

"A must-read for everyone in our field!"—**Rob Acton**
Founder & CEO, Cause Strategy Partners



Fundraising For Introverts

Harnessing Our Powers for What Matters

Brian Saber

Praise for *Fundraising for Introverts*

“In *Fundraising for Introverts*, Brian Saber masterfully debunks the myth of the extroverted fundraiser and makes a compelling case for the fundraising power of the introverted fundraiser—board member and staff alike. A must-read for everyone in our field!”

— Rob Acton, *Founder & CEO, Cause Strategy Partners*

“You’re an introvert. And you’re hired to be a fundraiser... or maybe you’ve just joined a board. Are you doomed... or destined for fundraising greatness? Spoiler alert: greatness... as Brian Saber’s blissfully honest new book demonstrates over and over. It’s a rousing pep talk and survival guide for the 51% of us who function wonderfully well as real-life introverts.”

— Tom Ahern, *Author, Fundraising Marketing Guru*

“Brian Saber’s new book is a terrific reminder of how much good donor relationships are based on listening, not talking.”

— Claire Axelrad, *Founder and Principal, Clarification*

“Brian Saber takes his experience, compassion, and expertise and rolls it up into inspirational advice for introverted fundraisers and everyone who works with them. If you are an introvert and have any doubt in your fundraising prowess, this book will put those doubts to rest.”

— Amy Eisenstein, *CEO & Founder, Capital Campaign Pro*

“We love the way Brian challenges conventional thinking that fundraisers must be loud, loquacious and silver-tongued speakers. He highlights the profound truth that introverts can be equally, if not more effective, in soliciting gifts because of their heightened listening skills and sensitivity and respect toward donor prospects.”

— Jim Eskin, *Founder, Eskin Fundraising Training*

“If you’re an introvert looking to make a difference in the world, Fundraising for Introverts is an absolute must-read. But it doesn’t stop there—even seasoned fundraisers will find immense value in Brian’s fresh perspective and insightful advice. Prepare to be inspired, emboldened, and ready to take your fundraising efforts to a whole new level.”

— *Pamela Grow, Founder, Basics & More Fundraising, Simple Development Systems*

“Brian Saber’s book *Fundraising for Introverts* takes a very complicated subject and makes it seem completely understandable. Fundraising for Introverts will instantly help you understand that introverts can achieve great success just by being themselves!”

— *Andy Hamingson, Founder, Principal AD Hamingson & Associates*

“We finally have a book that articulates the nuanced concepts and strategies an introvert can use to maximize their personality in the pursuit of fundraising for any important cause.”

— *Peter Heller, Founder, Heller Fundraising Group*

“I, too, am an introvert, hiding in plain sight. I love the way Brian Saber shines a spotlight on the gifts and talents of introverted fundraisers. This book will help so many people feel more comfortable in their fundraising role. Thank you to Brian for reminding us that being authentically ourselves is always what makes us successful and happy.”

— *Lori Jacobwith, Founder, Ignited Fundraising*

“Introverts rejoice! You can excel in planned giving fundraising. Brian’s insights into the Asking Styles include that introverts listen attentively; question curiously; empathize; and wait patiently. Those each sit on my short list of attributes for successful Planned Giving.”

— *Tony Martignetti, Planned Giving Accelerator and Martignetti Planned Giving Advisors, LLC*

“I am an introvert and I realized more so as I read Brian’s book. Being social takes a lot of energy, but like Brian I have acted as an extrovert to succeed. Am I a fake? Read the book to find out. Every fundraiser needs this book because fundraising is all about asking.”

— *Viken Mikaelian*

“Brian Saber’s voice is smart, candid, and a breath of fresh air. Fundraising for Introverts is a calling, manifesto, and validation for a quiet revolution of introverts to claim their innate strengths and superpowers. A must-read for introverts and extroverts alike to acknowledge and celebrate the valuable traits introverts bring to fundraising.”

— *Rachel Muir, CFRE, Founder Girstart, and
League of Extraordinary Fundraisers*

“Fundraising for Introverts provides a succinct and clear description of the unique qualities of introverts and aligns them brilliantly with essential aspects of the fundraising process. In so doing, it offers invaluable lessons for everyone about the dynamics of donor cultivation and stewardship. It’s a must-read, especially for extroverts.”

— *Marc Scorca*

“If there was a Fundraising PHD Class for introverts, *Fundraising For Introverts* would be the textbook and Brian Saber would be the professor!”

— *Bob Tiede, CEO, LeadingWithQuestions.com*

“I am not an introvert, however I have been married to one for 48 years. I have been in fundraising for longer than I’ve been married. This is a must-read book for anyone asking, supervising, employed by, married to or friends with an introvert. You will never experience an introvert’s behavior in the same way.”

— *Carol Weisman, President, Board Builders*

Featured Chapter

Introverts Are Great Fundraisers

Obviously, I think we introverts can be great fundraisers...otherwise I wouldn't have written this book. I just wish it hadn't taken me 25 years to figure that out through my work developing the Asking Styles. In fact, all those years I thought I was an imposter of sorts. My bosses and organizations were very happy with my work, but I couldn't help but think there must be someone who could do what I was doing AND enjoy special events, excel at networking and meeting people, enjoy chatting on the phone, etc.

I wish I had figured it out 25 years ago not only for me, but so

that I could put my fellow introverted fundraisers on a pedestal way back when—and so I could tell everyone else in our industry that they ignored or devalued us at their peril. That we are integral to fundraising and embracing us will always strengthen their team.

Let's talk about the ways in which introverts excel.

Listening, Not Talking— The Ultimate Superpower

As the late, great fundraising guru Jerry Panas once said, “No one ever listened themselves out of a gift.” Classic Jerry, and so true.

Fundraising is about building relationships, and building relationships is based on how people communicate with, and come to trust, each other. When we're trying to build a relationship between two individuals, the key to building the relationship is the ability to listen to one another. In fact, listening is often cited as the most important trait in fundraising, especially in individual gift work. It's also true in our efforts to build relationships with foundation staff, corporate giving officers, and our elected officials and their staffs.

Well, this is great news for us introverts as, hands down, our number one superpower is that we're good listeners. Yes, we have a significant advantage in what is often considered the most important trait in fundraising. Think about that for a second: While the stereotype says introverts are at a disadvantage as fundraisers, in fact we have a distinct advantage in the art of building relationships with donors. So, why is listening so important—and why do introverts do it so much better?

In a conversation, one is either talking or listening. The rule of thumb in fundraising is to talk less than 50% of the time. The goal is to get the donor to do most of the talking, as much as 65% or 75%.

If we were to do all the talking, we'd create what's called a wall of

words, where we've talked so much one of two things happens. Either the donor stops listening to us because our voice has become white noise, or the donor listens intermittently and may very well not hear—or remember—the most important points we're making.

It's often said that humans remember the least of what they hear. They remember more of what they say, even more of what they do, and the most about how they feel. If we as fundraisers do all the talking, we risk our donors feeling talked at. We risk their feeling we're selling them. We risk them not feeling good when the meeting is over. And we risk them not taking away from the conversation what was most important to take away.

However, if we engage them with questions and demonstrate that we are interested in learning about them, they'll feel important...which they are. They'll walk away feeling great about the meeting. They'll remember the important stuff. And we'll have learned much more about them, which will enable us to customize our cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship.

Because we introverts are wired to talk less and listen more, it's easier for us to give our donors greater opportunity to ask questions, share their viewpoints, and talk themselves into a gift.

Extroverts can struggle on this front. Though their ease at chatting can be helpful in opening conversations and keeping them moving along, extroverts have a tendency to talk too much. The brief silences in a meeting can drive them nuts and they will rush to fill them, whereas the introverts can sit with that silence. The silence gives our donors an opportunity to say something more.

In fact, our donors often need that time to say something more. Research shows it can take eight to ten seconds to formulate a good answer to a question that requires thought. Take a moment and count to eight. It's a long time, right?

People often take less time to answer a question than they really need because they are trying to accommodate the questioner and the long silence can be challenging for both parties. Even four or five seconds of silence will sound like a lot.

Further, questioners often speak again too quickly. How long do we generally wait before adding something to our question or rephrasing the question? Research shows it's as little as two or three seconds. That does not bode well for having a meaningful, intentional conversation.

Now imagine if a particular donor is an introvert. Though we'll talk more about donors later, it's important to note that we can assume, all things being equal, that half our donors are introverts, just as half the population is. Half our donors are likely to pause more than less before speaking. If we rush to fill the space and cut them off, we are likely to create some friction or negativity, not to mention lose the opportunity to learn something new.

While most fundraisers could probably benefit from slowing down a conversation with a donor, introverted fundraisers naturally give a conversation more room to breathe. They understand, personally, the need to take time to formulate an answer, and are more likely to provide that space to others. That's an incredible asset.

Being Caring and Empathetic

If listening is an introvert's top superpower, being caring, attentive, and empathetic is close behind, especially for Kindred Spirits—one of the two types of introverts in the Asking Styles framework. Kindred Spirits are wired to want to help. They strive to find out what makes someone tick and what they need, and then meet that need. Often, they meet the need with words of acknowledgment and concern. They are most likely to use an emotional con-

nection to communicate to donors that they hear them and care.

Mission Controllers—the other group of introverts we’ll learn about in the next chapter—show they care by listening and helping to find a solution. What’s the plan? What can be done to address this situation? How can I make sure your needs are met? They excel at finding solutions to a donor’s needs.

Responding to a donor in a caring and empathic way deepens the relationship as it would any personal or business relationship. It proves we’re listening and that we’re attuned to our donors’ needs and desires. It underscores they’re important to us and, by extension, our organizations. And, in this day and age when the disconnect in society often feels so great, that makes an even greater impact on our donors.

Bonding Through the Personal

A third key strength when building relationships is the ability to share personal stories, experiences and perspectives that validate each other. In many ways this is the next logical step to listening and showing empathy. First, we listen. Then we show that we empathize with what we have heard. And, in an ideal situation, we also share something personal that demonstrates we understand what the other is communicating.

One can see where extroverts might struggle, for without giving someone the opportunity to speak, and then taking the time to truly listen, any attempt at empathy could sound insincere. Introverts, and Kindred Spirits in particular, shine brightly here.

Imagine the impact of this in fundraising. Imagine sitting in a cultivation meeting, asking a donor what they think of your organization, and hearing they have some concerns. You’re probably surprised, and a bit thrown. What to do? What’s most important

here is to continue listening, to say you hear what the donor is saying, and to ask further questions to better understand what the issue is. It's important to contain that first impulse to counter their argument, try to change their mind by providing data, or reinforce your own enthusiasm for the project.

Now imagine you're in a meeting where you've just asked for a gift and the response is awkward. Perhaps the donor has shared some very personal financial information which makes the requested gift more than a stretch. What do you say? This is another moment when listening, empathizing, and making your donor feel comfortable are paramount. If you seem mercenary and immediately come up with solutions without asking questions, you risk devaluing the donor's relationship to the organization. The long view is what's important, which plays to the strength of Mission Controllers (planning) and Kindred Spirits (caring).

Given all this, you might assume introverts are better fundraisers. Well, we don't have data on that, and I will refrain from coming to a biased conclusion! However, studies have been conducted in the for-profit sales arena, and the results were quite the opposite of what most expected. In fact, in one significant study of more than 4,000 salespeople, there was virtually no correlation between extroversion and sales performance (0.07%).⁶

So, fellow introverts, wear your skills loud and proud. They are serving you incredibly well in your donor relationships. You are creating space for your donors. You are building bridges to them. You are allowing them to be front and center, and to be heard. And you're learning a ton.

⁶ Barrick, Murray R., et al. "Personality and Performance at the Beginning of the New Millennium: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go Next?" *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, Vol. 9, March/June 2001, pp. 9-30.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

ESTHER LANDAU (*Mission Contoller/Kindred Spirit*)
Senior Director, Advancement
The Arc San Francisco

When I started working in fundraising, I hadn't even really figured out that I was an introvert. I knew I felt awkward and clumsy in conversation with new people, especially when I needed to seem smooth and confident. I kept looking for ways to make myself change—to pretend to be the outgoing, dynamic person I thought I had to be. But the longer I stuck with the work, the more I found that being bad at small talk meant I'm really good at deep talk. And deep talk builds authentic connection. I didn't have to pretend to be an extrovert to get by. I needed to lean into my introversion.

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