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Final project – West Michigan Symphony Annual Fund campaign
PA 662-01 Dr. Michael Payne

“No campaign ever fails because too many people said no. They fail when not enough people are asked.” – Si Seymour

Unlike asking for a contribution to prevent child abuse, feed the hungry or help with disaster relief, the West Michigan Symphony’s Annual Fund campaign will never tug at people’s heartstrings. It caters to a very specific audience – classical music lovers – often in the upper echelon of society. A blanket direct mail campaign or solicitation will never work, either, as symphony officials’ first need to sell them on buying a ticket, then convince them to return before they can approach them to give money. This paper examines West Michigan Symphony’s overall environment for fundraising, as well as its strengths and weaknesses in the areas of development and increasing donations to the Annual Fund campaign. Specifically, it looks at how to entice donors to the symphony’s Annual Fund to become “major” donors and move up the “donor circle.” Currently, there are different categories of donors: Golden Baton Conductor (these people give \$10,000 plus annually); Orchestra Circle (\$1,500-\$3,999 annually); Benefactor (\$700-\$1,499); Patron (\$400-\$699); Sponsor (\$200-\$399), and Sustaining Member (\$76-\$199). The symphony has a strong base of support at the Sponsor and Sustaining Member levels, but not a lot at the Orchestra Circle or Benefactor levels, and only two people in the Golden Baton Conductor Circle. This analysis identifies three main weaknesses: failing to cultivate donors, make the “ask” and “friend” raise.

For more information on the complete assessment, please contact Marla Miller.