COPE: The Process of Asking for Money

Objectives:

- Uncover our experiences, internal taboos, cultural myths and misunderstandings about asking for money.
- Identify and practice the elements of asking for money successfully.
- Identify strategies for addressing our worst fears around asking for money.
- Creating an Organizing Plan

Messages, myths and misunderstandings about money

How many people like asking people for money? Not very many! Most of us dislike being asked for money. We have all been asked to give money and, at some times, we gave when we were asked. There is a discrepancy here…we feel horrible when we ask for money, but very seldom do people really hate us for it. Sometimes they even appreciate it, especially if they know it's part of a plan to work for their interests.

There are several categories of giving: individuals, bequests, foundations, corporations. Of these categories, individuals give the largest percentage in this country (not for politics, but in general). The percentages are individuals: 81%, bequests: 7%, foundations: 7%, corporations: 5%.

People making under $25,000 give the largest proportion of their salaries, and people making under $50,000 give about 85% of the individual donations in this country.

There are a lot of negative messages in our society about talking about money and about asking people to give money. Here are some examples:

"Money can't buy happiness" - Neither can poverty, but money can help us make changes that could make life a whole lot easier.

What is the famous quote about money from the bible? 'Money is the root of all evil.' But the *real* quote says 'The love of money is the root of all evil.' We don't have to love money, but we can certainly appreciate it and use it for our benefit. Let's replace that quote with another one, which is tailor-made for a COPE Organizer: "You have not because you ask not."

We've all been told that it isn't polite to ask someone how much money they make or what something costs. Question: Who benefits by us not being able to talk about money? Answer: *The people who have a lot and don't want us to figure out that the rest of us have something in common.* One of the basic premises of being part of a union is to break down these barriers, learn how much everyone makes (including supervisors) and try to make it equitable. You have to care enough about what you're raising money for in order to get past all of these internal taboos.

Now let's talk about some misunderstandings. One argument you have probably heard a member say is, "I pay dues for you to work for me!" They don't seem to understand how the Union functions. That's because they are used to a corporate or service model of an organization. They pay their money, and get a service in return.

Elements of the Perfect Money Ask

Ask people who have given money to tell why they gave. List the answers on flip-chart. "*What was it about the issue or cause that got you to give? How were you asked? Was there something about the person who asked?"*

To develop the outline, ask: *"Where will we say the money will go, why is it important? What are the members' self-interests around this issue? What examples can we give of concrete ways that politics and political money has helped them as members in the past? In what way and how much do we want them to contribute?"*

<u>What Are We Afraid Of? Answering Tough Questions</u>

Ask people what their biggest fear or nightmare is about asking for money, and list their responses.

One fear that is sure to happen is that people will say no. Remind participants that they will have to ask 4 or more people for each 'yes' that they get. That means facing a lot of 'nos' - they have to be able to move on and continue to talk to a lot of people. It is important to remember that *people say no for a lot of reasons* and it *isn't personal!* It's important to give yourself a pep-talk that the next person will say yes, that you are offering them an opportunity *no one else* can offer (to participate in something that will directly benefit their lives), and to keep going.

Another fear will be around answering questions. There are two training options on difficult questions depending on how much time you have.

Trainer Directions – Asking for COPE money

Option 1: Have group brainstorm all of the possible responses from yes, to no, to what do you do with my dues money, to you only support democrats, etc., list them on butcher paper.

Go over each response/question and as a group decide what might be a good response. Use the handout *"Sample Responses to Common Questions About COPE"* as a trainer's guide. *Distribute the handout only after the group has come up with their own responses.*

Option 2: Review the "Responses to Tough Questions about COPE" Handout. Ask the group if these questions and the responses cover the questions that they're worried about. Emphasize that when asked a question they don't have to feel like they need to be an expert, they should answer very briefly and then move on. If they don't know the answer they can say "You know I don't know about that, but what I do know about is…(back to the message)"

Asking for Money

Break into twos and have people practice asking each other for a contribution.

Ask the large group what worked in their practice role-plays. Did anyone feel that their partner did something particularly good? What was the hardest to do? Did anyone find themselves talking and talking, but never getting to actually asking?

Ask for a pair to volunteer up front. Ask the group. What worked? What could have been stronger?

Creating an Organizing Plan

Take the rest of the week to plan your campaign. Go to friendly places first! Get the low-hanging fruit. Use the planning form and calendar handouts.

Present your plan to your Political Organizer. Calendar a one-on-one meeting today with your PO to go over your proposed plan this Friday.

Tips on Asking For Money

Have a Clear Message about where money will go, and why it's important.

Express the *Urgency* of donating right now. Have cards and pens ready, and actually *hand them a card as you are giving your rap*. After you make the 'ask,' *hand them a pen* if they seem like they are leaning towards donating. The probability of someone taking a card and getting it back later or turning it in to a steward is low, around 1 in 6.

Personal Appeal: the message should appeal to *their* Personal, Immediate Self-interest. *Example: Are they concerned about their pension? Bring up the pension initiatives. Are they concerned about the cost of sending their children to college? Talk about how we fight back against budget cuts to schools. If you don't know what their personal immediate self interest is, take a guess using one of the above examples!*

Larger Appeal: The message should also appeal to their Larger Self-interest and Values. *Example: If you believe membership in our Union is important to show the State we are strong, COPE is just as important to show State Legislators we are strong.*

Ask For What You Want Don't try to guess how much they will give, ask for a specific amount, and don't low-ball. Then go down if you have to, but remember that you're getting credit for $7 cards.

If you are(or were) a member and donate, let them know - Let the person know how much you gave and why.

Answer any questions or doubts and Ask Again Don't get diverted, say you're

sorry about their problems with their steward, you don't know a lot about that, but what you do know is that if workers put their money together…

Silence after you ask: give them a chance to really think about it. Count silently to five; don't fill the space with nervous talking.

Most important: *Don't get discouraged*! Remember, the yes ratio for a successful Organizer asking for COPE is 1 out of every 4 asks. Even the best COPE Organizers get told "no" *most of the time!*