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Sent: Friday, July 09, 2010 1:26 PM
To: Mary M. Helmer
Subject: The Cornerstone



*Your future depends
on many things, but
mostly on YOU. -
Frank Tyger*

In this Issue:

[There's a New
Sheriff in Town!!](#)

[Toolbox for
Marketing and
Promotion Success](#)

[The Pre-Ask: A
Winning Strategy
for Successful
Solicitation](#)

[Electing a Devil's
Advocate and
Devil's Inquisitor](#)

Helpful Links:

[National Trust for
Historic Preservation](#)

[National Trust Main
Street Center](#)

The Cornerstone!

Welcome to the first edition of The Cornerstone, an e-newsletter direct to you from Kansas Main Street! We hope this newsletter will become a monthly link between each of you and our program!

We will be using this format to get program information to you, updates and schedules for training opportunities, sending out announcements, keeping you apprised of key statistics and more. As the year progresses, you will see us switch more and more to electronic methods of getting information to you. For example,

this year as we celebrate our 25th anniversary the brochure and registration payments for the Downtown Symposium will be done online! We'll be the first program in the Department of Commerce to take advantage of this technology now available to us. We are headed to training on the system in a few days and we can't wait to make these offerings to you.

One of the things we are most excited about is being able to have direct contact with YOU! No waiting for snail mail or a printed brochure to be passed around. We hope the information and the format are helpful to you and look forward to your suggestions for improvement.

[Top](#)

There's a New Sheriff in Town!!



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[Kansas Department of Commerce](#)

[Kansas Main Street](#)



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Kansas Main Street is so pleased to announce that Dodge City has been selected as the newest member of our Main Street family. Main Street Dodge City completed a year in the Inside Track tier of the Main Street program before making application for designation. In the



application they stated "It is more important than ever to make a strong, focused effort on reviving the downtown area. The Main Street program will help us establish a comprehensive program to achieve this. With our participation we'll be able to build on partnerships throughout the community while capitalizing on our current assets and implementing new projects and activities in the district."

We begin services to Dodge City on July 21 with our reconnaissance visit. Our second visit in August will consist of bringing in a team of experts from the Kansas and National Main Street programs as well as contracted architect Bruce McMillan and his staff. The team will work in the community for nearly a week and will have public meetings, focus groups and meetings with the new board. Work will begin on the Resource Team Report that will outline critical needs for the first one to three years of the program.

Dodge City's application was well done, shows an adequate budget, a number of current and potential partners and demonstrated a balance between need for the program and the opportunity for success. Welcome Main Street Dodge City!

[Top](#)

Toolbox for Marketing and Promotion Success

The Liberty Center Meeting Room at the Sleep Inn & Suites in Coffeyville will be the site of the August 19 quarterly training. The presenter, Marianna Hayes Chapman, is the founder and marketing coach at the Mississippi-based HALO Business Advisors. She will be joined by Andy Chapman who is the senior marketing coach



and resident web expert at HALO.

We'll be unpacking a variety of New Media including e-mail, Web sites and blogs, as well as Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter and the next big thing! We'll review basic strategies that every marketing plan requires - whether it's for your downtown or for a downtown business. The focus will be on practical, realistic, doable techniques that will work for your community and local businesses. Come prepared to hear statistics, think strategically, observe case studies and experience a Results Revolution for your downtown. For more information and registration please go to KansasCommerce.com/MainStreet.

[Top](#)

The Pre-Ask: A Winning Strategy for Successful Solicitation

Good planning is a key to successful fundraising. From prospect identification to qualification of donor capacity and interest to the ultimate fundraising solicitation - adequate planning is essential.

Once you have determined that the prospect is to be solicited, consider an extra step which has brought me much success: Make an appointment to sit down and have a *pre-ask* conversation with the prospect.

When I schedule a *pre-ask* appointment, I tell the prospect I am coming to discuss a financial commitment to the organization, but not to ask for a gift. The *pre-ask* conversation needs to reinforce the organization's gratitude and appreciation for a donor's previous leadership and/or financial investment.

The next step is to clarify the donor's interest in the mission of the organization.

In other words, if I am planning to ask for equipment or capital, and I learn during the *pre-ask* that the donor would rather fund scholarships, this gives me time to adjust my strategy prior to the formal solicitation.

Be prepared to conduct a five sentence overview of the campaign at the beginning of the *pre-ask* conversation.

1. Describe the mission.
2. Delineate the campaign components.
3. Detail the campaign goal.

4. Distinguish the Board gifts given to the campaign and the organization's leadership.
5. Define the campaign timeline.

For such a conversation, the language I use is simple and straightforward:

"Mr. and Mrs. Smith, you have an important role with XYZ Organization and it is our fervent hope that you will, with some additional information, consider ways in which you could make a financial investment of X dollars with a matching estate gift of XX dollars for a total of gift of XXX dollars."

What you do next is critical. **Stop talking and LISTEN.** This is your opportunity to get to know your prospect on a deeper level and uncover what he or she cares about most. Once you do, the next step is to talk about the various methods in which the donor can make a financial investment (gifts of stock, property, charitable trust, etc).

Continue your conversation with something along these lines:

"I don't want to put you or (insert name of staff or volunteer leader) in an uncomfortable situation, which is why we are having this conversation. Would you be open to discussing a gift of this size with (insert name of staff or volunteer leader)? We understand that 'nobody wants to give money away' but people are very interested in supporting the mission of XYZ Organization and its important role in the world (state, community)."

At the end of this conversation, set an appointment for the actual solicitation. Give the donor a proposal and a closing date, i.e.: *"We need this gift by X (date) in order to achieve our campaign goal."*

Always ask for a cash gift *and* a planned gift; and stay donor focused.

Remember, it is important for the prospect to pick up on your personal commitment to the organization and feel a sense of urgency in your request for support. Setting up a *pre-ask* visit is one of the best ways I know to ensure an enthusiastic and successful solicitation.

- Davoren Tempel, Executive Vice President (Kansas City),
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[Top](#)

Electing a Devil's Advocate and Devil's Inquisitor

To push a board into thinking more creatively or to unblock tendencies of stagnation, the board may want to create an official position of a "devil's advocate." By choosing a single member, or rotating the job among board members, the devil's advocate has the role of purposefully contradicting presented arguments. As long as it is understood that this is the intended role of the board member during the meeting, the board can turn the idea into a productive game. The "devil's advocate du jour" does will not feel left out of the actual debate if he simply makes sure his point of view comes up during the discussion or as one of the counterpoints or questions.

You may also encourage board members to serve as "devil's inquisitors." The role of these individuals is not to purposefully contradict a statement or position but to always ask the questions that nobody else wants to ask, those difficult questions that one normally finds embarrassing or "dumb." The purpose of these questions is to clarify and simplify the issue under discussion and to ensure that everyone ultimately is on the same page and has at least a basic understanding of the details. These questions can come in handy particularly when the board is looking at the financial statements, and everyone is not a financial wizard.

No argument should be off limits as long as it does not get personal and it encourages members to consider alternative options. Any exercise that forces a board to open up to accepting new ideas can turn an ordinary board into a vigorous and insightful group of team members. However, a perennial devil's advocate or inquisitor may eventually test the board's patience, at which time the game becomes counterproductive.

Are your board meetings inspiring, productive, and efficient? Or are your board meetings tedious, unproductive, and dominated by one or two people? Do they leave board members wondering why they volunteered in the first place?

In **Meeting, and Exceeding Expectations**, you'll find ready-to-use information that will help all of your board members provide the valuable input that will propel your organization to greatness. This must-have resource poses critical questions, provides easy-to-implement answers, suggests tools, and clarifies legal and ethical expectations. It also shows you how to insert some fun into your

meetings.

You will find

- solutions to common board problems, such as absenteeism, private agendas, and conflicts of interest
- tips to help you solve typical board dilemmas and promote preventative discussion
- suggestions to help your board members become more innovative and seek new solutions to old problems

<http://www.boardsource.org/Bookstore.asp?Item=1095>

[Top](#)

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