

# educate*plus* – Gold Coast 2016

## THREE THINGS

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“Three things” said Neil McWhannell, CEO & Conference Chair in his opening address, surely that wouldn’t be too hard for me to take away from the conference would it? I was sitting in the audience as an attendee at my first ever conference and was very excited at the prospect of the learning and personal development journey I was about to embark on. The conference programme looked extensive and I had already highlighted the talks that I wanted to attend. As the recently appointed Stewardship Coordinator for the University of Canterbury in a newly established role, I welcomed the opportunity to learn more about my new pathway and to meet those in the industry who were willing to impart their knowledge and expertise freely.

## THING ONE

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Saying “Thank You” is not enough! What drives the donor to make a gift? It is usually knowing that their gift will make an impact.

The follow up with the donor after receiving a gift is one of the most important things an organisation can do. We need to make the donor feel special and to let them know that their gift, no matter what size, matters to us. How we publicly acknowledge the donor can be through a number of means – online donor honour roll, invitation to join a special recognition society, a personalised letter tailored to their area of support and most importantly conveying the impact of their donation and that their support does make a difference. Think about the bigger picture – what’s the back story? – talk about the student, their goals, dreams, aspirations.

A good reporting structure provides transparency to donors and non-donors. It is the tangible impact of philanthropy and allows us to demonstrate philanthropy internally as well as telling our stories (internally and externally). Through good reporting you can build a community of supporters who feel confident that you will use their donations as intended. Share the stories many times through social media, print publications, and faculty and college reports.

Establish Recognition Societies to acknowledge different giving levels appropriately. These could include a Chancellor’s Circle – annual gifts over a certain level, a Heritage Society – to recognise those that have made a commitment to leave a gift in their will, a Society which recognises loyal donors who have made a number of gifts for five years or more and a Special Society which recognises significant gifts from individuals or organisations. At each level, establish different benefits to “belonging”.

Most importantly – have you got everything in place to deliver what you promised to the donor?

## THING TWO

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One of the core stewardship functions of our University is to travel to countries outside of New Zealand to meet our international alumni, update them on the University and to feedback on the impact of the gifts they have made. We make the decisions about our visit programme for the following year at a meeting of stakeholders without consulting our international alumni. We assume that our alumni will be able to attend our events and meet with our team on the dates we choose to visit their country.

We plan our travels on the availability of our senior management team without giving any thought to the availability of our alumni. We need to take the time to build a relationship with our international alumni and our senior executive must be prepared to be involved in this process. When presenting our international alumni with a proposal, we need to ensure that our presentations are polished and professional. We also need to commit to a rapid follow-up to any meetings and ensure that the alumni get a timely response from anyone within the institution.

My takeaway is to ask our international alumni (before our scheduling meeting) when they feel would be the best time for us to visit and if possible, schedule our visit to meet their availability. Makes sense to me!

## THING THREE

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I had the privilege to listen to Tim McInnis from Telethon Kids, Western Australia – Ethos vs Process in Fundraising. Tim talked about the importance of engaging with donors and letting them know what their gift is going to do. He encouraged us to develop programmes that provide wonderful opportunities for our donors to engage with our students and see firsthand the impact of their gifts. Imagine something as simple as: “if our donors are going to be kind and generous to us, then we need to be kind and generous to them and about them”.

Tim spoke about operationalising our ethos in such a way that we:

- Are self-reflective and knowledgeable; and
- Take care with our perceptions and language; and
- Focus centrally on donor care and volunteers; and
- Treat our donors and prospective donors as friends; and
- Give our donors a really good giving experience.

## CONCLUSION THING

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I feel very honoured to have received a scholarship from the Educate Plus NZ Chapter to attend the conference in Australia. I enjoyed meeting many of our fellow fundraisers, alumni and donor relations people in such a collaborative and nurturing environment. I look forward to my continued relationship with Educate Plus and will share what I learned with my team at the University of Canterbury Foundation. I will leave you with two quotes from conference presentations which I enjoyed:

*“There are two “i’s” in Fundraising – they should stand for inspiration and innovation, not imitation and irritation.”* credit: Ken Burnett

*"Fundraisers should use pride, not apology, when asking for a gift for a charity that is doing good work."*

credit: Henry Russo

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