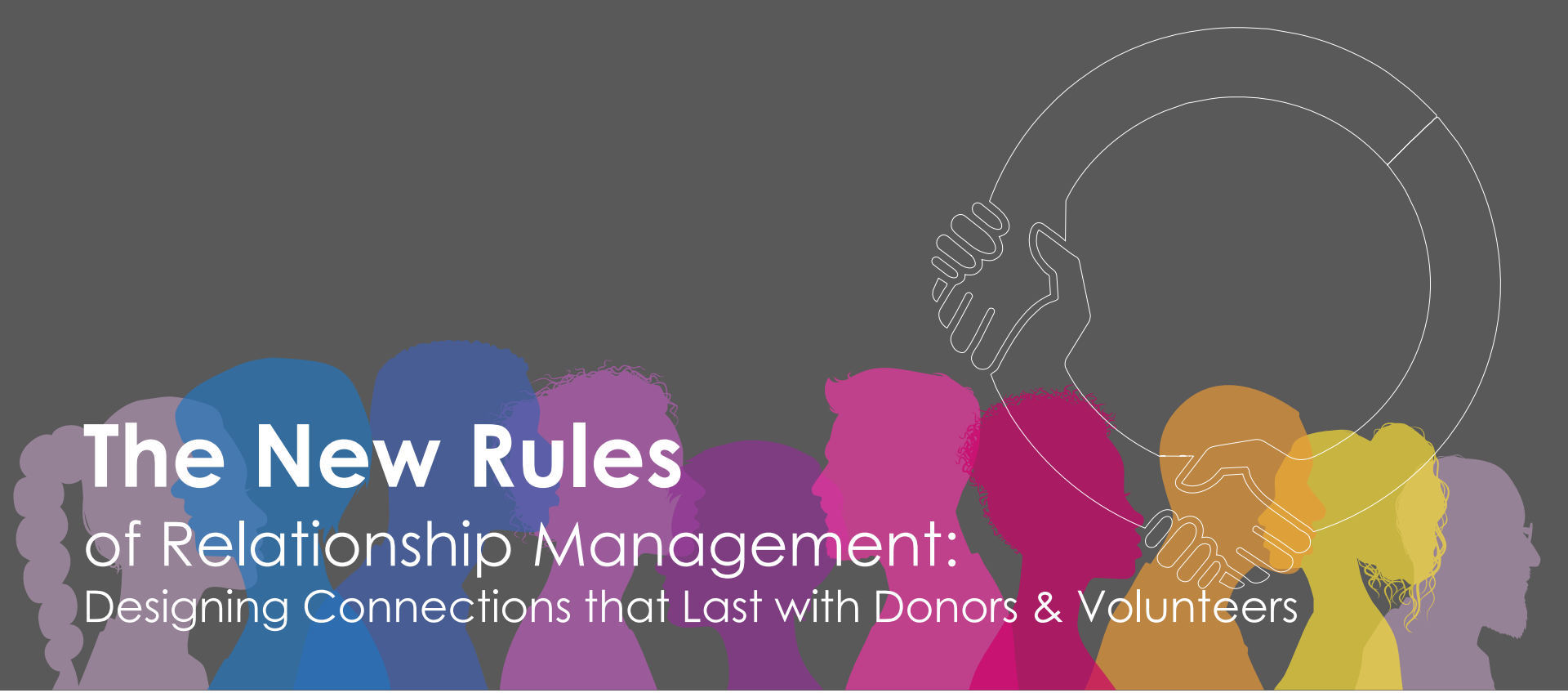

The New Rules
of Relationship Management:
Designing Connections that Last with Donors & Volunteers

SOCIAL IMPACT ARCHITECTS

SOCIAL TRENDSPOTTER — Latest Trends In The Social Sector

Suzanne Smith, MBA – Founder & CEO – *Social Impact Architects*

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BLOG socialimpactarchitects.com/blog

Check-In as You Arrive

& Top Love Language

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Connection:
The New Competitive Advantage

The Reality

We are living in an attention economy.

Every day, people are bombarded with messages, notifications, emails, texts, ads, videos, and endless requests for their time, money, and energy.

For nonprofits:

- Trust is declining
- Attention spans are shrinking
- Volunteerism is changing
- Donor expectations are rising

Transactional engagement is no longer enough. People do not want to feel like ATMs or free labor. They want to feel seen, valued, connected, and part of something meaningful. For nonprofits, this changes the game.

In an era of constant distraction, relationships are one of the few sustainable advantages left.

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The 5 Love Languages

Free Quizzes at:
https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes

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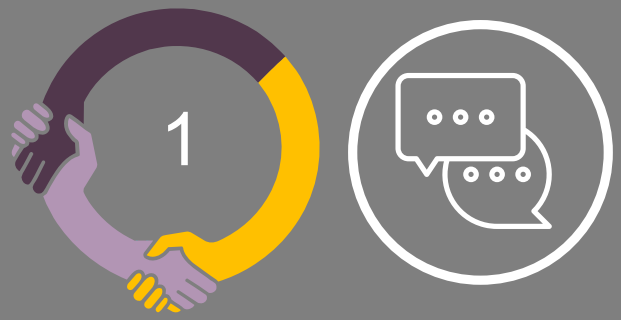

Words Of Affirmation
Share Their Role in Your Mission

WHAT: Words of affirmation serve an important purpose: they demonstrate that you understand the other person's inherent worth and the unique value they bring to your relationship.

HOW: Put your supporters in the center of your organization's mission story.

THINK ABOUT:

- Shifting from organization-centric to supporter-centric language (e.g., volunteer, staff, donor, board member).
- For every ask, deliver at least three communications that thank, affirm, educate, share impact or ask for feedback.
- Make your supporters the heroes in your storytelling.
  - Recognize the person, not the action.
  - Focus on emotion and meaning over logistics and resumes.
- Show the supporter directly connected to the impact.
- Pitch a story to the press on a key supporter.
- Highlight supporters via social media and tag their company.
- Train supporters to tell their story themselves.

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Physical Touch
Amplify the Results From Your Messages

WHAT: The love language of physical touch can be reflected in the different ways we learn new information - know your supporter's dominant learning preference.

HOW: Research shows that the more ways we learn information, the more likely we are to retain it and take action.

While physical touch is difficult to translate directly in nonprofit engagement, the core idea is creating experiences that feel personal, memorable, and multi-sensory.

THINK ABOUT:

Auditory Ideas

- When starting a presentation, do you have an attention-grabber?
- When moving from one point to the other, do you signpost (let people know where you are and where you are going)?
- When giving presentations, do you vary your tone and include points of inflection when making an important point?
- When sharing lots of information, do you pause effectively to let listeners gather their thoughts and possibly ask questions?
- When you end a presentation, do you share key takeaways and next steps?

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Physical Touch
Amplify the Results From Your Messages

THINK ABOUT:

Visual Ideas

- Are you using infographics to share your data?
- Are you including enough pictures to illustrate your story?

Reading & Writing Ideas

- Do you think ahead about the best form of communication - writing an email, texting or making a phone call?
- Do you write concisely?
- Are your emails getting opened?
- Do you use power words and emphasis effectively to highlight key points?

Kinesthetic Ideas

- Do you have tours so your supporters can see your mission in action?
- Do you have "hands-on" experiences to involve them in the mission?
- Do you give handouts and share examples at events and meetings?

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Quality Time
Create Quality Brand Interactions

WHAT: We demonstrate our love to the people in our lives by having quality interactions with them. To keep our supporters engaged, we must do the same.

HOW: Quality interactions aren't just at one point of contact, but across many touchpoints. In fact, recent research shows that an individual must have multiple touchpoints before becoming a volunteer or donor.

THINK ABOUT:

- How do you answer the phone?
- How quickly and effectively do you respond to social media comments and messages?
- How welcoming and professional is your lobby?
- Is your website up-to-date and responsive to mobile devices?
- Do you personalize your email communications with a name instead of "Dear friend"?
- How many clicks does it take on your website to get to your volunteer or donor interest form?
- Do you respond to volunteer/donor emails and phone calls within 24 hours?
- Do you segment your email lists and customize your communications to the needs and interests of specific audiences?
- Do your communications help create an emotional connection with supporters?
- Do all staff members have a mindset that they share responsibility for engaging supporters and keeping them happy?

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Acts Of Service
Meeting Their Unique Needs

WHAT: Acts of service is a love language in which your time and energy is used to meet another person's needs.

HOW: When it comes to your volunteers and donors, this can best be shown by tailoring cultivation plans or journeys that bring them into a deeper level of engagement within the organization.

THINK ABOUT:

- Inspiring them
- Understanding them
- Engaging them
- Thanking them
- Engaging them <u>again</u>

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Building Relationships

Key Steps

Step #1: "Build Rapport" via Food

- Get to know them outside of their job – ask them questions
- Understand their personality, motivations, values and love language
- Share insights about yourself – find commonalities
- Listen and talk 50/50 - take notes as if you care about them
- Be a learn-it-all versus a know-it-all

Step #2: "Build Liking" via Follow-up

- Send a note or follow-up ASAP
- Suggest a future activity together
- Invite people to get involved
- Share something that they would like and appreciate
- Introduce them to someone they need to know / want to know

Step #3: "Build Connection" via Freudenfreude (aka Shared Joy)

- Extend yourself to help them (e.g., volunteer, donate)
- Back each other up and be their cheerleader (e.g., share)
- Remember small things about them
- Show up for them and others

Step #4: "Build Trust" via Failing Fast After Mistake

- Seek to understanding their version of the story
- Practice humility as equals
- Know your values and understand your triggers – share them

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Receiving Gifts
Thank Early & Often

WHAT: The love language of giving gifts is about the sentiment and energy behind the gift.

HOW: In this context, the gift is the token of appreciation. You can give this gift to your volunteers in many ways; the key is to make it meaningful, genuine and personal.

THINK ABOUT:

- An email
- A handwritten card (from CEO, development director, or board member)
- Tickets to an event
- A personal gift (i.e., their favorite candy)
- A note or handmade gift from a client
- An appreciation event
- An award or a nomination for an award
- A donation in their honor
- Asking their opinion

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Q&A via Chat

"Nonprofits are in the 'love business.' Employees and supporters alike fall in love with our missions, but stay because they feel loved."

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SOCIAL TRENDSPOTTER

Latest Trends In The Social Sector

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THE ART AND SCIENCE OF DONOR ENGAGEMENT

4 STEPS TO TURN YOUR NONPROFIT'S VOLUNTEERS INTO EVANGELISTS

SHARPEN YOUR STORY: ESSENTIAL STORYTELLING TIPS

SHOW ME THE MONEY: TURNING DONORS INTO INVESTORS THROUGH YOUR ANNUAL APPEAL

WHAT THE ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE STILL TEACHES US ABOUT NONPROFIT FUNDRAISING, MARKETING, AND STORYTELLING

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Social TrendSpotter

Suzanne Smith, MBA

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- Top 10 Social Sector Blog, Huffington Post
- Next Generation Social Entrepreneurs Award, Social Enterprise Alliance
- Young ATHENA Award, Dallas Regional Chamber
- 40 Under 40 Award, Dallas Business Journal
- Women in Business Award, City of Dallas
- 2014 Collaboration of the Year, Workforce Solutions of Greater Dallas

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