

**Report of
AFP 43rd International Conference on Fundraising**



April 1-5, 2006



Georgia World Congress Centre



Atlanta, US

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June 12, 2006

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I. Introduction

The fundraising profession is growing vibrant in Hong Kong as NGOs face challenges in response to the cutting-back of government funding and intense competition for community resources. Equally important is the development of good fundraising practices to foster a trustful environment that nurtures donors' confidence in giving. The Hong Kong Council of Social Service therefore gives priority to resources development for the welfare sector and promotion of charity accountability. A delegation was organized to attend the AFP 43rd International Conference on Fundraising with the objectives to:

- ◆ learn new techniques and trends in philanthropy;
- ◆ network with fundraising professionals from around the world.

The Conference was held on April 1-5, 2006 in Atlanta, Georgia. It was hosted by The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) which represents more than 28,000 members in 180 chapters throughout the world, working to advance philanthropy through advocacy, research, education and certification programs. The Conference was one of the largest AFP International Conferences ever, with some 4,000 participants from the USA, Canada and the Asia Pacific. Delegates had the opportunity to listen to renowned plenary speakers, take part in session discussions, learn from exhibitors and network with fundraising professionals.

II. Evaluation of the Event Program

Conference of Champions was the theme of the 43rd annual conference. It conveyed the message that donors, volunteers and fundraisers were all champions, helping to change the world for the betterment of others. The conference had 3 lines of activities: Education, Exposition and Networking.

Education

More than 100 Educational Sessions were offered in 13 different specialty tracks, encompassing a comprehensive range of fundraising topics:

- Annual Giving / Membership / Direct Response / Events
- Capital Campaigns / Endowment
- Corporate / Foundation Relations
- Stewardship / Donor Relations
- Leadership and Management Issues
- Major Gifts
- Marketing and Communications
- Professional Development
- Planned Gifts / Gift Planning
- Critical Issues in Fundraising / Public Policy / Ethics
- Specialized Interests
- Technology in Fundraising
- Working with Boards and Volunteers

Distinguished Speaker Series was a new session at the conference that took delegates to explore issues beyond fundraising. Presenters were scholars and authors on contemporary topics including philanthropy, leadership, marketing and public relations. These issues brought about new understanding of the role of fundraising in societies and the world today.

** Please refer to the Appendices for the CD-Rom with conference proceedings materials, including the schedule of sessions, speakers' bios, presentations and handouts for some of the sessions.*

Besides the regular conference, delegates had the option to attend the AFP Academy for Professional Development as well as the Master's Track. These were offered prior to the conference. The Master's Track sessions had two main schools, both full day courses. The other courses offered for professional development were topic

specific sessions which were mainly half day courses. The Master's Track had the management school, and consultant school, which both focused on teaching specific techniques of leadership, strategic planning and innovation. It was suggested that if the attendees do not have at least three or more years of experience they should not sign up. An extra fee was charged for these sessions and they required pre-registration, so be very sure of what you would like to learn when signing up for these courses.

Exposition

Over 250 fundraising suppliers and service providers were featured at the Exposition on Fundraising and Philanthropy. It was a splendid showcase of the fundraising industry and its supporting services in the USA:

- Computer Software / Hardware
- Direct Marketing Services
- Donor Recognition / Special Gifts
- Donor Research / Prospect Identification
- Education / Training
- Financial Services
- Fundraising Counsel
- Fundraising Programs
- List Sales / Services
- Member Benefits Programs
- Online Fundraising Services
- Publishers / Resource Materials
- Special Events
- Telemarketing

Onsite at the conference were also the AFP Bookstore where the most recent fundraising publications and tool books were on sale. Delegates also had the chance to meet authors at book signing sessions.

Networking

Delegates could mingle with fundraising professionals at the Opening Session, Plenary Sessions and evening events such as the Opening Night Reception, Atlanta Chapter Event and AFP Awards for Philanthropy Banquet.

AFP Chapters also held off-line networking activities. The HKCSS delegation were invited to a dinner organized by the Aloha Chapter on the Opening Night, met the AFP Asian Pacific Initiative Task Force and delegates from Asia.



All smiles from delegates at the Southern-cooking dinner organized by the Aloha Chapter.

III. Implications to Hong Kong

The following are descriptions / summaries of the different courses attended, including the delegates feedback on the courses and their relevance to fundraising in Hong Kong.

Track: Planned Gifts/ Gift Planning

Nonprofits and For Profits – Perfect Together

Robert E. Wahlers & Paul Hansen

➤ Session Content:

- ◆ Identify donor’s key advisors, including will-writer, banker, accountant, financial planner, lawyer, insurance agent, etc.
- ◆ Strategies for fundraisers to work effectively with donor advisors:
 - ✦ Make connections and network with them;
 - ✦ Be their resource, e.g. develop useful information guide on “tax benefits of making donations” for financial advisors;
 - ✦ Cross networking to help grow each others’ business.

➤ Reflections:

I use to hold the concept that cultivating planned gifts is all about building trustful relations with donors, and that the only way to develop a good prospect list is based on the organization’s donor database. This session shed new light for me, that fundraisers can ally with professional advisors and leverage on their connections to develop new prospects for their organizations. It is important for fundraisers to network with professional advisors, learn the mechanics and focus of their concerns. To start with, fundraisers can engage their organizations’ board members who are in the legal and finance profession to help open up such opportunities.

Winning Strategies for Planned Giving Programs and 33 Egregious Errors

Calder P. Sinclair

➤ Session Content:

- ◆ The presenter provided an outline for establishing a planned giving program:
 - ✦ Decide types of planned gifts to promote
 - ✦ Develop administrative guidelines and code of ethics
 - ✦ Get board members engaged
 - ✦ Get legal counsel and planned giving consultant
 - ✦ Identify prospects, cultivate and solicit planned gifts
 - ✦ Follow up with publications, seminars and workshops
 - ✦ Donor recognition
 - ✦ Establish timetable, goals and budget

➤ Reflections:

The presenter ranked “Not having a planned giving program!” as the Number 1 Egregious Error. In fact, planned gifts constitute a major portion of a non-profit organizations income in the USA and UK, and the trend is on the rise. Planned giving in Hong Kong is regarded as a rather new and unfamiliar fundraising program for most local NGOs. More education should be done so that NGOs can understand the basic gift instruments and select which types of planned gift to promote that best suite their organizations. Much more has to be done to develop planned giving.

Basics of Planned Giving for the Small Shop

Alexander "Sandy" Macnab

➤ Session Content:

- ◆ Planned giving is an essential component of even the most modest development program.
- ◆ Organizations should assess its own readiness for a planned giving program, including institutional audit, program audit and even staff audit.
- ◆ Measure the cost of obtaining the right to receive dollars in the future in the form of agreements signed today.

➤ Reflections:

Planned gifts in the USA are part of a large, often complex tax-wise plan. The presenter suggested "7 basic techniques" to promote planned giving as ways to increase personal income, increase estate to heir, to enjoy asset and receive income an income tax deduction. However, this is not applicable to HK as Estate Duty was abolished Feb 11, 2006. Planned givers in HK are not tax-driven but cause-driven. Fundraisers should therefore focus more on the organization's cause, add a future element into the organization's mission statement or in the campaign slogan, e.g. "5% of Your Will Endows Our Children's Future".

Track: Marketing and Communications

How to Build the Perfect Donor Newsletter

Tom Ahern

➤ Session Content:

- ◆ Turn away from institution-centric to donor-centric (e.g. we did this because of your help...).
- ◆ The safest way to view the readers is “mostly uncommitted”, “few motivated”.
- ◆ What interest donors?
 - ✦ Accomplishments
 - ✦ Vision
 - ✦ Recognition
 - ✦ Efficiency
- ◆ Make use of the 5 positive emotional triggers: Hope, Love, Compassion, Duty, Faith.

➤ Reflections:

Donor newsletter is an art and can be an effective income generation tool. Organizations often drive away readers with event reports in their newsletters, only a few mention what was accomplished because of donations. It is high time for organizations to rethink their donor communication strategies, especially when fundraising is increasingly competitive in Hong Kong. One of the top priorities should be demonstrating organizational effectiveness by sharing successful stories with the help of donors.

Track: Leadership and Management Issues

What is Development Services and Why Should You Care

Robert Weiner, Anita Lawson, Mark Longo, Jon Thorsen

➤ Session Content:

- ◆ Mission of development services is to facilitate fundraising, gift processing, fund management and stewardship.
- ◆ A Director of Development Services has to have:
 - ✦ personality to work well with others
 - ✦ financial and legal knowledge
- ◆ The APC model:
 - ✦ Develop research
 - ✦ Develop information system
 - ✦ Donor relationship management
 - ✦ Donor relations – recognition & stewardship
 - ✦ Grants management

➤ Reflections:

Fundraising offices in HK have borne the above functions as Development Services in the USA. More often, HK's Fundraising Managers often perform the role of a Director of Development Services on top of their primary responsibility in fundraising. It is important for HK's Fundraising Managers to re-orientate their time management for a better balance between the dual roles. In case Fundraising Managers are burnt-out, they should be allowed to delegate some office responsibilities to others and make time for rejuvenation, so as to regain their drive in creative fundraising.

Master's Track: Management School

Bernard Ross, Julie Bellingham. The Management Centre, London

➤ Session Content:

- ◆ Change Processes:
 - ✦ Identifying the reasons for change
 - ✦ Where you want to go (i.e. the Vision)
 - ✦ The process of changing
 - ✦ The change partially or fully implemented
- ◆ Creativity and Innovation:
 - ✦ Mindmapping
 - ✦ Learning to be Creative and Innovative
 - ✦ Using your intelligences
- ◆ Developing Strategy:
 - ✦ Techniques in developing strategy
 - ✦ Evaluating
 - ✦ Planning the new strategic direction
- ◆ Leading Teams and Organizations:
 - ✦ Creating a learning organization
 - ✦ Emotionally Intelligent Leadership
- ◆ How to take the next steps:
 - ✦ Action planning

➤ Reflections:

Many NGOs in HK appoint service related staff to management positions. The problem which arises is whether or not the appointed staff have the requisite skills to be in a management role. The management school acts as a reminder and enhancement course for people with management training, but if a service related staff without the requisite management training was to attend the class they might find it difficult to conceptualize the techniques being taught.

Master's Track: What's Your Style? Behavior's Role in Fundraising

Angie Chaplin, Lutheran Services in Iowa

➤ Session Content:

- ◆ Identifying Communication and Relationship Strategies
- ◆ Style Analysis:
 - ✦ Identify your style in fundraising
 - ✦ How to read your style?
 - ✦ What are the implications?
- ◆ Behavior Compatibility:
 - ✦ People Reading Guide explained
 - ✦ Why Adapt to donor behaviors?

➤ Reflections:

The development departments in many NGOs in Hong Kong do not have the time and/or resources to spend on reflection of behavior, whether it be their own behaviors or their donors. The identification of a donor behavior as well as a fundraisers behavior and adaptability would enhance the power of a NGO. Team building retreats would be the best way to implement this type of self analysis in Hong Kong, due to the hectic lifestyles and pace of life.

“The Breakfast of Champions” Panel Discussion on Corporate/Foundation Philanthropy

Moderator: Steve Batson

Speakers: Virginia Peoples, Joseph T.N. Suarez, Charlene Howell

➤ Session Content:

- ◆ Foundations’ expectations on communications with grantees:
 - ✦ First impression is the phone call or cover letter, which reflects the leadership and culture of the organization.
 - ✦ Maintain and cultivate relationship with grant-makers after getting the grant
 - ✦ Say thank you
- ◆ How foundations find out more about grantees:
 - ✦ Check on Guide Star how grantees manage their resources
 - ✦ Site visit
- ◆ Foundation’s reputation is build on the projects they support

➤ Reflections:

Providing evidence of what has been accomplished with the grant and abiding by high levels of accountability are the two critical ways that NGOs can build trust for private and corporate foundations. The cultivation of relationship with foundations is necessary, through the foundation’s Executive Director if not the Board members.

IV. Evaluation of the Event Organization

This is a very American focused conference. The sessions and speakers are mainly from the United States. Some speakers were from European countries but still a minority. The attendees came from all over the world, but once again the US attendance is a large part of the audience. The sessions and topics were also very US focused, so you had to be very careful in choosing topics which were relevant to the fundraising climate in Asia. That being said, the conference would still be very beneficial to people attending with an open and creative mind. It would definitely enhance skill sets and even stimulate creativity for new ideas.

The event plenary sessions were very inspiring, but like many speakers they did not address the needs of smaller organizations. When you have very powerful plenary speakers they tend to forget to address the small organizations that do not have clout in the community. The power of the plenary speakers at this conference was impressive. When attending conferences like this, these types of speakers can make or break a conference. The speakers were Colin Powell, Jane Fonda, and J. Richard Wilson. They were truly the crown jewel of this conference. It was worth going for these speakers alone.

The exhibition was a typical conference exhibition. Coming from Hong Kong we can be a little jaded, but I am sure that if you did not have easy access to manufacturing and services as we do, then these resellers are very necessary in any business process. The important part to remember is that it is a business process.

The sessions themselves were many and the descriptions not always accurate. So you have to read the description of the session as well as the speakers bios carefully when planning your schedule. The frustrating part of the conference was the cancellations that were not announced in any organized manner, which means that you found out when you got to the door and they had cancelled the session. So you really need to have a second and third choice ready if your first choice is cancelled.

The Master's Track is well worth the money. Although when picking the session you want to attend, it strongly recommended that it is related to your job experience either in the past or currently. It is not recommended as a starter course unless the title or description tells you so. When you are signing up the courses are rated by experience, and I do suggest that you take that into consideration.

The networking events and gatherings were very large, so once again you had to be very proactive. Being an outsider is never easy, but with such established networks it does make it much harder. Luckily we were invited to a dinner with the Aloha Chapter which made networking and meeting other fundraisers a much more pleasant experience. I would suggest trying to hook up with other Chapters before you leave on the trip.

V. Conclusion

Fundraising is a profession in many parts of the world, and here is where you can see it. It can empower an individual fundraiser to see themselves with a different set of eyes. At a conference like this you can encounter the funding foundations, the experts in the field, and fundraisers from many different cultures with focuses in many different fields. It is necessary to get out and network with other people when attending a conference such as this. For some people this is a difficult task, but this should not be so for a fundraiser, otherwise you might be in the wrong profession anyway.

I do not feel that it is necessary to attend the conference every year, but as a refresher course for experienced fundraisers it is very good. Also, for first time attendees or new people entering the field it does provide a crash course experience.

The exposure to the world fundraising climate is very important because money has no boundaries. The world will grow smaller and fundraisers, no matter where they are geographically located, must understand the global focus. This conference can provide a glimpse of that focus. AFP itself is trying to expand towards similar goals globally, so the conference is a good place to start.

- END -

VI. Appendices

i. Conference CD-Rom

Enclosed the CD-Rom with conference proceedings materials, including the schedule of sessions, speakers bios, presentations and handouts for some of the sessions.

ii. Overseas Contacts

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