The Same Ask Event Doesn’t Always Result in the Same Outcomes

I implemented an ask event while the Development Director at The Arc of East Central Iowa. The Arc provides services and advocacy to people with disabilities. The event was hugely successful, exceeding my expectations. A few years later I replicated the event while the Development Director at Planned Parenthood of East Central Iowa, an agency that provides healthcare services to low income women.

Similarities

- Table hosts were recruited and they invited family, friends and colleagues to a luncheon
- Attendees were invited to the event using the same method
- Agency history and programming overview was shared
- Compelling story was told by a client
- Personal ask was made
- Attendees were provided with a variety of ways to give

Differences

- Table hosts for The Arc tended to be parents of children receiving services
- Table hosts for Planned Parenthood tended to be board members and long-time supporters
- $20,000 was donated by attendees at The Arc luncheon*
- $7,000 was donated by attendees at the Planned Parenthood luncheon

*Additionally, a breakfast event was held for The Arc to accommodate host and attendee schedules. $20,000 was also raised at that event.

Findings

- Attendees at The Arc ask events had personal relationships with the clients receiving services. Parents of children receiving services hosted the tables and invited family members, friends, neighbors and colleagues. On average, The Arc event attendees gave a higher donation amount and pledged that amount up to three years. There was a great deal of emotion expressed at The Arc events. It was very personal. At a time when people feel helpless in supporting family and friends who have a child with a disability, this event provided those caring individuals a vehicle to support an agency that was providing services that were invaluable to their family/friends in need.

- The Planned Parenthood event was well received and garnered a great deal of positive feedback, in addition to its monetary support, but the engagement with donors was not present. Although many attendees expressed that they had received health services from a Planned Parenthood when they were younger, the current services weren’t directly impacting them or the people they know.

Jenifer Vick began her career in fundraising over a decade ago. She had been the Development Director for two mid-size organizations before joining Four Oaks in 2011 where she had been the Development Director until a recent promotion to Grants Director, writing new grants and managing a multi-million dollar portfolio for the agency and its affiliates. Jenifer is the Immediate Past President of the Association of Fundraising Professional (AFP) Eastern Iowa Chapter.