

Getting An Interview

Over the years, Capital Quest has developed ten principles that clients have found useful in setting interviews with community leaders. Following this basic guideline will provide the most efficient manner of scheduling interviews.

1. **Practice makes perfect.** Don't start by calling your top prospect and asking them for an interview. Set-up five or ten "lesser" interviews first just as a way of becoming comfortable with the process and potential questions. If you are like most clients, you'll learn a lot in the first few calls and find the final attempts to set-up interviews much easier because you'll have more experience.
2. **Timing is everything.** Block out an hour at a time and do nothing but call name after name. Take a break and do another hour. This can become tedious after the initial interest and excitement wears off. Ultimately, it is a matter of perspiration over inspiration – you just have to sit down, undisturbed and make the calls.
3. **Efficiency counts.** Use the back of the copies of letters or the index cards to keep notes after each call. Keep the cards/letters in alphabetical order so you can quickly refer to them if someone calls back. If someone is assisting in the calls (not really a good idea), make sure they are using the same exact system and keep notes as well – and have only one set of notes. You don't want someone calling you back and you don't know what the other person said.
5. **Leadership makes the difference.** The most common statement you'll get is something to the effect of "I don't give away the money, _____ (spouse, employee, committee) does that" or "I'm really not interested in giving", etc. The KEY here is to make sure they know this interview is about **leadership** – not fundraising. A good response is:

"_____, this isn't about asking you for a gift or money. We really need your advice. You were selected to be interviewed because we think you can give us some really good advice about our community and this project. This interview will not ask you for money but we really need your help in figuring out how to do this project."

The key is to get the person to be interviewed about leadership and the community – NOT thinking that this is some sort of solicitation.

6. **Be a control freak.** Don't wait for callbacks, keep control of the process by always saying that you'll be the one to call back. Telling them you will call back on a specific day also helps. The problem with callbacks is that you never know if they've forgotten, are ignoring you or just waiting to see if you'll call again. Always say "I'll call you on _____" to those who are trying to brush you off.

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7. **Persistence pays the bills.** Be persistent. If you've left a message, and haven't heard back, call back in three days – no more. Keep them focused. You deserve an answer – yes or no – not just to be ignored. Call back at least every three days.
8. **Call in the big dogs.** If a very important prospect is reluctant to interview or not being responsive, don't be afraid to have a board member, organizational executive or other leader call and talk to the prospect. It is best to give the person calling a few dates and times so, if the prospect does agree to an interview, the caller can immediately schedule the date and time.
9. **Mistakes can be fixed.** It is easier to change an appointment than get an appointment. If you have a chance to set one, set it. If you need to change it later, that is always easier than always trying to coordinate schedules and putting off the person we want to speak with when they are ready to set a date.
10. **It's the BIG DOGS that matter.** Try very hard not to be downgraded to someone else in the organization. The individual name matters as much as the name of the company/foundation. Being passed from the CEO to the "Director of _____" means we'll have less useful information about the community – as well as a likely smaller gift since, in many organizations, the CEO can make a decision while the staff person is really there to say 'no'. In most cases, the top dog is who we want as a LEADER in the campaign, and will do a much better job of leading a campaign than a staff person.

Follow these simple guidelines and most circumstances can be handled. If you get into something that isn't covered or you need other assistance, don't ever hesitate to call us anytime for any reason. That's why you are paying us.