

Neighborhood Technical Assistance Clinic

Presents

A Conversation with Philanthropist Charles Hamm

September 13, 2011 | 10:00 - 12:00 PM | Brooklyn Botanic Garden (Auditorium)

Sponsored by



Interviewer, Sandra Thomas, Vice President Community Affairs with Charles Hamm on the stage at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden

It was an honor to have this chance to get advice from someone as revered in Brooklyn as Charlie Hamm. His commitment and experience in supporting nonprofit endeavors is both innovative and legendary.

As Independence Community Bank president and CEO, he enabled the creation of the Independence Community Foundation which has poured millions of dollars into neighborhoods throughout New York and New Jersey. That foundation now has an endowment of \$100 million. Since its founding in 1998, it has distributed more than \$40 million in grants to nonprofits in New York and New Jersey, though Brooklyn continues to see the most benefit.

When we contemplated having interviews with philanthropists to learn more about cultivating individual donors once again, Charlie Hamm came to the top of the list as a foundation founder; as board member who takes seriously the task of cultivating donations from other high-net-worth individuals and as an active overseer of the institutions he supports.

We were very fortunate to have this unique opportunity to get Mr. Hamm's perspective on the donor experience, and are delighted to share with you the following 10 essentials for attracting large donors, excerpted from September 13th's illuminating conversation.¹

1. **Know the background of the person from whom you are seeking funding:** giving profile, organizations to which they belong, cultural background, professional background, hobbies, so you can appeal to the things that are most likely to motivate them.
2. **Don't use a list to appeal to large donors; find a way to meet them in person.** And, the messenger needs to be the leader (CEO, Executive Director, or Pastor) of the organization.
3. **Don't expect a silver bullet; Never send a form letter** - "99% are thrown away in the mail." Instead, pick up the phone and request a meeting or a brief conversation with the philanthropist; it is your responsibility to figure out how to break the ice.
4. **Community [as in community of people involved with your mission and cause] involvement is very important** – take time to introduce yourself through the networks you have, expand deeper, pick up the phone make calls to introduce yourself. Use your community connections, your Board's connections and your social network connections to create your list. Everyone needs to be on the top of their game – review the list(s) regularly.
5. **Be prepared to share the facts about your organization.** Give some indication about what the organization is doing for the community; be clear about the "community" served; share the qualifications of your staff and officers in delivering on your mission and programs; be prepared to discuss your vision – what will make your organization stronger, more responsive.



¹ Summarized by: Lishawn Alexander, Capacity Building and Oversight Analyst at Mayor's Office of Contract Services, Zella Jones, Market by Market Communications

6. **Be absolutely transparent.** Give donors annual reports and newsletters demonstrating the organization's achievement and overall successes. Show how much you spend on overhead; if your CEO makes \$500,000/yr. don't bother; if over head is approaching 20% you are in trouble, don't flash your list of hundreds of employees as an asset. Demonstrate that you are fiscally responsible, professionally laudable. Tell me what is driving this wedge of truth, conviction and participation.
7. **The organization's representatives must be passionate,** because the donor has to feel convinced that this organization is committed to its mission before making a decision to give (Conviction is the sales tool!).



Stephanie Hyacinth, Brooklyn Community Foundation; Valerie Oliver-Durrah, President and CEO of NTAC; Sandra Thomas from WABC-TV; Philanthropists Charles Hamm and Irene Hamm; Rev. Sylvia Kinard, Esq, Chairperson of NTAC; Brooke Durrah, Charity Director of NTAC

8. **Treat the donor like their gift is making a "major" contribution.** Donors should feel that their funding is genuinely appreciated (continue to be charming after they give). Moreover, if the contribution is a significant gift, then the head of the organization and or board members should make several calls and personal visits to let the donor know how they are managing their donation and the institution, overall.
9. **You can't thank a donor enough.** Express your organization's gratitude not only after the event, but in regular personal communications throughout the year. Stay in touch, because philanthropists want to know that you are not only inviting them to contribute at fundraising events, but cultivating an ongoing relationship or friendship.

10. **Use high-tech resources.** Though there is no substitute for face-to-face exchanges, referrals and new or potential supporters want to see web pages they can access from anywhere that bring them up to date on your activities, your financials, your clients. This is very important and will be more so as mail is used less and less. Nonprofits have, at best, five years to go big on the web as a major outreach and donor supporting tool.

Since this wonderful morning of insight, we have received accolades for Charlie Hamm's candor and sincere interest in nonprofits and responsible philanthropy from those who attended. We share those here, as well.



I had my deputy attend this event and she came back and told me that "it was a fantastic presentation" and that she learned a lot. We look forward to participating in your future events.

Cheryl Hall, Executive Director, Caribbean Women's Health Association, Inc.

It was a great session and Charles was terrific. More than anything it was a privilege to get a glimpse into the philanthropist's mind. The insights will certainly be useful as I move forward with my fundraising efforts.

Todd W. Fliedner, Director of Development, Brooklyn Community Pride Center.

Thank you so much for pulling together this event. I very much enjoyed hearing Charles' perspective and advice. The informality of the discussion was extremely pleasant and the opportunity to connect with other non-profit organizations, particularly in Brooklyn, was wonderful.

The lessons I took away from today were very simple. Organizational leaders need to be passionate and persistent. We need to be unflagging in our attempts to create relationships with like minded individuals who will want to support our good works, if we can reach them to tell them about it. And we need to talk to everyone we can about what we believe and what we want to achieve. And once someone has committed to supporting our work, we need to continue to tell them about what we are doing, how much their help means, and how we are using their money. -

Marianne Nicolosi, Executive Director, Brooklyn Community Pride Center.

Know your enemy, friends and your target audience if you want to manage success. Don't get discouraged success is for the 20% of people who do not accept failure as an option. Passion is from the heart always let it rule. As a leader you must aim high and never settle for less. Be transparent in your dealings. Relationships work if you know how to work your charm, commitment and dedication sharpens your character.

Pamela Payne, President, Professional Advocacy Mentorship Program

I was getting tired of never hooking the big fish...now I have encouragement that I'm on the right track. Mr. Hamm was very open about knowing the grantmakers and being straight to the point. This confirms everything that you teach in the grant and proposal writing classes.

Next, assurance that the money is out there. It's important to invite grantmakers to events, so they can see what your project is all about, before asking for funding.

One more thing, the mixture of the attendees was very interesting. I always attend to improve my skills, see my competition, and network. We all work together.

Ms. Fran McIntyre-Smith, President, Central State Street B. A.

The biggest lesson I learned is the importance of building a relationship with a potential funder. Charlie kept returning to that theme, saying that he wants the Executive Director to meet with him once a year, to be on mailing lists and to be kept up to date with organizations he financially supports. Actually, I should say that I know how important it is to build and maintain relationships, but it's difficult to make time to get out of the office and consistently meet with potential funders. It was great to be reminded of the importance of keeping in touch with funders.

Sally Marshall, Brooklyn Historical Society



The Neighborhood Technical Assistance Clinic (NTAC) serves the needs of philanthropic individuals and organizations in their efforts to develop support and maintain effective community-based and faith-based programs. We also serve non-profits wishing to improve programs and organizational capacity for addressing the needs of low-income and service-starved neighborhoods. We provide consultation, strategic direction and management, technical assistance and forums for increasing substantive outcomes in all these areas of human and financial investment.

Pictured at left: Sandra Thomas, VP Community Affairs, WABC-TV; Valerie Oliver-Durrah, President/CEO and Rev. Sylvia Kinard, Esq, Board Chair, NTAC

544 MacDonough Street, Brooklyn, NY 11233 T: (718) 455-3784 F: (718) 573-4490

www.neighborhoodclinic.org