

Big ideas for fundraisers no. 6: assessing major donor prospects with =mc's Prospect Assessment Grid

The big idea

The fastest growing area of fundraising in the UK and USA is major donors. It's also an area where there is significant confusion over tactics and approaches partly, we believe, because fundraisers often fail to separate the *ability* to give and the *motivation* to give.

=mc has developed a unique expertise in the UK, Europe, USA, Asia and South America on how to identify, recruit and win over major donors – or High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs).

The **=mc Prospect Assessment Grid (PAG)** is a simple tool from a raft of tools that we use to help manage the major donors process. It's essentially very simple – so this download is less detailed than the others in the series!

The PAG lets you do two things:

- It helps you establish the *spread* of your current donor prospects. Where you are in your campaign will directly impact this. Early on, you're looking for a healthy cluster in the top left quadrant (see diagram on page 3) – lots of potential to give at the level you need, but not necessarily engaged in your cause at this stage. Later in the campaign, you want a significant number of these prospects to have moved over to the top right quadrant.
- It provides the framework to establish *how* to *move* prospects from initial contact to genuine integration with your cause – not only giving money themselves, but also bringing others on board.

The PAG can also tell you how likely your campaign is to succeed by enabling you to see how many prospects are both *able* and *sufficiently engaged* to make a significant contribution to your overall target. It turns the classic donor triangle into a dynamic tool.

The grid takes two key dimensions – *ability to give* and *level of engagement* and places them on different axes:

- *ability to give* relates to the prospect's wealth in terms of cash or easily realisable assets
- *level of engagement* relates to the extent to which the donor is involved in the cause.

Origins

=mc first developed the PAG to help with our major donor work in the USA. It's designed to avoid the challenge of simply having lists of 'names'. The PAG works to identify who might be potential major givers – and those who aren't.

Using the =mc Prospect Assessment Grid

Each of the two PAG dimensions is calibrated separately. What you're looking for at the end of this exercise is a clear indication of the likely success of your campaign given your prospects, their ability to give, and their level of engagement with your cause.

Like all the best tools, the PAG is easy to explain, but takes some practice to be good at using. And also like the best tools, the more you use it, the easier it gets.

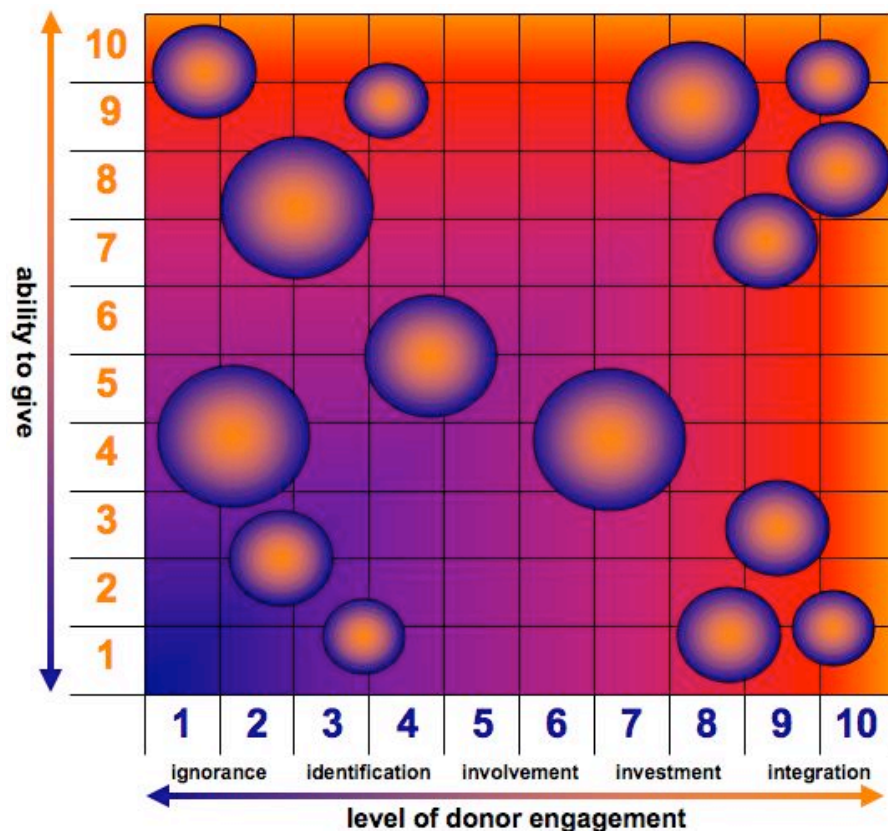
Step 1: Calibrate your prospects

Start by analysing the potential of your current donor prospect list. How

much can each individual give?

- Make a list of the prospects and the sums they could give, and add up all the potential gifts. Be aware your total prospect pool will need to be well in excess of your whole target at the start of the campaign.
- Create a circle for each prospect that reflects the size of their potential contribution against the total projected income.
- Place them on the PAG according to how engaged you believe them to be in your cause. Early in your campaign you're unlikely to have a high level of engagement from more than a few prospects and those that are engaged are probably your committed donors and/or volunteers.
- Check the total potential gifts you have in the top right quadrant. (Early on in your campaign don't expect this to add up to much. Later in your campaign, though, if you're not getting close to target, you've got a lot of work to do to bring the people with the money on board.)

Once you've done this, you may end up with a grid looking something like this.



The table below shows you how to codify and classify those donors who cluster at the four corners of the PAG.

PAG point	Description and likely action
10/10: <i>Perfect Prospect:</i> high ability to give <i>and</i> high engagement	Has probably already given at the target level. Key action is to persuade them to act as a champion and bring on board other donors. Bringing others on board is a hallmark of integration.
10/1: <i>Long Shot:</i> high ability to give <i>but</i> low engagement	Has the ability to give at the level needed but has no knowledge of or previous contact with your cause. How can you reach them and then move them across the grid as quickly as possible?
1/1: <i>Time waster:</i> low engagement <i>and</i> low ability to give	Not worth considering. Bizarrely there are people who operate on the edge of appeals taking up time but with no real ability to give at the level you need, nor genuine interest in the cause.
1/10: <i>Dedicated volunteer:</i> high engagement <i>but</i> low ability to give	Very high commitment to your cause but don't have the ability to give money at the level you need. Their energies can be channelled into other forms of volunteering.

Step 2: Focus your energy

The next step is to decide *where* to take action and *what* action to take in each quadrant. Remember, it will very much depend on what stage you are at in your campaign.

- *Most prospects in the bottom left quadrant:* you're in trouble – you just don't have the right prospects for your campaign to succeed. You need to find some new prospects urgently – or rethink the campaign.
- *Most prospects in the upper left quadrant:* you need to focus on a programme of engagement – are these simply the same high value names that appear on most organisations' lists, or are they really potential prospects for you?
- *Most prospects in the lower right quadrant:* you need to work out how you can use these keen volunteers to help reach wealthy donors who can give at the level you need.

- *Most prospects in the upper right quadrant:* these are likely to be your committed donors. Just before you give yourself a pat on the back, however, are you asking for *enough* against their ability to give? And how will you 'close' the ask in a way that successfully maintains the relationship?

Step 3: Move new prospects from ignorance to integration

It's unlikely at this stage, that you have enough committed donors in the top right quadrant to be able to sit back and relax for the rest of the campaign. So in this last step you're looking to see how you can *integrate* as many prospects as possible.

The five 'Is' ranged along the bottom of the grid are:

- Ignorance
- Identification
- Involvement
- Investment
- Integration

The table below defines the 'Is' and gives you several examples of how to achieve integration.

Level	Characteristics	Examples of how to move a prospect on to the next level
Ignorance	unaware of the cause or your organisation	– host a cultivation event – organise targeted PR
Identification	keen to align themselves with your cause and organisation	– invite them to join a task group – take them on a ‘field visit’
Involvement	engaged in the development of your cause and case	– ask them to help with the case – ask for connections to contacts
Investment	making a substantial gift at a level close to their potential and your need	– emphasise their gift’s importance – explain overall campaign needs
Integration	actively seeking others who might support your cause	– ask them to ask others – seek further support

Need more help?

Join us for =mc’s one-day masterclass *Getting Started in Major Donor Work*, will offer you all the tools and techniques you need to both start and develop a major donor programme.

Getting Started in Major Donor Work

For further information and to make a booking, please visit:

www.managementcentre.co.uk/training_programmes

Or call us on **+44 (0) 20 7978 1516**.

Need some other fundraising big ideas?

=mc has a team of unrivalled fundraising consultants able to assist with the biggest and smallest campaigns. Between us we share experience in small and large charity work, international development, arts and culture, disability and the environment.

=mc *transforming the performance of not-for-profit organisations*

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To find out how we've helped these organisations achieve their big ideas – and how we could help you – call us on **+44 (0) 20 7978 1516** or visit www.managementcentre.co.uk/fundraising.

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