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Follow-up Thoughts about Campaign Conversion Ratios M&L Minute #1

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We know from years of experience with our clients that the conventional wisdom about a realistic conversion ratio on campaign gift solicitations has been the requirement that three prospects are required for each desired gift. For years institutions have followed this "law" when assembling gift tables and assessing the feasibility of a campaign by applying the 3:1 ratio during the planning phase.

Below are some thoughts about the findings and recommendations for best practices:

- One of the most interesting findings in the survey is the low percentage of institutions (29%) that relied on data to support their reported conversion ratios. This indicates that too few of the respondents have a systematic way of tracking results against rated potential. We think that greater attention to tracking this information will increase accountability for solicitors and allow institutions to include more analysis in assessing past results and planning for future campaigns.

- The campaign conversion ratios at various levels of campaign support within institutions are revealing because they illustrate that the 3:1 ratio does not apply for each gift band on the table of gifts. These vertical distinctions are instructive for management and front line fund raisers to know when setting campaign goals and benchmark expectations for gift officers who work with prospects at various levels. They can adjust the number of prospects required based on their giving history and target gift levels.

Best Practices

The following is a summary of the principal best practices that an institution can implement to track the success of the campaign and measure the campaign conversion ratios and related information.

- The campaign rating should reflect the prospect's gift potential at <u>your</u> institution given what you know about his/her financial situation and philanthropic priorities, the history of support, the size of the campaign, and the other individual circumstances.

- The rating should be at the high end of a gift range if your institution tracks information in this manner
- Set the rating for each individual based on valid information (screening and research profile) and personal knowledge about the prospect's affinity for the institution.
- Confirm the rating through screening at the staff level and with key volunteers.
- Record the prospect rating in the database for future tracking purposes before soliciting the prospect.
- Avoid changing the prospect rating during the campaign. It can be adjusted for the next campaign based on new information.
- Analyze the results in several ways including the following:
    1. % of solicitations overall and in each gift band that resulted in a gift at or above the initial campaign rating
    2. % of solicitations overall and in each gift band that resulted in a gift of any size
    3. % of the total ask amount overall and in each gift band that was converted into a gift.
- Conduct a post-campaign assessment to evaluate all the assumptions and plans that were made when it was launched.