



Photo courtesy of Camp Lurecrest



# WHO ARE YOUR CHAMPIONS?

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## A look at transformational fundraising

When it comes to fundraising, most ministries follow a similar script: “We’re doing great things in our ministry. We need your financial support so we can do more great things.” It’s typically a blanket approach that is sent to everyone connected to the ministry, in the hopes that people will get excited and want to give money to help make more great things happen.

Mission Increase (MI) works with ministries around the country to shift from a *transactional* fundraising approach, like the one mentioned above, to what MI refers to as a *transformational* fundraising approach. It’s a shift in mindset that has ministries asking, “What do we want *for* people?” rather than “What do we want *from* them?” ▶

Photo courtesy of Tejas



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## **Champions**

At MI, donors are referred to as “champions,” since these people are usually connected to a cause in ways beyond just financial giving. Changing your perspective to view people as champions helps you to see the ways they are helping to support the ministry financially as well as championing the greater cause of the ministry.

Kevin Whitman, Oregon area director with MI, says that ministries know they want donors to give, pray and come to camp. “At the core, that’s [the ministry’s] organizational need.” Whitman explains that when ministries look at their champions and ask questions like, “How do we want their life to be different? How do we want their relationship with Christ to change? How do we want their life to be transformed?” a ministry’s perspective changes.

“We believe everyone has a call from God on their life,” Whitman says, “so how does [a person’s] relationship with this organization connect with that [call]?”

## **Right person, right question, right time**

Whether starting with a new potential champion or reaching out to an existing champion, the question is the same: What is the appropriate next step for her or him to take?

Whitman explains that when asking someone to take the next step, it’s important to consider, “Are we asking her or him to take this next step because of organizational need, or because we want to help her or him take the next step in that growth process?”

For a new, potential champion, is the appropriate next step to learn more about the ministry, or to pray or to give a one-time gift? For champions who are already connected to your cause and have likely taken some of those steps, the same question of an appropriate next step may lead to different possible answers. Maybe you’re asking them to step up to be monthly donors, or to purchase several tickets for a fundraising event or to consider a legacy gift. The question is the same no matter which audience you’re dealing with; it’s just the next step that differs.

## **A team effort**

Taking on a transformational approach to fundraising requires buy-in throughout the organization. Often, one staff member initially approaches MI looking for help. When they get excited about the approach, they need to get the rest of the staff on board.

Whitman says, “It has to be an organizational philosophy. It’s difficult for one person to focus on transformational giving when everyone else is focused on transactional giving.”

Whitman explains, “Personal transformation precedes corporate transformation.” MI first works with the ministry leader who approached them, helping the leader understand the process. “It results in them finding more joy and freedom in doing the asking,” Whitman says “Leaders are transformed.”

Whitman goes on to explain that leaders discover that it’s not about them; they understand that if someone says no, it’s not because they didn’t ask the right question. Whitman says, “When we ask the right question at the right time, we’re more likely to get a ‘Yes.’ When ministry leaders see that, they understand it. They find joy and freedom in the work they do. That brings increase to the organization.”

## **Making it work for you**

When it comes to fundraising, a face-to-face approach is always the best strategy, but MI realizes that’s not possible (or necessarily appropriate) for everyone in your database.

Whitman suggests, “Do for one what you wish you could do for all.” He recognizes that some people are going to get more of your time. Once you determine who those people are, Whitman recommends that you grow that list and, “understand that when it comes to champion relationships, it’s not just the developmental director or executive director involved in those relationships.” Recognize that some people on your staff may be the primary contact with someone because of where she or he fits in the organization. Whitman advises that you let that happen. “When you open it up to more people, it opens up more opportunities,” Whitman says.

The biggest challenge with transactional fundraising, according to Whitman, is that we’re asking the same question to everyone, when that may not be the right ask for everyone on the list. “There are some who can

do more, some less and some who want to participate in other ways,” Whitman explains. That’s why it’s important to know whom you’re asking, and what question is the best fit for that person.

With the understanding that God has a call on every person’s life, and that a relationship with your ministry could further his or her call, you begin to realize that it’s not about you. “When I’m asking ‘How will this help you; how are you seeing what Christ is doing in the world and your own life?’ it changes how and why I ask,” Whitman says.

Mission Increase ([www.mif.org](http://www.mif.org)) offers workshops, coaching and in-depth consulting to ministries that are looking to reshape the way they do fundraising. ■



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# The 10 Principles of Transformational Giving

*A biblical view of giving*

■ by Mission Increase

At the heart of Mission Increase’s work with Christian nonprofits is a biblical view of giving summarized in our “10 Principles of Transformational Giving.” These principles guide nonprofits toward a genuine understanding of fundraising as the building of a community and away from simply asking for money to support their work. Transformational giving always begins with the acknowledgment of Jesus’ words found in Acts 20:35, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” The community that is then created between nonprofits and their champions, whom God uses to advance the Gospel, begins with love for others, faith in God’s provision and a willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit.

Transformational giving begins as a response to God’s grace and results in an “overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.” 2 Corinthians 9:12

<p><b>PRINCIPLE 1</b></p> <p>Transformational giving is based on the abundance and trustworthiness of God, not a theology of scarcity.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 2</b></p> <p>Every act of giving is first and foremost a statement about the faithfulness of God.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 3</b></p> <p>God invites people to be part of His work because of His desire to see them grow in Him.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 4</b></p> <p>Giving time, talent, treasure and testimony is a result of champions being comprehensively coached in the cause.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 5</b></p> <p>Ministry leaders have a dual calling to steward the mission and grow the people God brings.</p>
<p><b>PRINCIPLE 6</b></p> <p>The liberating nature of generosity means inviting champions to give is a sacred task that grows God’s kingdom.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 7</b></p> <p>Ministry leaders coach champions according to the degree of their personal ownership in the cause.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 8</b></p> <p>Champions connect with organizations primarily to enhance their mutual impact on the cause.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 9</b></p> <p>The relationship between champion and champion is as important as the relationship between champion and organization.</p>	<p><b>PRINCIPLE 10</b></p> <p>Champions are called to be a primary means of advancing the cause.</p>



Jen Howver was once a camp kid who later spent two summers working at a camp in Michigan, where she met and later married her husband, Jay. Fast forward more than 20 years and now Jen works as a marketing consultant and editor of InSite magazine. She and Jay live in Monument, Colorado, with their daughters, Noelle and Chloe, and way too many pets.