)(3) mission-based nonprofit. The "why" of our existence comes before "who" we serve or "how" we are structured. In researching the need for a new brand, NCPG found that the current name and brand do not communicate this essential fact. What is a "committee?" A small group of people? An inefficient decision-making structure? What is "planned giving?" Only revocable or deferred? Something donors do, not fundraisers or advisors? These nagging perceptions prevent us from communicating clearly about the mission we exist to achieve: not just increasing the quality and quantity of planned gifts, but creating the most meaningful charitable giving experience for the donor personally, and in accomplishing the mission the donor wants to support.

NCPG was facing a "perfect storm" of issues: a limited and often misunderstood image, a constituency that clearly needed to be broadened, and shrinking support for what we do. These same challenges were faced by an organization whose case study created an "aha" moment for NCPG. The American School Food Service Association was linked to an unflattering image of school cafeteria workers. There was a serious gap between their brand and their mission, a gap that prevented them from engaging the broad constituency they needed in order to achieve their mission of good nutrition. To close that gap, they became the School Nutrition Association. Now, school administrators, nutritionists, food suppliers, the media, and the public "get it." The School Nutrition Association is creating a brand that welcomes all of these constituents—and they would be the first to tell you, "not a word is said about hairnets or ketchup."

Like good nutrition, good planned gifts require the careful balancing of several groups. In January 2009 the National Committee on Planned Giving will become the *Partnership for Philanthropic Planning*. As an organization, we are devoted to fostering partnerships that bring together all parties in the gift planning process through collaboration, communication, and shared learning, for the purpose of *charitable giving made most meaningful*. Our value lies in our ability to help charitable gift planners utilize *every* philanthropic tool available to create the most meaningful charitable giving experiences.

The Partnership for Philanthropic Planning has launched a website that previews the new brand and offers our members and other constituents an opportunity to let us know how they would like to engage in this new partnership. To reach this site, go to www.pppnet.org and click on Partnership Introduction.

Sidebar: NCPG Strategic Directions Task Force

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National Committee on Planned Giving

Sidebar : Definition of Charitable Gift Planning

Charitable gift planning is the process of cultivating, designing, facilitating, and stewarding gifts to charitable organizations.

Charitable gift planning:

- uses a variety of financial tools and techniques for giving,
- requires the assistance of one or more qualified specialists,
- utilizes tax incentives that encourage charitable giving, when appropriate, and
- covers the full spectrum of generosity by individuals and institutions and is based on powerful traditions of giving in the United States.

The techniques of charitable gift planning include both revocable and irrevocable arrangements, gifts available for use at the time they are given and gifts that may not be available until a future date, and split-interest gifts intended to balance financial, personal, and charitable objectives.

Donors should seek charitable gift planning advice from professionals with integrity, expertise, and experience in law, investments, property, tax, and charitable transfers in order to assure both the technical merits of the transfer and the philanthropic quality of the gift.