

1-2015

Characteristics of Major Donors for Bible Translators

Michael Toupin
Wycliffe Bible Translators

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl>

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Finance and Financial Management Commons](#), and the [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Toupin, Michael (2015) "Characteristics of Major Donors for Bible Translators," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*: Vol. 9: No. 1, 41-55.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol9/iss1/5>

This Featured Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

Characteristics of Major Donors for Bible Translators

Cover Page Footnote

Michael toupin, Ph.D., has served with Wycliffe Bible translators and the Seed company for nearly 30 years. his service has spanned numerous areas in Bible translation, adult literacy, major donor fundraising, and organizational leadership.

MICHAEL TOUPIN

CHARACTERISTICS OF MAJOR DONORS FOR BIBLE TRANSLATION

Abstract: The Seed Company is a faith-based organization committed to Bible translation projects for hundreds of minority language communities. The organization depends upon major donor support for its success and growth. This article addresses high points of a study that confirmed the value of several development approaches, particularly the importance of intentionally building a sense of community and relationship around the cause of the organization. The research revealed significant differences between major donor categories based on age, education, marital status, and financial capacity. Further, the importance of alignment with the mission and vision of the organization, esteem for its leadership, involvement with the organization, and the importance of direct requests were strongly correlated with major donor behavior. The most significant finding is that donors with the highest sense of involvement tended to give at the highest levels. Stated another way, those with the highest levels of giving reported the greatest levels of participation in the community of donors associated with the work of The Seed Company.

Keywords: *Fundraising, major donors, Bible translation, communities of participation*

The Seed Company is an organization committed to life transformation for all the language groups in the world through the ministry of Bible translation. The organization has experienced incredible growth since its incorporation in 1998. The participation of major financial donors has been a key factor in the organization's story. This article discusses highlights of my research concerning important beliefs and behaviors of those major donors (Toupin, 2014), but I'd like to share a brief story before getting into the details. The names of the donors have been changed, but the story is completely accurate.

Have you ever noticed that early and (often) unexpected experiences can radically change how you feel about a new endeavor? For me, one such extraordinary realization took place around salsa and chips! I was working in a brand new role back in 2001, visiting major donors to The Seed Company. Jim and Barbara, the couple I was visiting, had given tens of thousands of dollars

Michael Toupin, Ph.D., has served with Wycliffe Bible Translators and The Seed Company for nearly 30 years. His service has spanned numerous areas in Bible translation, adult literacy, major donor fundraising, and organizational leadership.

to help a specific Bible translation project in Africa. Amazed by their generosity, I had come to say “thank you.” I also hoped to build a strong relationship with them in the process—ostensibly for the sake of the work. Little did I know that they would deeply impact my own life.

There was no way to prepare for what I experienced. We were sipping coffee after our meal in a crowded Mexican eatery in their town. The place was alive with lunchtime patrons. In the middle of all the buzz, right in the middle of tacos and burritos, Barbara had tears running down her cheeks. She didn’t seem to mind that people were staring. Apparently Jim felt the same way. He nodded in quiet agreement as she wiped the tears away. It was an awkward moment for me. I wasn’t sure what to say.

I had learned a bit about Jim and Barbara. They had been married a long time. Jim was a Vietnam veteran with a knack for business, and Barbara was a homemaker and was good at office work. Together they had built a motorcycle business in the area. Their kids were grown and one was working as a mechanic in their shop. They had a shared faith that was contagious. They also shared a high value for the Bible.

So as we sat sipping our coffee, I had asked if it would be alright to pose a personal question. They said it was fine. “Jim and Barbara,” I began, “you have been so very generous to our ministry. Your kindness just blows me away. May I ask what motivates you to give so generously?” This was the question that had led to the awkward, teary moment.

But then the atmosphere became electric. Barbara leaned into the table to answer the question, a warm smile appearing beneath the tears. Her emotions revealed something deep in her heart. She picked up a paper napkin and held it in her hands as if it were a Bible. Her eyes were beaming, the tears flowing. “Mike, I think the most exciting day in my life. . . .” Barbara paused to get her composure and wipe the tears from her cheek before continuing. “I think the most exciting day in my life will be the day I hold that Kolanga New Testament in my hands. I know that we won’t understand a single word, but those dear people will have God’s Word in their own language for the first time in history. We get to be a part of that. And that’s a legacy we share with our family forever.”

Wow! I was deeply moved by their connection with the outreach, with God, and with their sense of purpose. Jim and Barbara had worked hard to succeed in their business. The profits had not come easily, yet their giving was way “out of the box.” From their own lips they shared how their lives were deeply enriched and changed through their stewardship. They experienced an indescribable joy in their giving.

I have come to realize that while Jim and Barbara had given tens of thousands of dollars to the work, they sincerely felt that a gift had been given to

them by God through their participation. They showed absolutely no sense that anything had been taken away. On the contrary, they had grown in their faith and joy through partnering with the work. In fact, some time later they sent a note of gratitude: “Thanks for letting us join God in what He is doing!” And they remained significant financial partners through difficult ups and downs in their business.

Since meeting Jim and Barbara, I have heard similar stories from dozens of joyful donors, some who have given millions of dollars. My experience with people like this laid the foundation for research among major donors within The Seed Company. Their stories have changed my life forever. The underlying characteristics of these realities might possibly change the way you feel about stewardship as well.

Christianity and Bible Translation

Jesus lived in a religious setting that highly valued sacred Scriptures. He constantly referred to them as He taught about the life of faith. During His teachings, He encouraged His followers to serve as peace makers in the midst of difficult realities, to be salt and light, to bring healing to the nations. The Church, which is the collective body of His followers, is comprised of those who place their faith in His message. This message and the history related to it are recorded in the Christian Bible, which is an essential element in the faith and practice of the Church globally, across all denominations and Christian affiliations. My research project focused on major donors who contributed to Bible translation projects among “Bibleless” people groups.

One might rightly ask if the Bible carries sufficient weight to justify research on major donors who give to the cause of translating it for the minority language groups of the world. Global population statistics provide insight. To begin with, Christianity taken as a whole is the largest religion in the world, with followers in virtually every corner of the globe (Christianity in View, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2011). There are approximately 2.2 billion adherents worldwide, making up about 31% of the total world population. Of these, nearly 1.2 billion are Roman Catholic, 312 million are Orthodox, 617 million are Protestant and 80 million belong to nondenominational churches (Christianity in View, 2013). Simply stated, the fact that the Christian faith directly impacts the lives of nearly one in three people globally makes its message important.

While differences exist around the role of the Bible among the primary branches of Christianity, substantial agreement exists regarding its high level of importance. For instance, the World Evangelical Alliance (2013) claims a platform of influence with over 600 million Protestants globally. The first point in their statement of faith states, “We believe . . . in the Holy Scriptures as orig-

inally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct” (World Evangelical Alliance, 2013). The Bible holds a similar place of importance for Orthodox believers, who see the Bible as the “Book of the Church” (Serfes, 2000), and nondenominational Protestant churches, which represent one of the fastest growing sectors in today’s Christian religious landscape (Thumma, 2010). Catholics and Protestants have collaborated in Bible prioritization since Vatican II. Bishop Christopher Butler emphasized this, writing that “despite longstanding hostility, full collaboration between the Catholic Biblical Federation and the United Bible Societies was soon established, bringing a notable increase in production of vernacular versions all over the world” (Murray, 2013).

The translation of the Bible has accompanied the global spread of Christianity since the early centuries A.D. The process of translation began with a handful of languages, including Greek, Latin, Gothic, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Old Nubian, Ethiopian and Georgian (Wycliffe Global Alliance, 2014a; “Bible Translations,” 2013). Initially, the Bible was intended for use by the common people of each language community. However, as time progressed, the Bible became the intellectual property of church leadership and few lay Christians had access to its message in a language familiar to them (“Bible Translations in the Middle Ages,” 2013). Instead, individuals heard the message of the Bible second-hand through the clerical leaders of the church.

Early reformers found this lack of Bible accessibility for the laity to be a significant problem for the Christian faith. The concern sparked an increased movement toward translation of the Bible into the vernacular languages. In A.D. 1522, during the birth of the Protestant Reformation, and in the face of significant persecution, Martin Luther translated the Bible into German in order to help common people have access to its message and power (“Luther Bible,” 2013; “Martin Luther,” 2013a; “Martin Luther,” 2013b). Luther, along with other contemporary reformers like John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, and John Huss, faced significant ostracism and persecution by the institutional church leaders of the day (Brown, 2011). Yet they persevered in translation work, believing the Bible should be accessible to everyone—clergy and laity alike—in the language individuals most clearly understood.

This focus on the importance of the Bible, and on translating it for the minority people groups, continues today. For example, Desmond Tutu, noted for his connection with the reforms of apartheid in South Africa, stated that “if you want to keep people subjugated, the last thing you place in their hands is a Bible. There’s nothing more radical, nothing more revolutionary, nothing more subversive against injustice and oppression than the Bible” (Neumann, 2008).

Another recent example of the importance of translation is cited in *The Christian Post* (Vu, 2010). The article described the 2010 convening of more than 4,000 Evangelical leaders from 198 countries in Cape Town, South Africa, as the most diverse evangelical meeting in 2,000 years. The written and signed call to action resulting from this gathering of global church leaders includes a mandate to eradicate Bible poverty through translation and distribution of the Bible in all nations of the world (Lausanne Movement, 2011). The Lausanne statement underscores the connection of Bible translation with modern Christian missions.

The biblical vision and precedent for outreach to each people and language is noted in Acts 1:8 and 2:4-11, and again in Revelation 5:9 and 7:9. The verses in Revelation describe God's kingdom as being comprised of individuals from every "tribe, language, people, and nation." This idea captured the imagination of missionary leader Cameron Townsend. After working with Bibleless people groups in Latin America in the 1930s, Townsend founded Wycliffe Bible Translators. Since its founding in 1942, the organization has served more than 2,000 minority language groups in over 90 countries (Wycliffe, 2013).

While the Church's focus on Bible translation has already begun among thousands of minority language groups, much remains to be done. For example, the Forum of Bible Agencies International, representing a broad swath of international Christian organizations, states that it exists "to promote collaboration and cooperation amongst Bible Agencies with a shared vision of working together to maximize the access and impact of God's Word." The Forum reports that, in spite of significant progress being made in the area of translation for minority people groups, Bible translation still needs to be started in over 2,000 remaining Bibleless language groups (Forum of Bible Agencies International, 2014).

As a result of these needs, a number of organizations exist to serve in the area of Bible translation. A leader among these is Wycliffe Bible Translators (Wycliffe, 2013), which also serves as the parent organization to The Seed Company (Wycliffe Global Alliance, 2014b). The Seed Company exists to see the Bible available for every language community in the language they understand best—in the most timely and effective manner possible. This is facilitated through a unique connection of major donors with specific Bible translation projects. As with most other religious work, The Seed Company is fueled financially through charitable contributions.

The Philanthropic Landscape and The Seed Company

The context for contribution revenue is remarkable in the United States. For instance, in the last 60 years, nonprofit organizations have multiplied in the United States from a few thousand in number to well over 1.28 million organi-

zations today (Giving USA, 2011). Charitable contributions in America now exceed \$300 billion annually. Incredibly, the majority of these funds are given by individuals. Giving USA (2013) reports that more than 70% of annual contribution funds are provided by living individuals, and that approximately half of these funds are provided by only 3% of the U.S. population. This represents a huge amount of nonprofit contributions provided by a relatively small group of individuals.

Correspondingly, serving major donors has been integral to The Seed Company's development programs. While The Seed Company is engaged in a variety of fundraising practices, a primary focus has been on major donors whose contributions represent over 70% of the organization's revenue since its incorporation in 1998. The organization's approach emphasizes building healthy relationships with major donors while utilizing widely held practitioner insights to cultivate their involvement and financial support. The desire is to meet the needs of both Bibleless communities and donors in a transformational manner that is mutually beneficial to all stakeholders.

Historically, insights for building major donor strategies within The Seed Company were drawn from team members' intuitions, experiences, and anecdotal evidence. As a result, several widely recognized approaches for major donor programs were implemented. These approaches, however, were not tested rigorously with the organization's donors. There was therefore no objective evidence that the approaches actually resulted in increased or decreased effectiveness with major donors. A primary intention of my research project was to test the value of these concepts empirically, providing feedback related to key development practices and beliefs of the organization. Additionally, our team felt that insights gained from the study may also be informative to similar organizations and para-church ministries.

Within The Seed Company, development strategies were related to contemporary practitioners' inputs and theoretical models recognized by the team as normative in today's marketplace. For example, significant practitioners' guidance was drawn from Jerold Panas (2012), who wrote two editions of the text, *Mega Gifts: Who Gives Them and Who Gets Them*. Panas tested the value of 22 reasons for high-level philanthropy through an extensive survey of million-dollar donors and fundraising specialists. His research points to several significant reasons for giving that have remained consistent since the first edition of his book. A prominent finding is that the highest predictor of major gifts is the strength of the donor's belief in the mission and vision of the organization. My research project tested several concepts from Panas's text used within The Seed Company.

In terms of theoretical concepts, Identification Theory is the contemporary

model informing practice in The Seed Company. The model consists of eight themes that represent significant mobilizing factors for major gift philanthropy. The foremost of these is what author Paul G. Schervish (2008) describes as communities of participation. This concept may be viewed as the number and importance of relationships connecting the donor to the organization or cause. In other words, if an individual has the financial capacity to make a large gift, he or she is more likely to do so in the context of shared relationships and community around the cause or organization, thus experiencing a sense of identification with the cause and its supporters. Several concepts from Identification Theory were also tested in the study.

The Research Project

The research project investigated characteristics of three donor categories within The Seed Company. Each of the donors involved had contributed \$2,500

Table 1

Specifications for Major Donors by Categories

Category Qualifications	Number of Surveys Mailed	Number of Useable Responses	Qualifications of Group Inclusion During Period
L1 (Entry Level)	213	70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Giving total in range of \$2,500-\$25,000. ● Minimum in any year must be \$2,500. ● If only in 2011 or 2012, cumulative must be \$2,500 or more; If in 2008-2010, cumulative must be \$5,000 or more.
L2 (Rising Level)	120	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Giving total in range of \$5,000-\$50,000. ● Minimum in any year must be \$5,000. ● If beginning in 2012, cumulative total of \$5,000 or more. ● If beginning in 2011, total of \$10,000 or more. ● If beginning in 2010, total of \$15,000 or more. ● If beginning in 2009, total of \$20,000 or more. ● If beginning in 2008, total of \$25,000 or more. ● Also included if a gift of \$5,000 or more is doubled (but any making a single gift of \$25,000 or more were assigned to L3).
L3 (High Level)	133	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Giving total of \$50,000 or more or ● A single cumulative year of \$25,000 or more.

or more during any year(s) from 2008 to 2012. The three categories were described as L1 (entry-level) major donors, L2 (rising-level) major donors, and L3 (high-level) major donors. These categories represent the dependent variables of the research. Table 1 describes the classification for each level in precise terms. The table also describes the distribution of donors from the 146 useable surveys.

The independent variables for demographic information and donor characteristics were derived from three sources: (a) selected insights from Jerold Panas (2012) noted in statements 1-3 below; (b) selected concepts of the Identification Theory (Schervish, 2008; Schervish & Havens, 1997, 2000) noted in statements 4-6 below; and (c) personal experience and input from professional colleagues, which were used to customize the survey approach for use specifically within The Seed Company. The intent of the research was not to challenge the validity of the six concepts but to examine their relevance to The Seed Company. The concepts relate to the donors' philanthropic decisions and experience and are listed as follows:

1. The donor's belief in the mission and vision of the organization
2. The donor's sense regarding the importance of the organization's leadership
3. The value of matching gifts to inspire their giving
4. The importance of communities of participation
5. The value of direct requests for support (being asked to give in a face-to-face context)
6. The importance of the organization meeting urgent needs effectively

A primary outcome for the study was to confirm, or disconfirm, whether any of these six concepts discriminate between the three major donor categories with statistical significance. If the concepts do discriminate between major donor categories, which approach or combination of approaches discriminates more effectively? Such information may prove helpful to practitioner and theoretician alike.

These concerns around statistically significant discriminant characteristics are important for at least two reasons. First, they provide a basis for predicting donor classification among the three major donor levels studied. Second, understanding discriminant characteristics reveals areas that are important to major donors. These insights better equip the organization to build development programs that attract and retain major donors in methods that resonate with their desires and proclivities.

The Survey Instrument

A printed, response-based survey was used for the study. The general information section of the survey asked for demographic and experience-related information. Demographic data included age, gender, marital status, highest level of formal education, annual income level, and region of residence. Experience data included whether the donors had met local and national leaders of The Seed Company, if they had a relationship with the organization through a development representative, if they had been involved in programs or events of the organization, if they had participated in mission trips, whether they had hosted events for the organization, and whether they had represented the organization to churches or friends.

The perceived importance of the six concepts derived from theory and practice was then tested through a series of 30 survey questions. These questions were presented using two different approaches. The first approach consisted of six questions on the survey that requested a belief-based response, with one question targeted for each of the six concepts. Each of these questions appears in the form of a declarative statement regarding the concept, followed by five statements with a ranked order of importance from high to low. Participants were asked to choose the one statement that best described their belief regarding the concept in question. For example, the construct regarding the importance of alignment with mission and vision was investigated using the statement and weighted responses shown in Figure 1. The same approach was used for each of the six concepts.

1. The Seed Company's Mission and Vision

The Seed Company's mission is to accelerate Scripture translation and impact for people without God's Word through Great Commission partnerships. Its vision is God's Word transforming lives in every language in this generation. Please circle the number that most accurately describes the level of importance you place on this mission and vision:

- 5 Extraordinarily important, among the top 10 biblical priorities for Christian life and mission.
- 4 Very important, among the top 10 or 20 biblical priorities for Christian life and mission.
- 3 Somewhat important, similar to most activities of Christian life and mission.
- 2 Minimally important. It is a good thing, but it ranks below most areas of Christian service.
- 1 Not important. My involvement with the organization is for entirely different reasons.

Figure 1. Sample of the first question using the first approach to investigate respondents' perception of the importance of the six concepts.

Using the second approach, four additional questions were used for each of the six concepts, to provide further evidence of the importance each concept held in the donor's mind. This resulted in 24 additional questions in which par-

ticipants rated stimulus-behavior features of their giving experience to complement the belief-based questions already asked. A Likert-based scale of 1 to 5 was used where 1 = “I would not” and 5 = “I would” behave in a particular manner related to the specific concept (Likert, 1932). Figure 2 demonstrates the approach of these questions.

- 1 Because it is important to make Scriptures available to people groups as quickly as possible, I [would ---- 5 ---- 4 ---- 3 ---- 2 ---- 1 ---- would not] consider supporting the ministry.
- 2 I [would ---- 5 ---- 4 ---- 3 ---- 2 ---- 1 ---- would not] introduce my friends to The Seed Company if the organization did NOT focus on building healthy relationships through its programs and events.

Figure 2. Sample of questions used in the second approach to investigate respondents’ perception of the importance of the six concepts

As mentioned above, questions in the general information section helped identify donor linkages with the organization through participation in various events the organization had hosted and through collaboration in hosting events on behalf of the organization. The size and frequency of gifts contributed was derived from The Seed Company’s database.

A mixed methods approach of content and expert-judged validity for the survey questions was employed through a Table of Specifications (Newman, Lim, & Pineda, 2013). Through this approach, five experienced practitioners gave input that shaped and tested the value of each question through subjective and objective means. The data from the survey were analyzed from a quantitative perspective using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, correlations, means, and standard deviations, on each of the variables and reliability estimates. Variables generated from the survey were also used to predict and discriminate between the three donor levels. To do this, a discriminate analysis procedure was used. Since a goal of the research involved predicting future behaviors, the stability of the prediction equations was estimated by using cross validity procedures.

Findings

Overarching

The study was conceived with the desire to understand significant characteristics of major donors to The Seed Company and to help provide a baseline of data for other para-church organizations to consider in their development programs. An underlying question was whether any characteristics significantly predict a donor’s classification in one of the three major donor categories. In other words, would a donor’s characteristics reveal that she was statistically

more likely to be a major donor in the entry-level, rising-level, or high-level category? If so, would a combination of the characteristics provide an even more powerful predictive value? As hypothesized, communities of participation provided the highest discriminant power of the six concepts. Beyond this, a combination of features was found to be more significant than any single feature by itself. The strongest of these was the combination of communities of participation with esteem for leadership.

Demographics

Bible translation projects with The Seed Company require sacrificial work from well-educated local individuals, many of whom could be expected to earn much higher incomes in public or private sectors of their home countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that the major donors who invest in this academic, non-tangible process come primarily from the Bible Belt among the builder and boomer generations. These donors tend to value the role of the Christian Scriptures and understand both the academic and missionary challenges of the task. Accordingly, demographic details of income, donor age, education, generation, and marital status were found to be significant factors among major donors.

An intuitive assumption is that significant financial status is required among major donors. The study confirmed this, revealing that nearly two-thirds (59.6%) reported incomes in excess of \$150,000. Among these donors, 64% reported incomes of \$250,000 or more. The majority of these donors are from the baby boomer and builder generations, being over 50 years of age. They tend to be married and highly educated with undergraduate or graduate degrees. Among the married donors, only a very few reported giving as an individual, with the vast majority (over 80%) reporting their giving as a mutual decision.

Alignment With Mission and Vision

The study participants assigned the highest mean value to alignment with the mission and vision of the organization (4.64 out of a possible 5.00). However, the concept carries such a high value for each donor level that it does not discriminate between donor levels ($L_1 = 4.53$, $L_2 = 4.70$, and $L_3 = 4.80$). This level of importance indicates that the organization would be wise to implement programs and relationships to increase understanding and passion for its mission and vision among all major donor groups.

Meeting Urgent Needs With Lasting Impact

The mean value of immediate and lasting impact for urgent needs was the second highest in the study (4.49/5.00; $L_1 = 4.26$, $L_2 = 4.60$, and $L_3 = 4.81$). It

seems that donors who make very large gifts want to know that their contributions have an immediate impact that is also effective for the long term. This concept is interesting in the realm of Bible translation, compared, for example, to disaster relief programs, which emphasize the immediate and urgent needs of those suffering horrific circumstances. Bible translation is a “behind-the-scenes,” long-term service task with outcomes that may be less easily imagined than those of natural disaster victims. A possible inference is that major donors to The Seed Company feel that the spiritual needs of Bibleless communities demand the same level of response as the needs of natural disaster victims—and maybe even a greater level of response.

Leadership and Involvement

The majority of high-level donors indicated significant involvement with the organization. Most of these donors also indicated participation in events designed for major donor peer groups. All of the highest level donors indicated having met key leadership on multiple occasions. Additionally, most of the highest level donors influenced others to attend activities of the organization, thus demonstrating their commitment and involvement with the cause.

An interesting factor related to involvement with The Seed Company is participation in mission trips. Nearly 90% reported having been on a faith-based mission trip at some point in their life. However, somewhat counterintuitively, the majority of these mission trips were not with The Seed Company. The donors appear to have a deepened or transferred level of understanding for the need of Bible translation based on personal experience through mission trips, regardless of what organization those trips were with.

Matching Gifts

Contrary to the belief held by the organization’s development team, responding to matching gifts was not a primary motivating factor for most major donors. However, a number of significant matching gifts were provided by high-level donors during the period of the study. It seems that these individuals enjoyed the sense of encouraging others to give through matching grants. However, the mean values for matching gifts were the lowest of all concepts and did not provide significant discriminant value.

Direct Requests

The concept of direct request, that is, making a financial “ask” in a face-to-face setting, garnered significantly more positive responses among higher-level donors than among lower-level donors. The higher-level donors also had the highest level of connection with development representatives. In The Seed

Company context, the “ask” is most often presented by a development representative, a key leader, or through special donor events in a group context. The high-level donors’ apparent comfort with the direct request is in keeping with anecdotal evidence of development practitioners. They report that many of The Seed Company’s major donors say it is vital for the organization to make “the ask” directly, that “nothing happens till you place the order.”

Community

Finally, as mentioned above, communities of participation provided the single highest discriminant value between donor categories, with leadership coming in next, and the combination of these two being the most powerful. It is not surprising that donors will have a deeper understanding of and passion for the mission as they grow in community with others who share similar values. Accordingly, major donor event strategies provide a foundation for peer-to-peer friendships, engagement with leaders, deepening of alignment with the mission and vision of the organization, a clearer understanding of impact as donors meet those receiving the service first-hand, and the opportunity to respond to direct requests which are often connected to matching gift possibilities. This depth of involvement seems to build a strong sense of identification with the cause, its leadership, and its community. Therefore, not only does the community of participation concept provide the single most significant discriminant value between major donor levels, it also provides a significant platform for realizing each of the other concepts.

Conclusion

I imagine the vast majority of readers of this article enjoy familiarity with the Bible. I am certain that for many it is highly cherished. And I imagine that most readers have access to a Bible translation in their own mother tongue, the language that speaks most clearly and powerfully to their hearts. Unfortunately, there are hundreds of millions of people in nearly 2,000 language groups that still have no access to Scripture in their own language simply because it has not yet been translated. It seems inconceivable in this day and age that so many are still without what most of us take for granted as a basic component of our lives and faith.

The vision to translate Christian Scripture into all the Bibleless languages of the world is huge and compelling. Organizations like The Seed Company are rallying to the need. They are building global partnerships with hundreds of like-minded organizations and ministries. While significant funding challenges exist, momentum is growing now more than at any other time in Church history. Major donors are playing a fundamental role in the process by providing

wisdom, friendship and the financial resources required. As our friend Barbara exclaimed at the opening of this article, the growing hope is that all the Bibleless peoples may “have God’s Word in their own language for the first time in history.”

This article is intended to encourage those involved in major gift stewardship and leadership of organizations with great causes. While the research was based in the world of Bible translation, I hope readers will consider applications to their contexts as well. May we be inspired to build a growing sense of community around the causes we serve, creating communities that invite and celebrate the participation of major donors as never before!

References

- Bible translations. (2013). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_translations
- Bible translations in the Middle Ages. (2013). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_translations_in_the_Middle_Ages
- Brown, D. L. (2011). *The history of our English Bible on this 400th anniversary of the King James Bible*. Retrieved from http://logosresourcepages.org/Articles/bible_history.htm
- Christianity in view. (2013). *Statistics on the Christian faith*. Retrieved from <http://christianityinview.com/home.html>
- Forum of Bible Agencies International. (2014). *About us*. Retrieved from <http://www.forum-intl.org/about-us/>
- Giving USA. (2011). *Giving USA: The annual report on philanthropy for the year 2010*. Bloomington, IN: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.
- Giving USA. (2013). *Giving USA: The annual report on philanthropy for the year 2012*. Bloomington, IN: The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.
- Lausanne Movement. (2011). *A confession of faith and a call to action*. Cape Town, South Africa. Retrieved from <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/ctcommitment.html>
- Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of attitudes. *Archives of Psychology, 140*, 1-55.
- Luther Bible. (2013). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luther_Bible
- Martin Luther. (2013a). In *New World Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Martin_Luther
- Martin Luther. (2013b). In *Theopedia*. Retrieved from http://www.theopedia.com/Martin_Luther
- Murray, R. (2013). *Vatican II and the Bible. Vatican II, the voice of the Church*. Retrieved from <http://vatican2voice.org/92symp/murray.html>
- Neumann, T. (2008). Archbishop Desmond Tutu says the Bible has the power to free the poor. *Breaking Christian News*. Retrieved from http://www.christiantoday.com/article/bible_has_power_to_free_poor_tutu/21378.htm
- Newman, I., Lim, J., & Pineda, F. (2013, July). Content validity using a mixed methods approach: Its application and development through the use of a Table of Specifications methodology. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 10*, 1-18.
- Panas, J. (2012). *Mega gifts: Who gives them, who gets them* (2nd ed.). Medfield, MD: Emerson & Church.
- Pew Research Center. (2011). *Global Christianity: A report on the size and distribution of the world's Christian population*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf>
- Schervish, P. G. (2008). Why the wealthy give: Factors which mobilize philanthropy among high net-worth individuals. In A. Sargeant & W. Wymer (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to nonprofit marketing*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Schervish, P. G., & Havens, J. J. (1997). Social participation and charitable giving: A multivariate analysis. *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 8*(3), 235-260.

- Schervish, P. G., & Havens, J. J. (2000). *The modern Medici: Patterns, motivations, and giving strategies of the wealthy*. Chestnut Hill, MA: Boston College.
- Serfes, D. (2000). *Holy Scripture in the Orthodox Church*. Retrieved from <http://www.serfes.org/orthodox/scripturesinthechurch.htm>
- Thumma, S. (2010). *A report on the 2010 national profile of U.S. nondenominational and independent churches*. Retrieved from hirr.hartsem.edu/cong/nondenominational-churches-national-profile-2010.html
- Toupin, M. E. (2014). *Major gifts to The Seed Company; Who gives them and why* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
- Vu, M. A. (2010). 4,000 int'l church leaders convene for world evangelization. *The Christian Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.christianpost.com/news/4000-intl-church-leaders-convene-for-world-evangelization-47228/>
- World Evangelical Alliance. (2013). *Introduction*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldea.org/whoweare/introduction>
- Wycliffe. (2013). *About Wycliffe Bible translators*. Retrieved from <http://www.wycliffe.org/About.aspx>
- Wycliffe Global Alliance. (2014a). *Bible translation timeline*. Retrieved from <http://www.wycliffe.net/BTT.html>
- Wycliffe Global Alliance. (2014b). *United States: The Seed Company*. Retrieved from <http://www.wycliffe.net/partners/tabid/62/Default.aspx?entity=TSC&continent=AME&country=US>