

# Wooing and Winning: How to Develop a Lasting Relationship with Any Stakeholder, THE RIGHT WAY

Let's face it there is a right way and a wrong way to go about seeking support for your organisation.

Treating every potential stakeholder as though they are replaceable or as though you and your organisation are more important than them by

making the interaction all about you is THE WRONG WAY! Yes, I said it and if someone told you that there is no right and wrong in the way you grow your organisation and its capacity through relationship building, THEY LIED! People think your cause is noble, but that does not mean if you try to engage them about it in YOUR LANGUAGE, i.e. "my organisation is so great because we do X" or "we love what we do and you should love and support us because of that," that they will respond positively or at all. And, speaking to them in your language is essentially what you do when you tell the same organisational story to everyone who you request support from. Why would they care about your organisation, you have not made it relevant to them—period.



So, I guess now you're looking at this article with a very perplexed look and wondering "What's the right way?"

The right way is making it about them—relevant to their jobs, their interests, their lives—by going the extra mile after the initial introduction to learn about that person (potential funder, reporter, potential advocate), government agency representative or company and the values that you share.

Consider the following:

1. What makes your NGO one that is attractive for them to fund, invest in or report on?
2. Do you serve their community or a community they are interested in serving?
3. Do you provide a service to people that they believe is essential for all people to have?
4. Do you ascribe to the same principles?

These are questions that you can answer by doing simple research. How simple? [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com); it really is that simple—Google them and find out what kinds of causes and/or projects they have funded, invested time in or written about in the past and why. Can't find the information there? Go to

their website if they are a reporter, government agency or company and check their online profiles if they are a potential advocate/grassroots supporter. Start taking copious notes about what, why and for how long they engage with these projects or organisations and start eliminating “potential mates” that don’t line up with the kind of support you need.

Once you have a short list of media representatives, potential advocates/grassroots leaders, individual funders/donors, government agencies and corporate citizens that line up with your goals and objectives, it’s time to start the wooing process. That means making the leap from casual interest to full-on “stalker” or strategic relationship-builder.

1. Create opportunities to interact with them at events; attend events that they host and/or are likely to attend.
2. Strike up conversation about anything; let it evolve naturally into an introduction or reminder of who you are and what you do. This is where you plant seeds of familiarity with your stakeholder.
3. Repeat steps one and two as many times as it takes for them to remember who you are and what your organisation does.
4. Email them after your last and most successful iteration of step three. Tell them you’d love to follow-up on your conversation and share more with them about the work you’re doing, either over a quick lunch, coffee or a drink (just one).
5. Prepare for your follow-up meeting by jotting down salient points from your last discussion with the target stakeholder. If they are a reporter, look up their last and most relevant stories about your area of focus. For corporate citizens, government representatives, and/or potential donors/funders, look up the last few projects they funded that were similar to yours. If they have never reported on or invested in a project like yours, make a case for why they need to; reference recent developments or phenomena that make what you’re doing a priority that deserves their attention here and now.
6. Meet and casually weave your points into the discussion without making them feel like if they are being backed in a corner. Present it in a way that makes them feel as though a partnership, collaboration or any resulting good would have come from them.
7. Follow-up! Follow-up! Follow-up! Later that day, email to recap what was discussed. A week later, call to see if they were able to act on anything you discussed. A month later, reach out to get them back up to speed on what you’re doing and to find out what collaborations are possible.

8. Repeat 4, 5, 6,7...that's the start of beautiful rapport and working relationship with a stakeholder.

Those are the basics of building stakeholder relationships my way— *the right way*. Go forth, woo, win and build capacity for your organisation through the relationships you build!

