

# MAKING IT HAPPEN: IDEAS AND STRATEGIES

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## One-On-One Solicitation

**This is the most effective technique in almost any kind of fundraising.** As the name implies, this involves one member sitting down one-on-one with another to ask for an RPAC contribution. Although one-on-one solicitation is time consuming, most professional fundraisers agree that, while certain other techniques may be more productive in raising money from a larger number of people, one-on-one solicitation almost always is the most effective way to get a contribution from any one individual.

We all know how difficult it is to say “no” to someone who is standing or sitting in front of us and looking us in the eye. By contrast, it is much easier to discard a piece of mail or refuse to accept a telephone call. There are other advantages to one-on-one solicitation. You will no doubt know the answers to a prospect’s questions, so you will be able to explain and describe how RPAC works and why it is important for the real estate industry to be involved in politics through RPAC. Since you are there in person, a great deal of give-and-take is possible.

## Who Should You Target?

Your first step should be to compile a list of folks you want to solicit. Contact Washington REALTORS® Government Affairs Department to obtain a list of current year investors and/or investors who have invested in the past, but not in the current year. Successful fundraisers know that it is easier to raise money from those who have given before.

You may want to supplement the list you obtain with your own list. Start with every local board member you know personally. Add to it any member who would have reason to know of you, or at least your name, even though you might not know them personally. Then add the other board members’ names you may recognize, perhaps through their position on the board or in the community, but who may not know you.

## Setting Up Appointments with Prospects

Once you have your list of members to contact, you must take the responsibility for setting up a mutually convenient time to meet with each of them. Call your prospect, identify yourself, and briefly describe why you are seeking an appointment. (“John, if you care about real estate and our industry, I need 10 minutes to talk to you in person.”)

When setting up appointments you obviously must give your prospect enough information so that you will be able to confirm a date and time to get together. But one word of caution: some prospects may push you to tell them exactly what you want over

the phone (e.g., "I'm terribly busy this week, Mary, why don't you just tell me now what you want?") If you get trapped into making the actual request for an RPAC contribution over the phone, you will have lost most of the advantages that one-on-one solicitation offers. And you may let your prospect escape by giving him or her an opportunity to say "no" over the phone.

Once you have agreed to solicit other members for RPAC, but before you make your first personal visits, you should learn the four rules for successful one-on-one solicitation:

**1. You Must Have Contributed Yourself**

This is called the "put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is" rule, and it is an unbreakable one: there is simply no way you can make an effective case for RPAC if you have not contributed yourself.

**2. You Must State the Case for RPAC Effectively**

To get a contribution for RPAC from your prospects, you must do an effective job in "selling" RPAC. In order to do that, you must 1) believe that RPAC is important and 2) understand how RPAC functions.

Before you make your first personal visit make sure you have read all the available material about RPAC, understand how RPAC works, and know its purpose and structure. Contact WR for promotional materials that can help assist you. Some local boards also print materials that describe RPAC and its functions.

**3. You Must Ask for a Specific Amount**

One of the most fundamental principles of fundraising is that people are not likely to contribute unless they are asked for a specific amount. To decide how much you will ask from each member, observe the following guidelines:

- Never ask for less than "Fair Share" goal -- \$30 per member per year.
- Never ask for less than the member gave the year before.
- Attempt to "upgrade", or increase the amount the member contributed the year before.

**4. You Must Close the Sale**

Just as in selling real estate to be an effective RPAC solicitor you must bring your prospects to the decision, "Yes, I will contribute to RPAC."

- Do not ask the yes/no question until you are sure you are close to a deal and have effectively conveyed all the reasons why this donor should give to RPAC. Do not, however, take too much time and impose on the prospect.

- When the time is right, ask for the contribution directly and confidently: “Mr. Jones, will you contribute xx dollars to RPAC today?” or “Will you write a check to RPAC today for xx dollars?”
- Wait for a response from the prospect. You are not asking this person for money to put gas in your car, you are asking him/her to make an investment in their livelihood.
- If the answer is yes, the next step is to thank the prospect and leave with the check.
- If the response is no, ask for a lesser amount. If you are again met with a negative response, ask if there would be a better time of year or if they would consider an even lesser amount. Be sure to also thank this prospect for his/her time.

## **5. Follow-up**

Once you have completed the solicitation of the individuals you have been asked to contact, be sure to follow up on any questions or requests that have arisen during your visits. Also, be sure to send them a thank-you note (regardless of whether or not they contributed). For those individuals who said no this time, there is always next time.

### **RPAC Designated Office Contact Program**

Sometimes it is a daunting task for the local RPAC Chair and committee members to contact every member of a local association. Therefore, it is important to delegate to others. A good way to do this is setting up a Designated Office Contact (DOC). DOC's are REALTORS® in local offices who are a part of your fundraising team. DOC's receive updated information about RPAC from the local RPAC Chair via meetings and/or e-mails. Their responsibilities are to then keep their office informed about what RPAC is doing for REALTORS® by passing on the information provided and to solicit the members of their offices for RPAC investments. By having a DOC system in place, it is an easy way for RPAC to be a regular part of interoffice communications.

### **Dues Billing/Rpac Solicitation**

One frequently used technique for soliciting RPAC funds is dues billing which involves billing members for a voluntary RPAC investment along with their regular dues. Since dues statements are sent to every association member, this is perhaps the only technique that absolutely ensures every member will be solicited for RPAC. Any other fundraising technique, however effective, will miss at least some of the membership.

Dues billing is effective for two reasons:

1. Because RPAC works to the benefit of every member, dues billing reminds each one to pay his or her fair share of those benefits.
2. Dues billing makes it more convenient because the process encourages members to make an RPAC investment at the same time they pay their association dues.

Several local associations are already using dues billing for RPAC solicitation, and for most it has proven very successful.

(Note: The disclaimers are required; however, should you choose not to bill for RPAC, the non-tax-deductible disclaimer still must appear on dues billing statements. W.R.'s accounting department annually provides you with the amount of dues that are not deductible for income tax.)

Also consider inserting a RPAC brochure that W.R. provides annually to assist local associations in the fundraising effort. The brochure is a great way to let members know about our RPAC successes and to impact our members.

### **RPAC Fundraising Speeches**

One of the most difficult presentations to make is the fund raising speech. Of course, no one ever said asking people for money would be easy!

Your first task is to undertake a little audience analysis. How does your audience feel about political action committees in general or about RPAC in particular? Keep in mind that an audience's response to an issue (any issue not just PACs) can range from hostile and overtly opposed to actively supportive. When it comes to asking for money, your target is to reach those in the middle of the scale who may be neutral or conflicted about PACs and move them through your remarks to the other side of the scale where they are more receptive to your plea.

To accomplish this goal with finesse, you may choose to organize your remarks using a well-known persuasive structure that focuses on motive. Known as The Motivated Sequence, this five-step structure is based on the psychology of persuasion.

#### **Motivated Sequence**

1. Attention: If you don't have their attention, what you do in the other five steps won't matter much. Be innovative. Give them a new piece of information. Tell a dramatic anecdote. Pose a question. Use an interesting quote.
2. Need: Make them feel the need for change. They must feel that there is a serious problem with the status quo. Build your case with dynamic arguments.

3. **Satisfaction.** Present your plan and demonstrate how it would work. Audience should know where you're leading them.
4. **Visualization:** They must be able to "see" how life will be better if they accept your solution. By giving to RPAC, of course!
5. **Action:** Tell them exactly what to do and how to do it. Let them know what an appropriate contribution would be.

### **Humor as a Constructive Distraction**

Another favorite tool of the persuasive speaker is humor. Humor can be persuasive to the extent that it is a constructive distraction. Why distract the audience? An audience that is pleasantly distracted is more capable of accepting a persuasive message, In this case, the plea for a contribution. Jokes aren't the only way to distract an audience. You can use:

1. **Quotes:** You can always preface this with "I believe it was... who said."
2. **Cartoons:** Describe a cartoon from Wall Street journal or New Yorker that makes your point.
3. **Letters:** Look in the newspaper or make one up. You can even hold up a blank page as a prop.
4. **Lists:** Think of David Letterman. You can have a real list with one funny item at the end.
5. **Analogies:** These are so easy to deliver and automatically make your point.
6. **Definitions:** Take a key word from your speech and define it in a funny way.
7. **Observations:** Short, clever lines that breathe new life into dull presentations.

### **Sample RPAC Fundraising Speech**

I am pleased to be with you today to discuss the importance of the REALTORS® Political Action Committee (RPAC). RPAC is an important part of the REALTOR® Legislative Program - a part that allows our association to have a strong role in the political community in our state. Your single investment in RPAC allows the support of candidates at the local, state and federal levels of government and of state and local issues. This is possible because of how your RPAC investment is allocated. 75% is spent on candidates, 25% on issues. 30% of the candidate split is sent to NAR and the rest stays home. All of the issues split remains in-state. That's a pretty wide range of influence for your dollar.

You probably wonder who decides how your money is spent, and that's a valid question. Decisions on candidate contributions are made by state and national RPAC

trustees after endorsement recommendations are made by local associations. The trustees all have one thing in common – they are REALTORS®. I'm not going to promise you that you are always going to agree with who is supported, but you can be guaranteed that the REALTORS® serving as trustees review the facts on every candidate. These facts include an understanding of REALTOR® issues, as well as committees on which they serve, and their openness to listen to our concern – the decision is made by looking at the total picture.

And don't worry that RPAC buys a politician. We support candidates whose views are similar to our own. Financial help is provided in the hope that it will increase the chances of the candidate being elected – a candidate sympathetic to our point of view.

Other groups with positions contrary to ours do exist and they are out there in force, supporting their views. We must continue to do as much and your RPAC investment is an important part of this. If we don't, we can't blame anyone but ourselves when public policy is passed that adversely affects our ability to survive in this business. And we shouldn't have to face this fear – we have the resources – over 20,000 members just like you who must be made aware of the role of RPAC and its importance to our political program.

Please invest in RPAC now! Remember, we can only be as strong as our membership allows us to be.

### **RPAC Challenges**

RPAC challenges are a great way to motivate and encourage members. Whether you are involved in local and/or state challenges, there are many different ways to arrange them.

Annual local board/association competition programs:

#### **A. Category Competitions – Percentage of Dollar Quota Collected**

All local boards and associations are divided into one of seven categories based on size. Boards and associations compete against other boards and associations within their respective category. The competition is based upon the percentage of the board's or association's PAC quota that has been raised. A plaque is given to the top two local boards or associations in each category. The local board, the board president, the board association executive, and the local PAC chair are recognized at PAC Orientation. The competition ends Dec. 15 and awards are presented during the Legislative Hill Day.

#### **B. Category Competition – Percentage of Members Contributing**

All local boards and associations are divided into one of seven categories based on size. Local boards and associations compete against one another within their respective

category. The competition is based upon the percentage of members giving to the PAC. An award is given to the top two boards in each category. The board, the board president, the board AE, and the local PAC chair are recognized at PAC Orientation. The competition ends Dec. 15 and awards are presented during the Legislative Hill Day.

### **C. Quota Board Certificates**

Every local board association reaching quota receives a certificate. Certificates are given to the local board or association and the local PAC chair.

### **D. Pledging**

If a potential investor is basically in support of the PAC, but wishes to pay at a more convenient time, or the investor wishes to make installment payments to the PAC, then a pledge card should be used indicating the amount and manner of payment. The local board or association should then bill all pledges using a proper form. Verbal pledges made by potential investors to a phone solicitor should be handled in a similar manner. The solicitor will make note of the investor's pledge amount and manner of payment. The investor needs to be informed that he or she will be billed accordingly. Credit cards are now an acceptable method of payment.