

# Making “Asks” Count

Sustainability

August 2009



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A service of the Corporation for National and Community Service - Special Projects and Sustainability Initiative

## Dear “Asking” Colleague,

Asking is a powerful technique for attracting advice, information, buy-in, or for money. Knowing how to ask... where to ask...and the right method for asking will help you sustain your programs when you get the answer you need. Click on the titles on the right to learn more about...

### How to Pose a Question

### Where to Find the Answers

### For Best Results—The Face-to-Face Ask

For any questions or ideas about asking, contact Campaign Consultation, Inc. through [OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com](mailto:OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com) for more information. You can still access previous issues of On-the-Go eTA by clicking on the back issues at the bottom of the page.

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## How to Pose a Question

Getting good answers to questions depends on delivering good questions. Follow the rules below and you will help make your “asks” count.

What to do...	And how
Ask the right type of question.	<p><i>Closed questions</i> elicit a short response...“yes,” “no,” a single word or name. Example: “What time does the meeting start?”</p> <p><i>Open questions</i> engage a person in conversation. Example: “What is needed in this community?”</p> <p>When you want short, crisp answers, ask closed questions. When you want a discussion, ask open questions or a series of related questions.</p>

## IN THIS ISSUE:

*click on titles below to read full articles*

[How to Pose a Question](#)

[Where to Find the Answers](#)

[For Best Results—The Face-to-Face Ask](#)

## Tips for the Times

Sometimes the best person to get your questions answered is a local expert. Spend time talking with your board and Advisory Council members and with community leaders to get answers to local questions.

## Visit the VISTA Campus for more information...

- [VISTA Viewfinder](#)  
See the latest issue
- [Featured eGIZMO](#)  
(Giving Information for Zooming Mission Objectives)

**[Business World Travel Kit:](#)**  
An important tool for making connections within and beyond your community, the *Business World Travel Kit* GIZMO provides innovative strategies for meeting your program's goals. The interactive learning format includes a Virtual Guide

Ask one question at a time.	Take time to figure out exactly what you need to know. Then frame a straightforward, unbiased question to elicit that information. You may need to follow up with another question after you've heard the first response.
Pause at the end of a question.	Allow time for the answerer to think, formulate and deliver an answer.
Listen and watch with ease.	Staying silent after asking a question involves more than just not talking. It means keeping eye contact, staying still and feeling comfortable while you wait.
Ask follow-up questions.	You can encourage clarification of points made in an answer by using verbal encouragers, such as "I didn't know that, tell me more," or "What else do I need to know?" People often have more to say if they are asked for more information. Remember the first rule, however... one question at a time.
Say thank you.	Thanking someone who's spent time helping you by answering your questions will increase the likelihood that you'll get more and deeper answers the next time you ask.

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## Where to Find the Answers

Sometimes you need help from outside sources to get the information you need to do your work. Most people know about Google, Yahoo, Ask.com, Bing, etc. You type a word in a search box and you get to sites with information related to that term.

Consider the additional resources in this article as helpful assists to finding the answers to your organizational and program sustainability questions related to fundraising, volunteer development, board and advisory council development, marketing, and more. Here are some ways to get your questions answered:

Book, Map, Passport, and Checklist to take you.

### Resources

*Sustainability Learning Products and Services:*

[On-The-Go eTA](#)

[Online support at OntheGo@Campaign Consultation.com](#)

[The Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)

[Workshops / Clinics](#)

[Online Courses / Webinars](#)

[Web Wizard](#)

[The 5 Cs](#)

[VISTA Viewfinder](#)

## Social Media

Ask questions on your social media network and receive answers from those who are connected to you and others who are connected to those. Sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn provide “apps” for the sole purpose of asking questions—social and professional. Ning lets you design a social network for your specific interests. Blogs allow you to ask questions of subscribers, and Twitter is showing itself to be a huge source of information from followers.

1. *Facebook, LinkedIn* and others: allow you to ask questions and see the questions your friends are asking so you can help! Facebook offers “apps” to help you manage your questions. Once you have your *Facebook* account, [click here](#) to choose a Facebook app for asking questions. *Ning* appeals to people who want to create their own social networks around specific interests with their own visual design, choice of features and member data. [Click here](#) to learn more about *Ning*.
2. *Twitter*: Ask your question in 140 characters or less. Twitter has been hailed as one of the most flexible platforms for exchanging information online—. *Twitter* features its own search engine, users can look for discussions and “tweets” on just about any topic imaginable. If you can’t find what you’re looking for with a regular search, you can simply tweet your question, and your message will be read by people who follow you. In addition to Web interface, *Twitter* can also be used on mobile phones through phone-based applications (for the iPhone, Symbian or Windows mobile) or SMS. You can get answers to your questions even while on the move. [Click here](#) to get a *Twitter* account.
3. *Wikis and blogs*: Wikis and blogs offer knowledge sharing opportunities. The best know of these tools is [Wikipedia](#), the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit. Most are topic focused and allow for collaboration. Investigate them all and choose judiciously which you join so you don’t become overwhelmed by chatter.
4. *Forums and email discussion lists* are another good resource for finding answers to questions. These types of interactive discussions were popular even before blogs, *Wikipedia*, *Twitter* and other websites existed. Forums are mainly community-driven. Therefore, how useful a forum will be will depend on how active the community is. Forums are also specific to a topic or niche. For instance, if you want to get information about volunteer management, you should join a forum that specializes in volunteer management. [Click here](#) for a list of Corporation of

*“He who asks a question is a fool for five minutes; he who does not ask a question remains a fool forever.”*

– Chinese Proverb

National and Community Service email discussion lists.

[Click here](#) to learn about more places to ask a question and get an answer.

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## For Best Results—The Face-to-Face Ask

When it comes to asking for money, the method by which you choose to ask impacts the results. The deeper the relationship to the asker, and the more personalized the ask, the more likely you are to get the results you want as demonstrated below.

*Personal Visits:* 70% will give about 50% of the amount requested

*Telephone Calls:* 25% will give about 25% of the asked amount

*Personalized Mail:* 10% will give 2.5% of the suggested amount

*Direct Mail Requests:* 2% will give gifts in the range of \$10 to \$25

Online appeals are reported to generate between 0.3% and 1.3% gift response, although this is a rapidly growing sector. *Source: Tony Poderis, [www.raise-funds.com](http://www.raise-funds.com)*

[Click here](#) to read about one person's experiment asking by mail.

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### Let us know

Let us know about your experience asking for anything. Contact [OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com](mailto:OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com) We would be happy to answer questions or to give you more support.

Thank you for your interest in On-The-Go eTA. We encourage you to send this and other issues of [OTG eTA](#) to friends and colleagues who would benefit from the information. Also, if you're on information-overload, you may request [email removal](#). Otherwise OTG e-TA will be back soon with another edition.

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## Where to Find the Answers (cont.)

### Resource Repositories

here are some excellent specialized online resources for meeting your needs and getting your questions answered.

1. *The Resource Center*: *The Resource Center* of the Corporation for National and Community Service offers online training tools and publications, an events calendar, the Effective Practices Collection, and a library of printed publications, videos, and other media available for loan to Corporation grantees. It also serves as an information exchange where individual programs can share innovations and effective practices with others. Content housed at *The Resource Center* is generated by a network of specialized training and technical assistance providers funded by the Corporation to help volunteer and service programs succeed and thrive. [Click here](#) to access *The Resource Center*.
2. *The Foundation Center*: In addition to being able to search for foundation to support your program, *The Foundation Center* offers collection of responses to [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) and an online librarian who will answer your questions about foundations, fundraising and research. [Click here](#) to access *The Foundation Center* librarian.
3. *TechSoup*: If your question is related to anything about technology, *TechSoup* is where you want to head. *TechSoup* provides a range of technology services for nonprofits, including articles, a blog, discussion forums, webinars, and discounted and donated technology products. Find out about *TechSoup* [here](#).
4. *VISTA Campus*: If you are a VISTA, you can log onto the VISTA Campus. Guests can sign up for limited access. Click on the Bulletin Board , the home for everyone in the VISTA community to connect, exchange ideas, and share resources. We invite you to engage in conversations, ask questions, and help others find the answers to theirs.

### Search Engines

Finally, when you're looking online for answers to questions, in additional to *Google*, here are four internet resources for additional answers to questions. Click on the titles to like to the sites:

1. [Mahalo Answers](#): *Mahalo* describes itself as a human-powered search engine with its content mostly user-submitted and edited by a handful of *Mahalo*'s editors. To get an answer to your question, first try searching for existing answers to the same or similar questions. If you can't find existing content, click the "Ask a Question" link to submit your own question.
2. [Yahoo! Answers](#): At *Yahoo! Answers* you can ask questions, answer questions, and if you're just in the mood for exploring what other people are asking about, you can browse by topic or search. An added option of *Yahoo! Answers* is that it can automatically notify you if one of your contacts (from your Yahoo! Address Book) asks a question.
3. [Answerbag](#): At *Answerbag* you can search for existing answers by typing in keywords or a question,

and if you don't find what you need, you can submit your own question. The nice thing about using the Answerbag's search functionality is that when it lists possible matches, it also displays the best answer along with the question, which makes it easy to browse for the information you need.

4. [Yedda Questions & Answers](#): Join as an individual or a cause. *Yedda Questions & Answers* lets you share your personal knowledge with friends and friendly strangers, and to tap their personal knowledge through questions & answers. Your friends will see your question and help if they can. In addition, *Yedda Questions and Answers* automatically searches for people with relevant knowledge & interest, and invites them to answer your question. By joining as an individual affiliated with a cause, your contributions help to increase credibility and interest in your social profit initiative, as well as providing answers to other's questions.

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## Resources

### eOrganizer

eOrganizer is an interactive clearinghouse for the latest and greatest web instruments of change. This GIZMO shows you how to maximize free and inexpensive online tools and resources to mobilize people around issues and within organizations. Structured around eight categories important to community organizing, it offers descriptions and provides access to many of the most current web arenas and strategies for bringing groups together to create community change.

<http://www.campaignconsultation.com/GIZMOs/eorganizer/index.html>

*The National ASK (Awareness, Skills, Knowledge) to Sustain Institute*, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 1998, 2002.

*The CNCS Resources Now! National Institute*, sponsored by Corporation for National and Community Service, provided by Campaign Consultation, Inc. 2005-07.

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## Learning Products and Services

### **Sustainability:**

OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com is designed to give information fast on building capacity. Use this online support for advice from a fundraising professional.

Contact [OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com](mailto:OntheGo@CampaignConsultation.com)

### **GIZMOs:**

(*Giving Information for Zooming Mission Objectives*) GIZMOS are resource and fund development tools for you and your volunteers. They are tangible products in packets, pocket brochures, CD-ROMs, games, etc. They feature a myriad of fundraising topics such as The Case for Support, an interactive online resource. View and use our newest GIZMOs at

[www.CampaignConsultation.com/gizmosplash](http://www.CampaignConsultation.com/gizmosplash)

### **The Chronicle of Philanthropy:**

Everyone who comes to a Resources Now! National Institute gets a free subscription to the Chronicle for a year. Participants in CNCS Campaign Consultation workshops receive the latest issue free of charge plus a \$20 discount on one year's subscription.

### **Workshops/Clinics:**

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), through its T/TA service provider Campaign Consultation, Inc., offers a three-hour workshops and clinics for those interested.

**WebWizard:**

CNCS sponsors this new service that Campaign Consultation provides to assist programs and projects in maximizing their websites for program, client, volunteer and fundraising needs.

**Online Courses/Webinars:**

Web course delivery of topics pertinent to resource development such as — **Build Fundraising Volunteer Champions** and **Cause Related Marketing and Corporate Partnerships**.

Available through the Resource Center at <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org>

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## Read Back Issues of OTG e-TA

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- [Mid-June 2009 Partnerships and Collaboration](#)
- [June 2009 Writing Foundation Proposals](#)
- [Mid-May 2009 Graphic Design on a Dime](#)
- [May 2009 Searching for Volunteer Leadership Stars](#)
- [Mid-April 2009 Laying Out the Welcome Mat for Your Community](#)
- [April 2009 Preparing for Civic Participation](#)
- [Mid-March 2009 Saving Time](#)
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