

# Added Value

More than Money

Winter 2007

[www.kedconsult.com](http://www.kedconsult.com)

*"The only bad no is when you don't learn anything and use it to improve your organization."*

## Winning, Even With No

It will happen to you. If you intend to be part of non-profit organizations long-term you're going to face rejection, maybe not a lot, but enough. It's hard not to be disappointed when a funder who you believed was ideal rejects your proposal. Or a panel member offers, if not false witness, information that isn't the whole truth. Or in the hubbub, you make a mistake and forget to include something critical, an item it would have taken five minutes to add. It's spotted instantly and your request goes down like a ship with a small round leak in want of a cork.

Since rejection is part of asking, it is helpful to gain skills to deal with it. This article suggests a healthy process that starts with acceptance, moves to analysis and concludes with taking actions that allows you to reap a win from any no.

### Step One:

#### Rant and Rave Acceptably

Rejection hurts. How dare they not fund you? It was a brilliant request! And it's not fair! They encouraged you. And you were counting on it. You worked hard and need the money or you wouldn't have requested it. Yes, you're angry, ready to blame and when the anger is out of the way--grieve. You've lost something; hope in a specific action.

The first step is to experience your response appropriately. Find

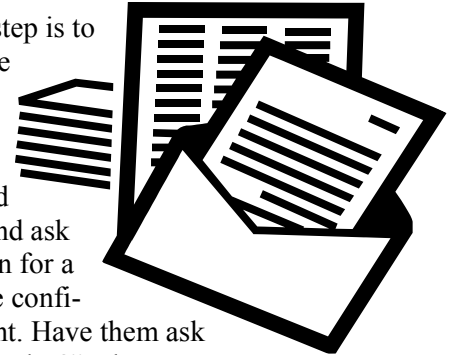
a friend and ask permission for a 15-minute confidential rant. Have them ask you "what else?" when you run out of wind. Breathe deeply and answer by going on the next complaint on your list. Another appropriate technique is screaming—in the right location. I have a friend who rides roller coasters for therapy. You might prefer a good yell when driving alone down an empty highway with your windows rolled up. Or rant, by writing down everything you would like to say in the language you would like to use. Then, shred it.

Appropriate ranting and raving helps; inappropriate ranting and raving takes a no and turns it into a catastrophe. A woman stands in the hall at the funder's agency and yells at a staff member. A man grouses publicly for weeks about the unfairness of it all. A third goes to the press. Almost *all* organizations have a funder to whom they can never ever return. At your own pace, in your own way

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Do you want to achieve more of your mission by turning your promising ideas into funded ventures? This firm has helped hundreds of groups do exactly that—and secure many millions of dollars, improve services and build stronger organizations. Contact the *More than Money Consultant* for results with facilitation, planning and grants.

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find a way to rant, rave and grieve professionally and then move on.

### Step Two:

#### Regain Your Optimism

Your grief will be worse if you choose to believe that this “no” was your last chance. It is not. Recognize that this or any no is only your last chance if you quit. Don’t. This recognition is part of the next step—finding your optimism. It helps to use the P.O.P. formula.

The first P in P.O.P. stands for **Perfect**. Recognize that the *perfect* grant is yet to be written. When I worked with Sarasota County, we prepared 13 drafts of one agenda item (no exaggeration) before it was submitted to the Board of County Commissioners. It *should* have been perfect. Six months later, I pulled it out to re-use some of the narrative for a grant. What did I discover in the first line? A second-grade grammatical error. Even your best applications will share this lack of perfection. The times you were funded weren’t because you wrote perfect grants and most rejection is not because your submittal lacked perfection. Yes, submit well-written grants, but your goal is not to create a family heirloom but obtain funding. Most grants could use the tweaking you would do if you had another 48 hours before the deadline.

The O in P.O.P. formula is for **Opportunities**. You will have new ones. Time and again, groups who are told “no” accept this block in their path and find other means. Some groups re-vamp rejected proposals and resubmit them successfully. Others use the “no” to focus on other strategies to achieve the same objectives. Janet Kahn, with the Early Learning Coalition was turned down by a foundation for a request for \$52,325 to create a

substitute pool of childcare workers. A year later, the Coalition began the program anyway by reallocating and reprioritizing funds. Could the Coalition still use grant funds? Yes, but they didn’t let a no stop them.

The final P in the P.O.P. formula is **Practical**. When you are dealing with a no, consider the numbers of grants submitted and the number of successes. In many cases, less than one in ten applications win funding. Educate yourself. Educate your constituents and board. Large gifts come from large investments of time, resources, planning and writing—from luck you make.

### Step Three:

#### Dissection: Scalpel Please

In the first two steps you grieved and gained some perspective. In the next step, you dissect the decision to learn what happened and use this information to improve your future efforts. This step recognizes that when a funder tells you no, you receive valuable feedback. Your goal is to harvest its maximum value.

#### Tools:

Here are five dissection tools and techniques:

#### ✂ Notes

After each submittal, take a few notes about what you learned, what you would change, i.e. starting earlier, the approximate time required to complete the application and who to ask for help next time. Since the length of time between submittal and response is often several months, reviewing your notes on major requests can jog your memory. Here, are two notes from a recent frenzied federal application process:

- Establish a schedule to follow-up within 48-hours with everyone from whom I request information
- Review any financial information early to ascertain if it is usable. (In this case, I received



documents *I thought* would be helpful and put them aside until the following week *assuming* I had what I needed. I didn’t. Panic!)

If you do have notes review them now. If not, add “creating notes” to your post application to-do list.

#### ✂ Copies of Scoring Sheets and a Comparison of Your Scores to the Scores of Other Applicants

When these items are available, a review of them will reveal the perceived strengths and weaknesses of your application. For example, groups often find that panels rate them poorly on evaluations because they failed to discuss enough specifics. Use information like this immediately.

#### ✂ Information from Staff or Panelists

Staff or panelist are often willing to share detailed information about how your organization was perceived. Even if they are reluctant to provide this information, you can still learn other useful items like the number of applications submitted, surprises in the process and if this was an easy or tough cycle.

#### ✂ An Honest Evaluation of Your Application Process

It is not a coincidence that hastily developed applications do not fare as well as ones developed methodically. Was your

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application done last minute? Did you engage in wishful thinking? Is it the wrong funder? Was this a weak idea? Or, an idea ahead of its time? An honest evaluation will improve your future application decisions.

### ✂ Funder Contact

After reviewing this material and completing the evaluation your dissection continues with taking the time and risk to contact the funder for feedback. Seek three pieces of knowledge:

- What might you do differently next time?
- Can they recommend other funding or other resources for your organization?
- And, can you keep in contact to submit future requests, ask for advice or call with other needs for resource suggestions?

### Step Four:

#### Decision: What Kind of No Was That?

After every application cycle, someone will decide if the experience was worth it and, if yes, whether to apply again. There are basically two kinds of nos. One is “no never.” These are easy. You place the source in the trash or pass it on to a friend. The second “no” includes, “We wanted to, but didn’t have the money;” and “One panel member has a personal vendetta about something, but she won’t serve next

year,” and “We weren’t convinced.” This no is more challenging because of its uncertainty. Is it worth the investment to try again? For two sets of criteria to use in making this decision, see Fall 2006’s *Added Value, Panning for Great Grant Donors* (available on web.)

### Conclusion

Rejection comes with asking. The only bad no is when you don’t learn anything and use it to improve your organization’s future by at least obtaining new resources and contacts. By working through the four step process shared, you can maximize the value of this unfortunate experience, decrease the chance of it happening again and make it long-term win.

## Website News

### Free Articles

These new free **Proven Result Articles** join more than 35 others at [www.kedconsult.com](http://www.kedconsult.com)

- *Beyond Thank You, Merci Beaucoup and Muchas Gracias: 20 Ways to Say Thanks*
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- *Two \$ Birds With One Stone, Suggestions on How to Create Grants That Support Individual Fundraising*

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## Three New Year, All Year Resolutions for Your Organization

1. Resolve to collect contact information from people who interact with your organization. Don't you wish you had kept the address of the couple who gave you your first hundred dollars?
2. Resolve to not only to request money but to build connections. Can you find that couple and call them to let them know, again, how much their initial support mattered?
3. Resolve to help people around you learn more about your mission. Each month, jot down five recent facts, statistics or one story and use them in conversations as you interact in the community. When you are as close to something as important as your mission it's easy to forget that others still don't **know** about the need.

## 2007 Events

January 11– Nonprofit Forum  
Sarasota

March 15 –16  
Grants Professional Network  
Orlando

Grant-Tastic (sign up on the web)  
Summer Teleconference Series  
Available everywhere

June– *You Had Me at Dear Funder*  
Organizational Readiness  
and Finding the Right Donor

July –*Unlock Fort Knox*  
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August—*Dance with the Paper Tiger*  
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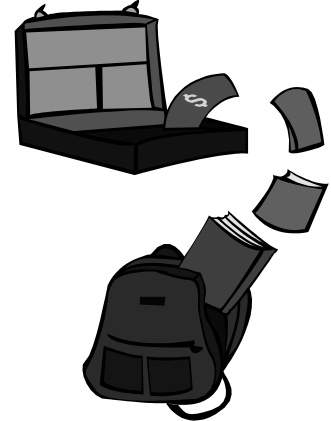
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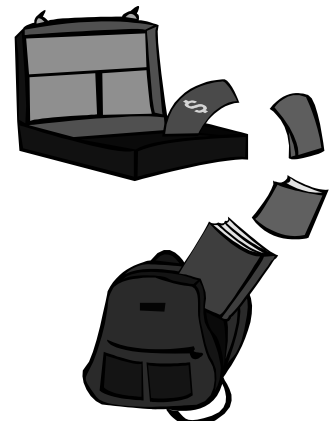
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