

Winning Edge #3 – Poverty or Partnership Mindset

This is Trevor Bragdon with Commonwealth Partners' *Winning Edge*: Tips to help conservatives persuade and win.



Imagine you are boarding a flight. As you slowly move through first class, you envy those wider seats and free drinks. Then you notice something. A prominent nonprofit leader is sitting there in first class.

What would you think?

If you were flying from Calcutta to the UK or America in the 1990s, this might have been your experience. Because sometimes seated in first class was Mother Teresa. She would go from helping some of the poorest people in the world to traveling sitting next to some of the wealthiest.

Why?

Because Mother Teresa was sitting where the money was. During the flight, she would fundraise and raise thousands more than the cost of a first-class ticket.

I mean, think about it. You're relaxing in first class, sipping your drink, and Mother Teresa sits beside you. Are you not going to donate? Is that not going to be the most expensive flight of your life?

What Mother Teresa showed us is that while she worked to help those in poverty, she didn't have what's called a Poverty Mindset.

The Poverty Mindset is the term we use to describe people's negative thoughts or beliefs about fundraising. The thoughts might be:

- Why would someone give to me, my cause, or my campaign?
- I'd be just interrupting the donor if I made the call now.
- Donors won't give if I ask.
- I'm not good at fundraising.
- I need to do (insert task) before I start fundraising.

Or sometimes, people think of fundraising like they are Oliver Twist. Remember that famous scene when poor Oliver draws the short straw, slowly walks up, and reluctantly asks for more soup? "Please, sir, I want some more?"

The problem with this view of fundraising is it positions you as less than the donor and assumes the donor is giving to you out of pity. But the reality is donors don't give out of pity. They give

because they want to see change. They give because they want good people to be elected. They give because they want to see you succeed.

Instead of having a Poverty Mindset, effective fundraisers adopt the Partnership Mindset.

In the Partnership Mindset, you understand that both the donor and the candidate are needed to make political change happen. Neither one is above the other, and instead, both are partners. The candidate needs money and wants to get elected, and the donor has money and wants to see change happen. But neither the donor nor the candidate can do it alone. Both are partnered together to make change happen.

When you are fundraising, first consider where you might have the Poverty Mindset. What's the thought or concern that's holding you back from making the ask?

For example, you think about it and realize you delay fundraising because you keep thinking, "I'd be interrupting the donor if I made the call now?"

Next, think about this through the lens of the Partnership Mindset.

If someone you knew ran for office and called you, would it feel like an interruption? Probably not. You might actually be excited to talk with them and hear how their campaign was going. And if you were busy, you'd just send them to voicemail and call them back.

Even if you didn't have the money to give, you'd still be glad your friend called, and want to see them succeed.

So as you start fundraising, think about where you may have the Poverty Mindset. Then look at it from the perspective of the Partnership Mindset. Then pick up the phone, or schedule the meeting and make the ask and give yourself the winning edge.