



Changing Fundraising Asks



MuseOps Example: Risk Mitigation Model

2018

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Context

Current Situation

- A science museum with a \$500,000 budget and 3 person staff has not reviewed or revised its fundraising ask levels in over ten years.
- With its building requiring significant repairs, the board and museum staff realize that the fundraising program needs to be adjusted to address the museum's current needs.
- The board is concerned that the museum's development coordinator may not be up to the task of asking for larger donations.
- The board members have been reluctant to participate in fundraising campaigns.



Context

Objectives and Approach

- The development coordinator, museum director, and the board need to identify the risks involved in changing (and not changing) the fundraising ask levels.
- Then the board and staff can develop plans to anticipate and reduce the risks, as well as consider other fundraising options.
- A Risk Mitigation Model will capture the risks, their warning signs, probabilities of occurrence, and mitigation strategies – allowing the board and museum staff to proactively reduce or eliminate potential problems.



Data Review

- Documents
 - Fundraising articles and books
 - Other museums' giving levels
 - Benchmarking data
- Interviews
 - Museum staff
 - Museum colleagues
 - Fundraising consultants
 - Key donors



Risk Mitigation Model: Increasing Fundraising Ask

Risk	Severity	Probability	Warning Signs	Mitigation Plan
Current donors are upset.	Medium	Medium	Current donors no longer donate or decrease their donation amounts.	The reasons for and benefits of the increased ask amount must be clearly and explicitly communicated.
The new levels create too high a barrier for new donors.	Low	Low	Few new donors are attracted.	Lists of donors who are amenable to the higher asks could be acquired.
The Development Coordinator is inexperienced with asking at higher levels.	High	High	Donations remain at the same levels. The Development Coordinator leaves.	The Development Coordinator should receive training prior to the campaign launch. A fundraising consultant could be used, too.
The board does not participate in the campaign.	High	High	Board members do not meet their targets.	The board should receive training prior to the campaign launch.



Paths Forward

- The building repairs have created an opportunity for the museum to examine and revise its fundraising program, including collateral, ask levels, and donor lists.
 - Consultants may be needed to guide the process.
 - The board and the museum staff may also need additional training to maximize the revised fundraising goals.
- In the long-term, these changes should yield greater financial stability for the museum. If not, the board can use the knowledge gained during the revision process to make any necessary staff or resource adjustments.