

Starting the Conversation

UNLOCKING YOUR CLIENTS' HIDDEN PHILANTHROPIST

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What:

Advisors need to have conversations with their clients about philanthropy. Studies have shown that many people would appreciate and value the advice of their trusted advisors in helping them attain their philanthropic goals, but those conversations are not often happening. When they do, many advisors focus on the technical and tax aspects of giving, but clients often prefer to talk about their passions and the impact they want their gift to have.

Why:

People have different motivations for giving. It is important for the advisor to discover the motivations to facilitate the right gift at the right time. In so doing, the advisor is adding value to the business relationship with the client.

How:

Advisors can start by asking probing questions to discover the client's attitude toward philanthropy. Such bridging questions include:

- How, specifically, do you wish to be remembered by your family, friends and community? Or, what kind of legacy do you want to leave?
- Beyond self and family, is there anything else in the world which you would like to have a philanthropic impact?
- If you had one year left in your life, how would you spend your time and resources?
- What do you consider the highest purpose of your life?
- What do you consider the highest purpose served by your assets?

- If you were given \$10 million dollars and you had to give it away, which causes provide the opportunity to fulfill your passions in life?
- What would you like to preserve or change in this world?
- For those who might have a more spiritual approach: Your last will and testament is your final teaching. What do you want it to say?

To gauge interest that can comfortably open the door to a deeper conversation, the advisor can ask the following questions:

- Do you volunteer? Where do you volunteer? What do you find satisfying about it?
- What first motivated you to be involved with that particular charitable organization or organizations.
- What role has giving back to the community played in your life? (How has “giving back” positively impacted your life”)
- Do you give to or are you actively involved in any specific charitable organizations?
- Are there charities that you have supported for a long time?
- Do your children share your charitable interests? How have they been involved?
- What have you tried to teach your children about giving back?
- What do you consider to be indicators of a charity’s effectiveness?

Once the client’s importance of giving is confirmed, the advisor can ask exploring questions that go much deeper:

- How do you give money to the organizations you believe in?
- What do you perceive as the advantages and disadvantages of philanthropy in your life?
- Are there any organizations that have had significant impacts on your life? How have they shaped your priorities and values?

- Do you have a strategy for charitable giving?
- Does your giving go beyond tax savings, to involve your core values & your family?
- What role would you like philanthropy to play in your life?
- Compared to your peers, do you think you tend to give more or less time to philanthropic concerns?
- Do you want to involve your family in philanthropic giving? If so, how would you do that?

Lastly, the advisor should ask questions that open the door for the client to take actions such as:

- In what areas do you wish to make a permanent impact?
- Is it your desire to make a single significant contribution to transform that program or to provide a steady source of support for it over the long term?
- Have you ever thought of including gifts to charitable organizations in your estate plans after you have adequately provided for your loved ones?
- Would you want your family to learn how to be philanthropic together?
- What holds you back from engaging more deeply in philanthropy?
- What steps do you want to take to advance your current charitable giving strategy?
- What are your takeaways from this conversation about philanthropy?

Do you mind if I follow-up with you on this conversation periodically?