

THE GIVING COMMITMENT: KNOWING YOUR MOTIVATION



ROCKEFELLER PHILANTHROPY ADVISORS
PHILANTHROPY ROADMAP

The road to effective philanthropy begins with a donor's motivation.

Most of us can say what we care about. But can we explain clearly what we want to achieve with our giving?

Such knowledge can help define a philanthropic plan of action and maximize its impact.

The story of Oseola McCarty shows just how powerful focused motivation can be.

McCarty dropped out of school in the sixth grade to care for her ailing aunt. She never went back. Instead she spent more than 75 years as a washerwoman, doing the laundry and ironing the clothes of families in the town of Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Taught frugality by her grandmother, she never owned a car nor even subscribed to a newspaper. She did, however, save. When she finally quit doing laundry at age 86, she had saved more than \$200,000. She decided to give \$150,000 to the local university, the University of Southern Mississippi, to fund scholarships for financially-needy African-American students.

"I know it won't be too many years before I pass on," she said in 1994. "And I just figured the money would do them a lot more good than it would me. I'm too old to get an education, but they can."

When word spread about her generosity, other donors stepped forward to match her gift and create an endowed fund. McCarty received the Citizens Medal from President Clinton, became the subject of a children's book and even became an inspiration for Ted Turner's \$1 billion pledge to the United Nations.

"I can't do everything," McCarty said. "But I can do something to help somebody. And what I can do I will do. I wish I could do more."

Inspired to give others what she herself had not received, Oseola McCarty's philanthropy was made more potent by the clarity of her motivation.

Her story of giving success suggests an important question for any philanthropist to consider.

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR OWN MOTIVATIONS FOR GIVING?

This guide offers a brief overview of reasons why people engage in philanthropy. Part of our “Philanthropy Roadmap” series, the guide offers both experienced and emerging donors an opportunity to take a closer look at what motivates them to give. They can use this knowledge in turn to help create—or refine—their own giving strategy. Our approach here is straightforward: to help donors become more focused by becoming more self-aware.

KEY QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED

One way to begin an exploration of what motivates your philanthropy is to ask some fundamental questions. There are no “right” answers. The goal is to help the donor start a process of understanding, which can be continued with advisors, friends and family.

Have I found fulfillment in giving, and if so, where is it greatest?

What life experiences—or individuals—have inspired me to give?

Where have I learned the most about giving, and where could I learn more?

Has anything held me back from giving in certain ways or to certain areas? If so, what are those limitations and how can they be addressed?

Is legacy important to me? What shape should it take?
How would I like to be remembered?

FULFILLMENT AND LEGACY

GEORGE SOROS

George Soros’s life and philanthropy are both inspired by his father’s risk-taking during World War II—which allowed their family and others to escape Hungary during the Nazi occupation. “I relish confronting harsh reality, and I am drawn to tackling seemingly insoluble problems,” he has written. His extraordinary success in the financial world led to an even more extraordinary career in philanthropy. Over 30 years, Soros has given more than \$8 billion to his Open Society Foundations, which work to support basic individual rights and empower

civil society to hold government accountable. Soros feels it is vital that world leaders, and the people they lead, be able to confront the harsh reality offered by today’s world and respond with innovation. “I occupy an exceptional position,” Soros writes. “My success in the financial markets has given me a greater degree of independence than most other people. This obliges me to take stands on controversial issues when others cannot, and taking such positions has itself been a source of satisfaction. In short, my philanthropy has made me happy. What more could one ask for?”

HEART AND MIND

“I think that the heart is as important as the mind in charitable giving. A program of giving that is based exclusively on the intellectual and objective may miss important opportunities.”

DAVID ROCKEFELLER, SR.

Donors make personal as well as financial investments in their projects.

Giving intelligently, as David Rockefeller suggests, requires balance — individual values paired with financial acumen; rational analysis linked with passion; self-knowledge twinned with commitment.

It’s worth noting that our emotional response to a giving opportunity often inspires us. Such “heart-led” philanthropists sometimes explain their approach with an air of apology — as though a donor can’t be compassionate and strategic at the same time. This is simply not true.

The thoughtful, effective philanthropist is often the joyful philanthropist. Why? Because such donors have found the issues and the organizations they care about, created well-researched plans for giving and then acted on their strong, often heart-felt motivations. Our logical and rational faculties are enhanced by compassion. The head helps us give prudently; the heart helps us engage in our giving in a personal and lasting way.

In looking at your own motivation, it’s wise to remember that there is often more than one reason to give. A good first step is to recognize that those reasons may not fit together like a jigsaw puzzle and that both heart and mind motivate most philanthropy.

DISCOVERING MOTIVATION

ARNOLD GOLDSTEIN

BUILDING A MILLION-DOLLAR PLAYGROUND IN THE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD

Getting clear on your motivation for giving can make the difference between proactive and reactive giving. Arnold Goldstein was already a remarkable success in New York City real estate development when he decided he wanted to be more effective with his philanthropy. He had given generous, large amounts before, often to medical research, but usually in response to direct solicitations. He knew he wanted to focus on New York City, where he grew up and made his fortune, but he hadn’t defined his goals further. So he engaged professional advisors, who asked questions, listened, conducted research and asked more questions. In the end, he realized he was motivated strongly by his experience growing up in the Bronx and wanted to provide something to kids there he didn’t have when he was growing up — open space for play. With this new focus, he continued to work with his advisors, finding out there was an opportunity for a public-private partnership which would provide a 3:1 match with the Department of Education to turn a school parking lot into a first-class

playground for the whole neighborhood. Using his construction expertise, he even became involved in the design and cost analysis for the project. The formula was so successful that he has already built another playground in the Bronx and he continues to identify opportunities for more. The key to all of Goldstein’s highly effective philanthropy? Spending time identifying exactly why he wanted to give.

“...he wanted to provide something to kids there he didn’t have when he was growing up”



COMMITMENT AT THE CORE

Many donors identify with the causes they support. Donors also say they give in part to express gratitude for “blessings” they have received.

Beyond those fundamental reasons, however, motivations for giving often change over time and with experience. Unless a giving program addresses the needs that drive these motivations, it’s unlikely to be sustained or successful.

Because some motivations may be mutually exclusive, or at least hard to integrate, they need to be clearly articulated, so that decisions can be made about how to balance various priorities.

Here is a list of categories — not exclusive by any means — to help you begin to think about your own motivations. As you will see, commitment is common to most of them:

FAMILY

There has been a tremendous wave of interest in giving as a family in the past 15 years, resulting in a doubling in the amount of family foundations and a surge in family donor-advised funds and charitable trusts. Some donors seek to connect family members around a shared purpose or values. And honoring and appreciating ancestors can be among the strongest of motivators. In addition, our upbringing imprints upon us values and experiences which we often seek to reinforce through our giving.

LEGACY

Those motivated by legacy seek to influence the future. Donors may want to be remembered for more than financial success. Their philanthropy is their public commitment to making a better world. Other legacy donors want to create a family culture of generosity and public service. They seek to pass down values as well as resources to the next generation. Having their family involved in philanthropy is deeply meaningful to them.

EXPERIENCE

Inspiration comes from an individual’s own life. People who’ve benefited from scholarships, or see education as the foundation of their success, often wish to create that opportunity for others. Those who have faced a serious medical issue — or have seen a loved one suffer from medical problems — can be inspired to tackle that problem through philanthropy. Those who get deep joy from the arts may wish to provide others with the experience of beauty. People who travel widely, for business or pleasure, often confront challenging conditions; they also see opportunities to change them.

FAITH

Many donors center their giving around their spiritual beliefs and/or religious practice — supporting not only their house of worship but also organizations and causes that they learn about through their community of faith.

VALUES

Donors' generous acts are often guided by the values they hold dear. In philanthropy, values are associated with action—voluntary behavior that seeks to improve quality of life. Values can influence purpose—your goals—and process—the way you seek social change. But they always imply judgment and conscious choice. In common parlance, people talk about what they care about or what they stand for. Donors often identify with their philanthropy through values, and that's part of what makes giving such a personal act.

HERITAGE

Ethnic or national identity can create a set of important values as well as an impetus to support and honor that heritage. "Diaspora" donors, who seek to help the communities and country from which their families emerged, are a global force moving billions of dollars. Other donors interpret their heritage in an historical context: they view themselves, for example, as immigrants who made good. They may then turn to supporting other immigrants through philanthropy—regardless of their specific background.

ANALYSIS

Analysis-driven donors deemphasize the personal in their articulation of philanthropic goals. Instead, they seek to look objectively what the biggest needs are, or what issues can be successfully addressed with philanthropic resources. The terminology of investing or of the scientific method often frames how they define their motivations as well as their goals and strategies.

FINANCIAL

Taxes and estate planning may play a big role in giving decisions, as it simply makes good financial sense to give. In fact, many a great donor has started their giving journey in their accountant's office.

RECOGNITION

For some donors, part of the enjoyment of giving comes from being personally associated with their good works. The legacy of the donor's name—or family name—can also inspire giving. Many donors have achieved a reputation for success and excellence in their fields of endeavor. They want to maintain the same reputation for excellence in their philanthropy. This is perhaps one reason why philanthropists give major support to buildings, hospitals and institutions, where they can place their name and see their values acknowledged by the public.

O JOY

OPRAH'S GIVING MOTIVATION

Oprah Winfrey is America's richest woman. She revels in the joy of giving. "I define joy as a sustained sense of well-being and internal peace—a connection to what matters," she has said. But finding her niche in philanthropy took the brilliant broadcaster longer than achieving financial success. "When I first started making a lot of money," she said in 2007, "I really became frustrated with the fact that all I did was write check after check to this or that charity without really feeling like it was a part of me." To find a meaningful connection, she looked to her childhood. "Books were my pass to personal freedom. I learned to read at age three, and soon discovered there was a whole

world to conquer that went beyond our farm in Mississippi." Those books and some of Oprah's teachers played important roles in her development. Now she directs most of her philanthropy—estimated to total more than \$300 million—to support education. Projects include scholarships for students with financial need and the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy in South Africa. Ten percent of her annual income is donated. "I don't think you ever stop giving," she said. "I really don't. I think it's an ongoing process...It's being able to touch somebody's life."

MOVING FORWARD

“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

A thoughtful approach to philanthropy does more than incorporate research, analysis and experienced advice. It helps donors discover their motives and then connect them with their goals.

This kind of clarity can save large amounts of money from being wasted. Programs can be matched with inspiration—leveraging not only philanthropic impact but personal fulfillment. This kind of self-aware philanthropy is proactive by nature—a kind of due diligence for donors. As such, it is a prime example of smart giving.

Philanthropy is about choosing wisely. Knowing your own motivations can help provide a strong basis for making those wise choices.

ROCKEFELLER PHILANTHROPY ADVISORS

is a nonprofit organization that currently advises on and manages more than \$200 million in annual giving. Headquartered in New York City, with offices in Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco, it traces its antecedents to John D. Rockefeller Sr., who in 1891 began to professionally manage his philanthropy “as if it were a business.” With thoughtful and effective philanthropy as its one and only mission, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors has grown into one of the world’s largest philanthropic service organizations, having overseen more than \$3 billion to date in grantmaking across the globe.

Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors provides research and counsel on charitable giving, develops philanthropic programs and offers complete program, administrative and management services for foundations and trusts. It also operates a Charitable Giving Fund, through which clients can make gifts outside the United States, participate in funding consortia and operate nonprofit initiatives.

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