

VISION PIVOT | POSITIVE LANGUAGE RELAY

ACTIVITY TITLE: Positive Language Relay for Philanthropy Professionals

OBJECTIVE: To engage philanthropy professionals in identifying and transforming negative language into positive communication, fostering a more constructive and empowering approach to their work with donors, partners, and beneficiaries.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Index cards or slips of paper
- Markers
- A timer or stopwatch
- A whiteboard or flipchart
- Prizes for the winning team (optional)

DURATION: 45–60 minutes

PREPARATION: Before the activity, prepare index cards with negative phrases that might be encountered in philanthropy. Examples include:

- Our impact isn't significant enough to attract large donors.
- This community isn't responsive to our programs.
- We're struggling to secure funding.
- The board isn't supportive of new initiatives.
- We're behind on our goals.

Activity Instructions:

- Divide participants into teams of 4–6 members, ensuring diverse representation of different roles within the organization (e.g., fundraisers, program officers, communications staff).
- Explain the importance of positive language in philanthropy, emphasizing how words shape relationships with donors, partners, and communities. Discuss how negative language can undermine trust, discourage collaboration, and demotivate stakeholders.
- Have each team form a line.
- The first person in each line draws an index card, reads the negative phrase aloud, and quickly rewrites or verbalizes a positive version of the phrase. After transforming the phrase, they pass the card to the next person in line, who draws a new card and repeats the process.

- Advise that a timer is being set for 10 minutes. The relay lasts until all cards have been transformed or the timer runs out.

Notes for the Facilitator

Move around the room during the activity, encouraging teams and ensuring they stay on track. Make note of particularly effective or insightful transformations for discussion later.

When the timer goes off, give everyone a minute to get seated, then debrief the activity.

Debrief and Discussion

1. Ask each team to share a few of their most effective or challenging sentence transformations.
2. Facilitate a discussion around these questions:
 - Which negative phrases were most challenging to transform? Why?
 - How does the language used in philanthropy influence donor relationships and community engagement?
 - How can positive language enhance the perception of your organization's impact and effectiveness?
3. Acknowledge and discuss particularly creative or impactful positive transformations. If using prizes, award them to the team with the most insightful or creative transformations.

Wrap-Up

- Summarize the importance of using positive language in philanthropy to inspire confidence, foster collaboration, and enhance the organization's reputation.
- Encourage participants to be mindful of their language in all interactions—whether with donors, partners, or the communities they serve—and to focus on the positive impact their work can create.
- Call to Action: Encourage participants to note instances where they identify and transform negative language. Invite them to share their experiences and learnings in the next team meeting, perhaps offering a small incentive for those who participate. This follow-up helps embed the practice of positive communication in their daily work.