

THE ASK IN SIX EASY STEPS

1. Open with pleasantries. Not the weather; weather talk turns many people off. Start with something to do with the prospect, something he or she would like to talk about, even if the view from the window. But don't let this take too long.
2. Get to the subject. An easy way to begin is to say "thanks for seeing me". Offer to say a few words about your institution; know your cause/case down pat. Tailor the conversation to the prospect's interests, which may even lead to questions and discussion. Listen! Again, don't take too long.
3. Get to the asking. Ask the prospect to consider giving a specific amount. Some worry that you may offend your prospects if you suggest what they can or should give. But fail to mention an amount is to invite a far, far smaller gift than you might otherwise get. Suggest a specific amount and put your request in terms of an opportunity. Be ready with possible leverage points – challenge them to match your gift or let them know about other possible matching opportunities. Ask – and then be quiet – give them time to think and respond. You will have the urge to continue to talk, but by being quiet, you let them know you are waiting for a response
4. If they say yes, thank them, confirm details and leave. Be ready for any of a number of negative responses. You may get a flat refusal; if so, there's nothing you can do about it. You can't win them all - thank your prospect and leave. Some initial negatives aren't necessarily refusals however. Listen to understand why, restate your understanding, probe to determine why they said no (no to project, no to amount, no to the time, etc.), be sure the no isn't because of a misunderstanding, try to address any objections with facts or by adjusting the request. Deal with these negative responses as well as you can, but don't push, don't argue and don't retreat.

REMEMBER – no means different things, they are not saying no to you personally, but are saying no to the issue, to the amount, to the time of the request, etc.

5. Leave on a positive note. Keep the solicitation open; rarely do you get a commitment on the spot.
6. Follow-up. In every case, promptly follow up a solicitation with a note. At a minimum, a word of appreciation is appropriate. Use a follow-up letter to improve your presentation, if you can do it briefly. The note is a tactful reminder that the request is still open.