

EXPLORING QUALITATIVE FACTORS IN CHARITABLE DONORS' GIVING DURING A RECESSION

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Abstract

Faculty development is an important ingredient for teaching professionals. For those who work in a primarily teaching institution the opportunities for professional development through active research are somewhat limited. Occasionally, a situation arises providing an opportunity for research that can be integrated into the teaching and service requirements for the profession. Such is the case presented here.

A local non-profit organization contacted the university looking for help concerning declining donor revenue during a deep recession. The need for revenue was increasing at the same time as donors, both individual and corporate, had less to give. A project was developed to address this issue.

Using local resources found in a mid-sized Midwestern metropolitan area a series of three focus groups was conducted. This was considered the best form of information gathering in order to get relevant feedback that would be of use to the organization. The main thrust was to determine why people donate and why people disengage.

Motivation for charitable giving encompasses altruistic and self-serving reasons. The researchers gathered qualitative data from three focus groups. The similarities and differences are presented. When the personal needs of donors are recognized and addressed, charitable giving continues. Donor disengagement is difficult to measure. Individual donors seem to be less sensitive to personal income changes and charitable giving than do corporate donors. Individual non-donors are more likely to donate useful goods and services than individual or corporate donors.

Recommendations to the organization included focusing on specific demographic groups (women and young professionals), identifying self-driven donors, relabeling donors as supporters, and increasing the use of social media to communicate with donors.