



## Do you have "Sustainers" lurking in your files?

They're out there. Lurking somewhere in your database is a wonderful group of folks willing to pledge money on an open-ended, regular basis. They're called "sustainers," and they have the potential to provide your organization with a predictable source of income with which to plan, budget and weather tough economic times. But first, you've got to ask.

### Meet the Candidate

The good news is that sustainers are eager to accept your invitation to contribute regularly — whether it's with a traditional monthly gift or through a credit card/electronic funds transfer program. Research shows that between 5 and 10 percent of a contributor file would prefer to give monthly rather than annually. Need more incentive? Sustainers traditionally give more than annual givers — ranging from 50 to 200 percent more in annual value. And never forget that today's sustainers can become tomorrow's capital campaign heavyweights and estate and will gifters.

Here are some tips for building your "sustainer" base:

- **Ask.** Start with a mailing that asks members or contributors to pledge money on a regular basis. Note that, statistically, the most productive time to enroll sustainers is immediately after they have responded to your prospect mail and become donors.
- **Make them feel good.** Copy should make the donor feel special. Invite them to join a very special, select group of people who commit to giving a regular monthly amount.

- **Paint real need.** Here you can go much deeper than with a prospect or ordinary donor appeal. Illustrate the need with human-interest anecdotes and people stories.
- **Name it.** By all means, don't identify these folks as "sustainers." Make them members of "The President's Club" or something like that.
- **Show the love.** To maintain this long-haul relationship, donors must feel continuously thanked for their monthly gift. Set up some specific member benefits, such as a newsletter, personalized membership card and/or a special members-only section on your Web site.