

## **Inspiration: An Interview**

**Jennifer Darling**  
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### **What is the best advice you can give to a fundraiser?**

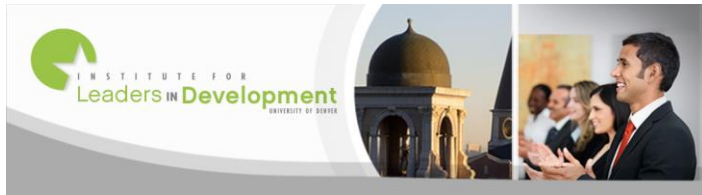
Don't be scared to just get out and ask. Get to know your prospects and donors – what inspires them? What motivates them? What type of engagement would bring them great satisfaction and happiness? And then your job is to be a “matchmaker” between your donor and your organization's various projects and programs. You should be creative and hold yourself accountable to both entities. Ultimately though, if you don't ask, you won't receive. There is a saying about the fear of asking for money being equal to the fear of death. And yet that is our chosen profession. So we know most people aren't comfortable asking for money. So it's our calling and, as we all learn through advancing in our careers, asking for gifts is not some uncomfortable transaction where you are talking people in to giving money they don't want to give. It is listening to what a person wants to do to make a difference in the world and showing them how your organization – or sometimes another organization – can help them accomplish their dream. It is such a privilege to be able to walk with our donors on such a personal journey.

### **What's the one book you would recommend to a fundraiser and why? (it can be about fundraising or not!)**

I always struggle with naming my favorite book since I have so many. I love “The Millionaire Next Door” because it challenges us to look beyond nice homes, fast cars and Rolex watches for our generous donors. I also love “From Ties to Tattoos” because it gave me great insight in to relating to individuals differently based on ages and generational differences with communicating, recognizing and connecting. And Ron Schiller's new book “Belief and Confidence: Donors Talk about Successful Philanthropic Partnerships” is very insightful for transformational gifts. Beyond these, I encourage all of us to take time to relax and enjoy fictional books as well. Sometimes our greatest motivations and creative ideas can be sparked by something outside of our industry so it's important to keep your mind open and energized.

### **What's the one fundraising blog or periodical you recommend fundraisers subscribing to?**

The City paper. I read – and have always read – the *Denver Post* on a daily basis. It is important to be current on issues affecting your local community and to be aware of who your political, economic, and cultural leaders are. Regardless of whether your organization is in the news (and you hope it isn't unless it's good news), your donors should see you as someone who is invested in and informed about the community you serve.



### **What's your favorite donor story?**

This is a very hard question since I have been blessed with amazing relationships with many individuals, families, foundations, companies and more over my long career. I still remember the two young brothers who happily contributed their piggy banks after reading we wanted to improve the Boettcher Conservatory at Denver Botanic Gardens. And of course I loved the privilege of working with Frederic C. Hamilton on a near-daily basis as we strategized support for the Denver Art Museum's Hamilton Building. He was a giant among men and he will be greatly missed by me and many. And one of my favorite philanthropists in the world is Mrs. Bea Taplin. For two decades she has inspired me with her strength, conviction and generosity.

I have countless stories about these individuals and countless more. This is truly the greatest profession in the world and I love to see others entering this career path and enjoying it as much as I have over the years.