



# All things to all men

**What fundraisers really think about ‘stewardship’?**

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# 1 Executive summary

Stewardship is the current buzzword. Everyone is talking about it. But it raises more questions than it answers. The reasons why there is such confusion, and so why this survey was needed, are addressed in section 2.

Section 3 shows how we conducted this survey.

Section 4 examines the topline data. This makes interesting reading, but this is not the most important part of the survey. That came out of section 5 where we drilled down into the mass of data to spot relevant patterns.

Section 5 gives the key findings of this report:

- The idea of ‘fundraising stewardship’ as a single unified activity is a myth: there is no such thing.
- Instead there are three distinct types of stewardship practised by fundraisers:
  - Passive stewardship
  - Active stewardship
  - Proactive stewardship

Passive stewardship is more or less the same as customer care or customer service and is very direct marketing oriented – see s5.5.1.

Active stewardship seeks to engage more with the donor, develop two-way relationships and initiate the ‘supporter journey’ – see s5.5.2.

Proactive stewardship is much more like traditional major donor fundraising, where fundraisers are in very close personal contact with their donors – see s5.5.3.

- Proponents of proactive stewardship want a common definition of stewardship whereas proponents of passive stewardship do not – see s5.2.9.
- There is very little support for a dedicated stewardship department – see s5.4.4.
- This report identifies several indicators of passive, active and proactive stewardship see s5.2. These include:
  - Ensuring details are up to date on the database – passive indicator
  - Raising more unrestricted income – passive indicator
  - Fall in attrition rates – passive indicator
  - Helping donors choose how they support – active indicator
  - Telephone is a ‘major’ communications medium – active indicator
  - A culture of philanthropy throughout the organisation – proactive indicator
  - All staff buy in to the concept of stewardship – proactive indicator
  - One-to-one meetings are the most important way to reach donors – proactive indicator

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## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 The problem with ‘stewardship’

Until the summer of 2007, fundraisers had been practising donor care, relationship fundraising and major donor fundraising for a long time, and to do all this they’d used a variety of relationship building techniques. There was no one name that all this activity went under; the closest thing would have been ‘relationship fundraising’.

Across the pond in the USA, American fundraisers had a tool that we didn’t have in this country. They had a much more liberal financial and tax regime that allowed a lot more giving to be planned, the same way you would plan your finances. Americans called this ‘planned giving’ and they referred to stewarding donors, or the stewardship of donors (and their money), as part of the planned giving process. After a while, the term ‘stewardship’ began to be applied to British-style relationship fundraising as practised in America.

So far, not a problem – we in the UK didn’t have a generic name for all the kit and caboodle that goes into building relationships with donors while the Americans called it ‘stewardship’. But a problem did develop when the term ‘stewardship’ crossed the Atlantic and British fundraisers became aware of it after hearing US fundraisers talk about stewardship at international conferences.

At its core, US stewardship was the same as the relationship fundraising that many people in this country had been working towards for a long time.

However, as with many new trends and buzzwords, there was an element of the ‘emperor’s new clothes’ and a lot of people began to see ‘stewardship’ as the ‘next big thing’ and began looking for ways to implement something that, in many cases, they were already doing.

Last autumn, I produced a white paper called *Pretenders to the Steward Throne*, which outlined my concerns about the implications of this confusion around what stewardship actually is.

I argued that if stewardship is to be meaningful, then we have to identify a role for it over and above the kinds of donor care (which we normally take to mean ensuring accurate personal information, de-duped data etc) and relationship fundraising that we are familiar with. If not we would end up with a lot of bandwagon jumping as charities wasted money implementing unnecessary ‘stewardship’ programmes.

But I also thought that there was a role beyond relationship fundraising, something more like the planned giving that American financial planners provided. Under this ‘third level stewardship’ (after level 1 – donor care; and level 2 – relationship

fundraising), fundraisers would begin to take personal responsibility for a donor's giving and help him or her plan how they wanted to support their charity (so it has a lot in common with supporter journeys).

I proposed the 'Stewardship Hierarchy' with donor care at the bottom, relationship fundraising on the middle level and 'third level stewardship' on the top. Each successive level incorporates the level below it and you can't move up to the next level until you have mastered the level you are on.

So:

- Third level stewardship incorporates both relationship fundraising and donor care.
- Relationship fundraising incorporates donor care.

This means that donor care is part of relationship fundraising; and both donor care and relationship fundraising are components of third level stewardship. But individually they are only components; they are not the same thing.

Finally, because I was genuinely worried that stewardship would 'wither on the vine' if there were not a clear idea about what it meant in fundraising terms, I called on the Institute of Fundraising to develop a stewardship code of practice that would come up with a generally accepted definition of stewardship.

There is also another way to think about stewardship – each fundraiser's individual responsibility to 'steward' the common resource of charitable giving. This is the type of stewardship that is meant by environmental stewardship and underlies the ethos of conservation. Under this notion of stewardship – which is more a general attitude – we are looking to act in a way that increases (or protects) giving for all charities from all donors over the long-term.

## **2.2 The stewardship survey**

*Pretenders to the Steward Throne* contained my ideas about stewardship. The logical next step was to find out what other fundraisers thought about stewardship. I wanted to discover if we could get to the heart of what fundraisers actually thought stewardship was.

I wanted to know whether fundraisers considered stewardship to be the same as relationship fundraising or whether they thought it was something different. I wanted to find out whether fundraisers agreed with me that we needed a common definition of fundraising stewardship. I also wanted to find out what communications methods fundraisers thought could be used to implement stewardship programmes and how they thought stewardship could be measured.

I have also long believed that the telephone could be used as an integral communications tool for implementing stewardship.

But I absolutely did not want to be a bandwagon jumper, going round telling people that they needed to use the phone as part of their stewardship programme when probably neither they nor I knew exactly what we meant by stewardship.

Before I could confidently and genuinely offer clients and prospective clients the phone as part of stewardship, I want to know – well, I had to know – whether fundraisers were already practising a type of stewardship where the phone could make a big contribution.

If not, then there would be little point in pushing something that really had no role or relevance.

## 3 Methodology

Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) was used to gather responses to the survey. A PDF of the full survey questions is available on request.

Questions were randomised so that each person viewing the survey was presented with possible responses in a random order. We did this to prevent the bias that often results with people giving higher weight to responses that are presented first.

We received 105 responses to the survey. This survey does not give a representative survey of fundraisers' views on stewardship, as this self-selecting sample is not a random cross-section of fundraisers. But that wasn't the point of this survey. I was less interested in a representative view of fundraisers and more in the views of fundraisers who had opinions about stewardship. Self-selection was quite important for this survey.

### 3.1 Questions

There were four main questions to the survey, with four secondary questions. These main questions were (primary questions emboldened):

- **Q1 What do you consider stewardship to be?**
- Q2 If your preferred concept of stewardship is not listed, please enter it
- **Q3 Do you think fundraisers need an accepted common definition of stewardship in a fundraising context?**
- **Q4 Which methods of communicating with donors have some sort of role to play in putting stewardship into practice**
- Q5 If your preferred communication method is not listed, please enter it
- Q6 List up to five types of communication method you would choose to deliver a stewardship programme
- **Q7 What do you think are the key performance indicators (KPI) and key indicators of success (KIS) of a successful stewardship programme**
- Q8 If your preferred KPI/KIS is not listed, please enter it

#### 3.1.1 Q1 What do you consider stewardship to be?

Respondents to the survey were presented with 10 'definitions' of stewardship

- a) Ensuring there is a 'culture of philanthropy' throughout my organisation
- b) Making sure all details on the database are clean, up-to-date, accurate and de-duped
- c) Helping people choose the ways they want to support my charity (donating, volunteering, campaigning etc) and helping them achieve their goals
- d) Taking personal responsibility for a donor's giving to ensure that their gift is used for the purpose it is intended and reporting to them on the effect their giving is having
- e) Ensuring donors are thanked politely and promptly for their gift

- f) Identifying donors who could give a lot more than they currently do, and bringing them on to a higher giving programme
- g) Ensuring all donors everywhere can give more for longer periods of time
- h) Always acting according to the wishes of my donors
- i) Communicating with and asking for money from donors only when they want to be asked
- j) Acting to ensure the sustainability of the pool of public donations.

Note that g) and j) are essentially the same question, just phrased differently.

Respondents were then asked to rate these statements on a scale of 1-5 according to how much they thought each statement was part of the concept of 'fundraising stewardship', where:

- 1 = is not part of the concept of stewardship in a fundraising context in any way
- 2 = is a building block for fundraising stewardship: without this, fundraising stewardship could not be put in place but is not in itself part of stewardship
- 3 = is a non-essential component of fundraising stewardship: fundraising stewardship could exist without this component
- 4 = is an essential part of fundraising stewardship: without this component it could not be considered 'fundraising stewardship'
- 5 = is the whole and self-contained definition of stewardship in a fundraising context.

As I've explained, I wanted to test whether fundraisers equated stewardship with relationship fundraising, or maybe thought it was more about protecting the pool of donations, or if it was about just making sure you got the address right.

So each of the 'definitions' (or statements about stewardship) in Question 1 were 'coded' for other types of fundraising. These were:

a)	Ensuring there is a culture of philanthropy	coded for: theoretical application/3 <sup>rd</sup> level stewardship
b)	Up-to-date details	practical application/donor care
c)	Helping people choose	practical/supporter journeys
d)	Taking Personal responsibility	practical/3 <sup>rd</sup> level
e)	Thanking donors	practical/relationship fundraising
f)	Higher giving programme	practical/major donor fundraising
h)	Acting in accordance with donors' wishes	practical/relationship fundraising
g)	Ensuring donors give more for longer	theoretical/conservation notion of stewardship
i)	Communicating only when asked	practical/relationship fundraising
j)	Sustaining pool of donations	theoretical/conservation notion of stewardship

By asking people how much they thought keeping data up-to-date was a part of stewardship, we were in effect asking how much they thought donor care was a part of stewardship.

By asking how much they thought sustaining the pool of donations was part of stewardship, we were in effect asking how much they thought of stewardship in terms of the wider ‘environmental’ or conservation notion of stewardship.

Of course, fundraisers who believe that stewardship is about third level stewardship will also think that it is important to thank donors promptly and get their address details right. So we would not expect to see huge variations, but we might see some small fluctuations that point the way.

For ease of reference, ‘definitions’ are also listed by their coded reference below:

**Theoretical**

**Third level stewardship**

a) Ensuring there is a culture of philanthropy

**‘Conservation ethic’**

g) Ensuring donors give more for longer

j) Sustaining pool of donations

**Practical**

**Donor care**

b) Up-to-date details

**Supporter journeys**

c) Helping people choose

**Relationship Fundraising**

e) Thanking donors

h) Acting in accordance with donors’ wishes

i) Communicating only when asked

**Major donors**

f) Higher giving programme

**Third level stewardship**

d) Taking Personal responsibility

**3.1.2 Q3 Do you think fundraisers need and accepted definition of stewardship?**

Respondents were asked to give a straight yes or no answer.

**3.1.3 Q4 Which methods of communicating with donors have some sort of role to play in putting stewardship programmes into practice.**

- a) One-to-one meetings with donors
- b) Face-to-face on the street
- c) Direct mail
- d) Telephone
- e) Digital – SMS
- f) Digital – email
- g) Digital – charity website
- h) Digital – social networking sites
- i) Events (e.g. drinks reception to meet programme staff)

Respondents were asked to rate each medium on a scale of 1-6 where:

1 = has no role to play at all as a communications medium in putting stewardship programmes into practice

2 = has a minimal role to play, for instance by being appropriate only for specific circumstances

3 = has a subordinate role, for instance by communicating with a minority segment of the donorbase or being used infrequently

4 = has a major role to play, for instance being a medium regularly used to communicate with a majority of donors

5 = has a crucial role to play, for instance by communicating key messages to important segments of the donorbase

6 = is the only or predominant communication medium needed

**3.1.4 Q7 What do you think are the KPIs and KIS's of a successful stewardship programme**

Respondents were asked to consider the following key indicators of success (KIS) and key performance indicators (KPI) and rate them on a scale of 1-5 where 1 indicates least value as a KPI or KIS and 5 indicates most value as a KPI or KIS.

- a) Reduction in complaints from donors
- b) Donors thanked within a specified time period
- c) Set number of non-ask communications built into programme
- d) Increase in average gift
- e) Increase in unrestricted income compared to restricted income
- f) More donors progressed up the donor pyramid
- g) Fall in attrition rates
- h) Donors become more involved in other ways to support (e.g. volunteering, advocacy)
- i) Non-donors begin to give

- j) Reporting regularly to donors how their gift is used
- k) Donors are more committed to organisation
- l) All staff buy in to the concept of stewardship
- m) A separate, dedicated stewardship department

The survey deliberately did not specify which of the options was a KPI and which was a KIS, which were grouped as follows:

#### **KIS's**

- a) Reduction in complaints
- d) Increase average gift
- e) Increase unrestricted income
- f) Donors up pyramid
- g) Fall in attrition
- h) Donors more involved
- i) Non-donors give
- k) Donors more committed
- l) Staff buy in to stewardship

#### **KPIs**

- b) Donors thanked
- c) Non-ask communications
- j) Reporting to donors
- m) Separate department

### **3.2 Analysis**

Analysis of the data was carried out in two stages.

First we looked at the 'topline' results – looking simply at the responses to the four primary questions – to see what inference could be made. We also tabulated the responses to the primary questions according to their average ratings.

However, it's important to bear in mind that for 'Q1 What is stewardship' and 'Q4 what communications methods have a role to play in delivering stewardship', the responses to these questions do not represent a true linear scale from 1-5, getting better as you go up the scale. For these questions, each column is a discrete response in its own right. So the average ratings tables for Q1 and Q4 are for guidance and interest only.

Only Q7 about KIS's and KPIs is a true Lickert scale from less good (1) to best (5).

The topline results and analysis are presented in section 4.

We then constructed 103 ‘filters’ that allowed us to analyse the survey data according to how people responded. For instance, we could look at the aggregated response data for all people who had responded that one-to-one meetings played a ‘crucial’ role in stewardship, or those people who had responded that ‘ensuring all donors everywhere can give more for longer periods of time’ was not part of stewardship.

The filters allowed us to compare these responses against the ‘topline’ results and look for any variations or patterns.

Because the list of stewardship ‘definitions’, communications methods and KPIs/KIS’s are not mutually exclusive, we would expect a lot of cross-fertilisation and any variations are likely to be quite small.

However, we have not performed any statistical analysis on this data to test for significance. Any researcher who wants to do so is perfectly welcome to have access to our raw data.

## 4 Topline results

### 4.1 Q1 What do you consider stewardship to be?

**Table 1**

	Not part of stewardship %	Building block %	Component %	Essential %	Self-contained definition %
a) Ensuring there is a 'culture of philanthropy' throughout my organization ( <i>theoretical/3<sup>rd</sup> level stewardship</i> )	16.2	<b>32.4</b>	22.9	21.9	3.8
b) Making sure all details on the database are clean, up-to-date, accurate and de-duped ( <i>practical/donor care</i> )	3.8	30.8	17.3	<b>43.3</b>	4.8
c) Helping people choose the ways they want to support my charity (donating, volunteering, campaigning etc) and helping them achieve their goals ( <i>practical/supporter journeys</i> )	4.8	9.5	26.7	<b>47.6</b>	10.5
d) Taking personal responsibility for a donor's giving to ensure that their gift is used for the purpose it is intended and reporting to them on the effect their giving is having ( <i>practical/3<sup>rd</sup> level stewardship</i> )	1.9	9.5	14.3	<b>46.6</b>	23.8
e) Ensuring donors are thanked politely and promptly for their gift ( <i>practical/relationship fundraising</i> )	2.9	14.3	3.8	<b>64.8</b>	14.3
f) Identifying donors who could give a lot more than they currently do, and bringing them on to a higher giving programme ( <i>practical/major donor fundraising</i> )	16.3	20.2	28.8	<b>29.8</b>	4.8
g) Ensuring all donors everywhere can give more for longer periods of time ( <i>theoretical/conservation ethic</i> )	<b>30.8</b>	18.3	23.1	18.3	5.8

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h) Always acting according to the wishes of my donors <i>(practical/relationship fundraising)</i>	11.4	8.6	27.6	<b>37.1</b>	13.3
i) Communicating with and asking for money from donors only when they want to be asked <i>(practical/relationship fundraising)</i>	16.3	19.2	<b>32.7</b>	25.0	4.8
j) Acting to ensure the sustainability of the pool of public donations <i>(theoretical/conservation ethic)</i>	23.8	21.0	17.1	<b>27.6</b>	6.7

'Don't knows' are excluded so rows will not necessarily add up to 100 per cent. Don't knows ranged from 0 per cent to 3.8 per cent.

Each column represents a discrete rating of each concept of stewardship and is not strictly speaking a scale from 1 to 5. However, the analysis software did allow us to make an average score as if this were based on a scale of 1-5 (1= not part of stewardship; 5=essential). The higher the ranking, the more essential to stewardship, on average, respondents considered it.

**Table 2**

1	d) Taking personal responsibility for a donor's giving to ensure that their gift is used for the purpose it is intended and reporting to them on the effect their giving is having <i>(practical/3<sup>rd</sup> level stewardship)</i>	3.84
2	e) Ensuring donors are thanked politely and promptly for their gift <i>(practical/relationship fundraising)</i>	3.73
3	c) Helping people choose the ways they want to support my charity (donating, volunteering, campaigning etc) and helping them achieve their goals <i>(practical/supporter journeys)</i>	3.50
4	h) Always acting according to the wishes of my donors <i>(practical/relationship fundraising)</i>	3.33
5	b) Making sure all details on the database are clean, up-to-date, accurate and de-duped <i>(practical/donor care)</i>	3.14
6	f) Identifying donors who could give a lot more than they currently do, and bringing them on to a higher giving programme <i>(practical/major donor fundraising)</i>	2.87
7	i) Communicating with and asking for money from donors only when they	2.82

	want to be asked fundraising ( <i>practical/relationship fundraising</i> )	
8	j) Acting to ensure the sustainability of the pool of public donations ( <i>theoretical/conservation ethic</i> )	2.71
9	a) Ensuring there is a 'culture of philanthropy' throughout my organization ( <i>theoretical/3<sup>rd</sup> level stewardship</i> )	2.64
10	g) Ensuring all donors everywhere can give more for longer periods of time ( <i>theoretical/conservation ethic</i> )	2.48

If their preferred concepts of stewardship were not listed, donors were asked to provide them in Q2. A full list of alternative concepts of stewardship can be found at Appendix 1.

### **Analysis of Q1**

Practical definitions/concepts score much more highly than theoretical concepts and the two definitions coded for the conservation ethic of stewardship came at the bottom of table 2 with two of the three lowest average scores.

Fundraisers think of stewardship as something they need to do for the benefit of their own donors and their own charity/cause, rather than a wider responsibility to preserve and conserve the philanthropic pool.

The different responses to concepts 'g) Ensuring more donors everywhere can give' and 'j) Acting to ensure the sustainability of public donations' is a bit puzzling as these two statements mean essentially the same thing. However, what the results do show is that substantial minorities do not regard this 'conservation ethic' idea to be any part of stewardship whatsoever.

But having said that, 'd) Taking personal responsibility' for a donor's giving – a third-level stewardship definition – not only scores highest in the average ratings (table 2) it also scores by far and away the most highly as a 'self-contained' definition of stewardship, with nearly a quarter of respondents (23.8 per cent) citing it as such.

At third place on the average list is 'c) Helping people choose the ways they support'. This was a code for supporter journeys and as I've said this is very, very closely related to third-level stewardship (10.5 per cent also think this is a self-contained definition of stewardship).

That these two concepts/definitions of stewardship are placed so highly tells me that there is a lot of support for the concept of stewardship as an attitude towards fundraising, rather than a set of processes. Stewardship is about how and why you

act the way you do, rather than what you do, such as keep the database clean and make a set number of non-ask communications.

I am particularly pleased by these sets of results.

After 'd) Taking personal responsibility', the next two-highest scores for a self-contained definition are 'e) Ensuring donors are thanked' (14 per cent) and 'h) Always acting in accordance with my donors wishes' (13.3 per cent).

For me, these two results encapsulate the problem about what we mean by stewardship. If all you need to do to 'steward' donors is do everything they ask or tell you to do, then the fundraiser is not stewarding the relationship, the donor is. If this is a self-contained definition of stewardship – in other words, as long as you do everything a donor requests of you, then you are practising stewardship – then whatever it is you are doing, it is not stewardship by any accepted definition. I cannot think of any other type of stewardship where the steward has zero autonomy or responsibility.

Similarly for 'h) Ensuring donors are thanked'. Making sure you thank donors just cannot be a self-contained definition of stewardship because it means all you need to do is thank donors and you're practising stewardship – you don't need to do anything else at all.

And yet 27.6 per cent of respondents to this survey think that as long as you thank donors or (not and, but or) as long as you do what they want, then by definition you are practising stewardship.

Of course, this is not to say that these two concepts are not vital parts of the stewardship process, which of course, they are. Thanking donors should be ubiquitous best practice in fundraising and it should be no surprise at all that 64.8 per cent of people think this is essential for stewardship.

There were a couple of results I found interesting. Both the major donor concept 'f) Identifying donors for a higher giving programme'), and another code for relationship fundraising ('i) communicating with and asking for money only when donors want to be asked') split opinion.

At first you might think it would be strange that two concepts of stewardship that leaned heavily towards income generation as opposed to general relationship building should score relatively lowly. Why do you steward donors if not to get them to give more?

However, I can see why people that were practising third level stewardship and who really understood stewardship might not regard these two concepts as important.

Stewardship is really about understanding your donor and their wants and needs. A good steward will know that stewardship means ensuring people give at levels they can afford and feel comfortable with so they might not need to be brought on to a higher giving level.

And to a very good fundraising steward, statement i) about asking only when your donors want to be asked, is a non-issue because you would *know* when your donor wanted to be asked without them having to tell you. That's part of taking personal responsibility – taking responsibility for knowing when and how to ask.

Finally, for me 'b) Accurate and up to date details' ought to be a building block of stewardship. But the results had 43.4 per cent, rating this as an essential part of stewardship, without which it could not be called stewardship. I guess that there is an ambiguity in the question and that an accurate database can be seen as both a building block and essential. But 30.8 per cent of respondents do agree with me that an accurate database is a building block to stewardship and not an essential part of it.

The reason for this I think is that data records have often been notoriously poor and inaccurate in the voluntary sector and yet we have still attempted to practise stewardship (or relationship fundraising). Good data cannot therefore be essential to stewardship because we've been doing it with bad data. Of course, the better your data, the better the stewardship will be.

In summary, topline analysis of Q1 What is Stewardship? shows:

- Support for stewardship as an attitude among fundraisers rather than a set of processes
- Little support for the idea of a 'conservation ethic' of stewardship
- Generally, wide variation in fundraisers' understanding of what stewardship means

#### **4.2 Q3 Do you think fundraisers need an accepted common definition of stewardship in a fundraising context?**

**Table 3**

Yes	60.6%
No	39.4%

#### **Analysis of Q3**

The majority of fundraisers who responded to the survey think there should be a common definition of stewardship in a fundraising context. This is one of the keynote findings of this survey. But see section 5 for further analysis.

**4.3 Q4 Which methods of communicating with donors have some sort of role to play in putting stewardship into practice**

**Table 4**

	No role %	Minimal role %	Subordinate role %	Major role %	Crucial role %	Only or predominant %
a) One-to-one meetings	1.0	5.9	14.7	20.6	<b>49.0</b>	5.9
b) Face-to-face	24.8	<b>25.7</b>	22.8	15.8	8.9	0.0
c) Direct mail	2.0	8.9	22.8	<b>38.6</b>	24.8	1.0*
d) Telephone	0.0	3.9	13.7	<b>52.0</b>	28.4	0.0
e) Digital – SMS	9.0	31.0	<b>32.0</b>	19.0	6.0	0.0
f) Digital – email	0.0	4.9	24.5	<b>42.1</b>	25.5	0.0
g) Digital – charity website	0.0	15.7	21.6	<b>37.3</b>	23.5	0.0
h) Digital – social networking sites	3.9	30.4	<b>43.1</b>	13.7	4.9	0.0
i) Events	0.0	5.9	23.5	<b>36.3</b>	31.4	1.0

\*This result does not fit the pattern at all and I think this response may have been clicked in error.

'Don't knows' are excluded so rows will not necessarily add up to 100 per cent. Don't knows ranged from 0 per cent to 3.9 per cent.

**Table 5**

1	a) One-to-one meetings	4.32
2	d) Telephone	4.07
3	j) Events	3.98
4	f) Digital – email	3.91
5	c) Direct mail	3.80
6	g) Digital – charity website	3.70
7	h) Digital – social networking site	2.85
8	e) Digital – SMS	2.81
9	b) Face-to-face	2.58

If their preferred communications media were not listed, donors were asked to provide them in Q5. A full list of alternative communications media can be found at Appendix 2. Respondents were also, in Q6, asked to list five types of communications medium they would choose for a stewardship campaign. Because of space constraints in this survey report, we have not utilised or analysed responses to Q6.

#### **Analysis of Q4**

It is not in the least surprising that one-to-one meetings came out at the top of the average list and scored highest as a ‘crucial role’ (almost twice the next highest score). Neither is it surprising that events (not challenge events, but the likes of drinks receptions) also came near the top. Both allow fundraisers to talk to donors in person, and as the fundraising adage goes, people give to people.

Looking at Table 5, what is apparent is that, as you move down the table from 1 through 9, the communications methods become less and less personal. The top three, meetings, phone and events all allow you to talk to a donor.

Emails can be easily personalised to the individual whereas, despite technological advances in digital printing, few charities have taken personalising further than the salutation.

Charity websites and social networking sites are passive communications methods that put the donor in total control. And face-to-face, although allowing personal

contact, can only be used at the point of recruitment so is less suited to stewarding the subsequent relationship.

(However, F2F split opinion: although 24.8 per cent think it has no role, 25.7 per cent think it has a minimal role and 22.8 per cent a subordinate role. Perhaps that's because, as a personal recruitment method, F2F is the opening touchpoint with a donor. That's where the relationship starts, so that's where stewardship has to start as well.)

The one real anomaly is SMS, which scores the second lowest score, with almost three-quarters of respondents assigning it a minimal or subordinate role in stewardship. I think that this perhaps reflects not just the high cost of texting but also a lack of understanding how to make the most out of SMS messaging in fundraising (see also s5.6.3).

Telephone scored very highly: second highest average ranking, 28.4 per cent giving it a crucial role and a massive 52.0 per cent a major role in delivering stewardship programmes.

As I work for a telephone fundraising agency, I am naturally delighted with these findings. However, the statistics don't tell the whole story – of course. The bare stats don't tell us whether fundraisers think the role of the phone is as a mass communications method (as I firmly believe it can be for stewardship programmes) or whether it is for personal calls to individual major donors (although the same question applies to emails – but there is more on this in section 5).

In summary, topline analysis of 'Q4 – Which communications methods have some sort of role to play in putting stewardship into practice?' shows:

- Methods that allow personal contact with donors score more highly...
- ...which suggests that fundraisers see stewardship as an interactive relationship with donors, rather than a set of mechanical processes.
- F2F has virtually no role to play in stewardship (but is the start of the stewarding relationships)

**4.4 Q7 What do you think are the key performance indicators (KPI) and key indicators of success (KIS) of a successful stewardship programme**

**Table 6**

	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
a) Reduction in complaints from donors (KIS)	6.1	14.3	25.5	25.5	<b>27.6</b>
b) Donors thanked within a specified time period (KPI)	3.1	7.1	11.2	30.6	<b>45.9</b>
c) Set number of non-ask communications built into programme (KPI)	7.1	24.2	<b>26.3</b>	23.2	15.2
d) Increase in average gift (KIS)	3.1	5.1	15.3	<b>45.9</b>	30.6
e) Increase in unrestricted income compared to restricted income (KIS)	12.2	15.3	<b>25.5</b>	<b>25.5</b>	18.4
f) More donors progressed up the donor pyramid (KIS)	4.0	3.0	14.1	<b>43.4</b>	35.4
g) Fall in attrition rates (KIS)	1.0	4.0	10.1	35.4	<b>45.5</b>
h) Donors become more involved in other ways to support (e.g. volunteering, advocacy) (KIS)	0.0	7.1	31.2	<b>41.4</b>	30.3
i) Non-donors begin to give (KIS)	9.2	14.3	18.4	<b>34.7</b>	21.4
j) Reporting regularly to donors how their gift is used (KPI)	0.0	14.3	18.4	<b>34.7</b>	21.4
k) Donors are more committed to organisation (KIS)	0.0	1.0	3.0	25.3	<b>68.7</b>
l) All staff buy in to the concept of stewardship (KIS)	1.0	5.1	19.2	34.3	<b>40.4</b>
m) A separate, dedicated stewardship department	<b>33.0</b>	26.8	16.5	13.4	7.2

'Don't knows' are excluded so rows will not necessarily add up to 100 per cent. Don't knows ranged from 0 per cent to 4.0 per cent.

This is a true 1-5 rating scale. Average scores are as follows:

**Table 7**

1	k) Donors are more committed to organisation (KIS)	4.65
2	j) Reporting regularly to donors how their gift is used (KPI)	4.31
3	g) Fall in attrition rates (KIS)	4.25
4	b) Donors thanked within a specified time period (KPI)	4.11
5	l) All staff buy into the concept of stewardship (KIS)	4.08
6	f) More donors progressed up the donor pyramid (KIS)	4.03
7	d) Increase in average gift (KIS)	3.96
8	h) Donors become more involved in other ways to support (e.g. volunteering, advocacy) (KIS)	3.95
9	a) Reduction in complaints from donors (KIS)	3.55
10	i) Non-donors begin to give (KIS)	3.46
11	e) Increase in unrestricted income compared to restricted income (KIS)	3.23
12	c) Set number of non-ask communications built into programme (KPI)	3.16
13	m) A separate, dedicated stewardship department (KPI)	2.33

If their preferred KPIs or KIS's were not listed, donors were asked to provide them in Q8. A full list of alternative KPIs and KIS's can be found at Appendix 3.

### **Analysis of Q7**

Way out in front as a key indicator of success of a successful stewardship programme is 'k) Donors are more committed', which scores a whopping average rating of 4.65 out of five, with 68.7 per cent giving it a score of 5.

However, this leads to a puzzling set of results, as some of the indicators of donors being more committed are way down the list, including a lot of the income generation KIS's.

If donors are more committed, you would expect attrition rates to fall, and this KIS does score very highly.

But if they were more committed, wouldn't you also expect them to give more, support in different ways, begin to give if they weren't donors to start with, and be more comfortable about giving unrestricted income rather than wanting all the money spent on the cause?

However, as I discussed earlier, good stewardship is not just about getting donors to give more money, it's about understanding how much they can give and that might mean keeping them at the same level for longer.

Instead of having 'd) Increase in average gift' as a KIS, we should have had 'Increase in lifetime value, which was suggested by one of the respondents in Q8. After all, I'd rather have a donor who gave £10 a month for five years rather than a donor who increased their gift by £1 each year but quit after three years.

So just because increased commitment is considered the best indicator of success, doesn't mean that all the more specific KIS's (which illustrate greater commitment) would also be so highly scored. And actually, increased commitment might lead to more rather than few complaints and donors are more actively engaged, and complaining is a great touchpoint opportunity for charities.

Perhaps the most disappointing finding in the whole of this survey is that 'e) Increase in unrestricted income' scored relatively poorly and split respondents' opinion so widely. Stewardship is a two-way, interactive process in which the fundraiser learns about the donor and the donor learns more about the charity and has more trust in the charity. They would, hopefully, understand that charities have admin and fundraising costs and would be prepared to contribute to them. I think though that the wide variation in what fundraisers think of the value of the 'unrestricted income' KPI suggests that a lot of fundraisers see stewardship as a reactive process where you do what the donor wants rather than genuinely taking responsibility and encouraging the donor to give where the gift will have most use (see s5.2.1).

It could also be seen as a bit curious that 'l) All staff buy into the concept of stewardship' should score so highly, and yet in question 1, the concept of stewardship as 'Ensuring there is a culture of philanthropy throughout my organisation' recorded the second lowest average score. However, that's partly because the average ratings for Qs 1 and 4 were not true linear scales – each column in those questions is a discrete response in its own right.

So it's plausible that 32.4 per cent consider a 'culture of philanthropy' to be a building block of stewardship and 22.9 per cent think it's a non-essential component and yet the KIS of all staff buying into stewardship is the second-rated KIS (see s5.2.7).

Moving on to consider the KPIs, two of these score very highly: 'j) Reporting to donors', and 'b) Donors thanked'. As I've already discussed, these are ubiquitous examples of best practice fundraising.

However, the two other KPIs on the survey fare less well. 'c) Set number of non-ask communications' is a very prescriptive KPI that split opinion with roughly equal

numbers (around 25 per cent) scoring it as 2, 3, and 4 on the Lickert scale (and got the highest percentage of ‘don’t knows’ as well). SECTION 6.

However, there was no ambiguity around ‘m) A separate, dedicated stewardship department’ with almost 60 per cent giving it a score of 1 or 2 on the Lickert scale.

In summary, topline analysis of ‘Q7 What do you think are the key performance indicators (KPI) and key indicators of success (KIS) of a successful stewardship programme’ shows:

- Donors are more committed is the most rated KIS
- Other indicators of commitment aren’t correspondingly highly rated
- Very little support for a stewardship department.

## 5 Detailed analysis

From this point onwards, things get a bit complicated, as there are a hell of a lot of stats and numbers to analyse and interpret – I reckon we had about 35,000 bits of data. But they also get a lot more interesting.

Rather than go through all the workings and analysis and then come to my conclusions – because it would all just get too complicated and confusing, and you'll have probably stopped reading before the end – I'm going to jump straight to my conclusions and then use some of the statistics to show my thinking behind it.

### 5.1 The Stewardship Spectrum

There is no single thing as 'fundraising stewardship'. Instead there is a 'Stewardship Spectrum', ranging from 'passive' stewardship at one end to 'proactive' stewardship at the other, with 'active stewardship' in the middle. As you move along the spectrum, the level of engagement with donors tends to increase and fundraisers become more interactive in their stewardship.

I don't think anyone will be surprised at this finding. We've always suspected it and this survey puts some flesh on the bones of our suspicions.

Generally speaking, at the passive end, we have mass communication techniques aimed at stewarding lots of donors (as many as possible in fact) and handing a lot of control to the donor to steward their own giving.

At the proactive end, where we are talking much more about one-to-one contact, we're into the area of major donor fundraising.

Active stewardship is the middle bit where the supporter journey ideas about stewardship sit with a mix of passive and active stewardship ideas and techniques.

However, the Stewardship Spectrum is not just about overlaying a new buzzword on top of the fundraising techniques associated with different levels of the donor pyramid or the Stewardship Hierarchy: there is not a simple one-to-one match between proactive stewardship and major donor fundraising or passive stewardship and direct mail committed giving fundraising. It is much more complex than that.

### 5.2 Correlated passive/active/proactive indicators

It soon became apparent that certain of our definitions/concepts of stewardship, certain communications media and certain KPIs and KIS's were more associated with certain parts of the spectrum. After a while, it became relatively easy to spot these 'passive indicators' or 'active indicators' and so predict what other indicators might be associated with them.

### **5.2.1 Unrestricted income KIS – passive indicator**

This was one of the best passive indicators. Respondents who rated an increase in unrestricted income as having most value tended also to record other passive indicators. I'd thought this would be the other way round – the more you build up trust with someone, the more likely they would be to contribute to core funding. However, respondents who gave active indicators didn't tend to value unrestricted income so I suspect the more engaged you become with a donor, the more likely you are to engage them in specific project work. Mass fundraising by DM and telephone however is very often concerned with unrestricted income so better stewardship at this level should result in more of this. The reverse is true of course – less value on unrestricted income suggests proactive stewardship.

### **5.2.2 Attrition KIS – passive indicator**

Attrition is a statistic – it's a function of large donorbases – so it's relevant to mass communications techniques and this applies to passive stewardship. Major donors are not statistics, they are individuals, so they do not 'attrit'. They might stop giving to you, but that is seen as a failure of the relationship rather than 'attrition' – a term that has no meaning in active stewardship. A low value for attrition is therefore a proactive indicator.

### **5.2.3 Up-to-date details KIS – passive indicator**

If this was given an 'essential' role in fundraising, then this was generally a passive indicator. This is about process and so it is essential for donor care. But, as I've said above (s3.1.1), great data is not essential for stewardship because we have been doing stewardship already with pretty poor data. The more you move along the spectrum towards the active end, the more likely people are to think of accurate data as a building block of stewardship, rather than an 'essential' part of stewardship.

As a passive indicator, it was often correlated with the idea that thanking donors was 'essential'. So, 84.9 per cent of respondents who thought it essential to stewardship to keep details up to date also thought it was essential to thank donors promptly and politely, compared to the average of 64.8. However, only 46.9 per cent of people who considered up-to-date details to be a building block of stewardship (a proactive indicator) thought that thanking donors was an essential part of stewardship. (See s5.4.1 for an explanation of this.)

### **5.2.4 Helping to choose ways to support concept/definition – active indicator**

Finding indicators that pointed to active stewardship was much harder than passive or proactive indicators because active stewardship contains a mixture of both ends of the spectrum. To identify active stewardship usually required looking for a combination of different indicators. The clearest standalone indicator I found was that if people gave an essential role to helping people choose the way they supported a charity then they were often talking about active, supporter journey-type stewardship,

which perhaps isn't all that surprising as we did choose this concept as the code for supporter journeys.

When it was correlated with an essential role for 'taking personal responsibility' this was an even stronger indicator of supporter journey-type stewardship.

For example, 52 per cent of respondents who considered helping people choose how they wanted to support their charity to be an essential part of stewardship also gave an essential role to 'taking personal responsibility for ensuring a donation is used according to the donor's wishes' compared to an average of 46.6 per cent.

They also gave the 'donors support in other ways' KIS (clearly an outcome of a successful supporter journey programme) an average score out of five of 4.19, compared to the average of 3.96.

### **5.2.5 Donors more committed KIS – passive/active indicator**

There was never any dissent that donors being more committed was the most important KIS, which meant it was quite tricky spotting any correlations. However the highest numbers of people giving donor commitment a score of 5 in Q7 was also correlated with passive and mid-Spectrum indicators. I think this is because 'commitment' is part of the language of low-level 'committed giving' rather than major donor work and, if you are engaged with a prospect at a major donor level, they've got to be pretty committed already.

### **5.2.6 Telephone a 'major' communications medium – active indicator**

While active stewards put a similar emphasise on direct mail as passive stewards, they are much more likely to give enhanced roles to the phone as a mass communications medium. See s5.4.2 for further explanation and examples.

### **5.2.7 Culture of philanthropy concept/definition – proactive indicator**

#### **One-to-one meetings, events – proactive indicator**

#### **Staff buy-in KIS – proactive indicator**

These are three very strong indicators of active stewardship and are often correlated. If you are going to personally steward donors, then the best way to do that is through face-to-face, one-to-one meetings. Quite often, you'll be involving other staff members so they'll have to understand why and how they can facilitate fundraising – a 'culture of philanthropy'. Of course, a KIS of engendering a culture of philanthropy is exactly that all staff (not just fundraisers) buy-in to stewardship.

Respondents who assigned an 'essential' role to a developing a culture of philanthropy throughout an organisation raised the average score for the 'all staff buy in to stewardship' KIS to 4.59 from 4.08, with the proportion who scored it 5 on the Lickert scale rising from 40.4 per cent to 68.9 per cent.

### 5.2.8 A common definition of stewardship

The average split for this question (see table 3) was 60.6 per cent in favour of having a common definition and 40.4 per cent against. As a general trend, favouring a common definition was an indicator of active/proactive stewardship and not favouring a common definition was an indicator of passive stewardship.

Generally, the more responses diverged from this norm, the greater the value of an indicator. A greater difference (such as 65:35) suggests more focus on proactive stewardship); a difference the other way (such as 53:47) tends towards passive stewardship.

For example:

**Table 8**

Up-to-date details	Building block of stewardship	68.0:31.0
Moving donors on to a higher giving programme	Not part of stewardship	43.8:56.3
Helping donors choose how they support	Essential part of stewardship	62.0:38.0
Direct mail	Crucial role in stewardship	48.0:52.0
Telephone	Major role in stewardship	73.1:26.9

This is how I reason this. As I explained in section 2 above (and in my white paper in 2007) fundraisers have been practising ‘stewardship’ for quite some time – in the form of major donor fundraising, relationship fundraising and latterly supporter journeys, although they didn’t call it stewardship.

What arrived in the UK in 2007 calling itself ‘stewardship’ is, I believe, passive customer care. Major donor fundraisers and relationship builders (proactive stewards) now feel under threat slightly as they see what they are doing perhaps being eroded by this new application of the term ‘stewardship’. So they want the term defined and a common definition adopted so that everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet.

Passive (customer service) stewards, however, ‘own’ the new use of the term ‘stewardship’ so they see no need to have it defined for them.

### 5.3 Non-correlated indicators

Other concepts, media and KIS’s/KPIs sometimes correlated with passive or proactive indicators and sometimes did not. Despite it’s fairly reliable use as an active indicator, the telephone at other times correlated with passive activity, and sometimes with proactive activity, depending on how the respondent envisaged

using the phone. These all had to be viewed and interpreted on a case-by-case basis. Whereas high values placed on attrition were very often a very reliable guide that you were dealing with passive stewardship, you couldn't *always* look at a high rating for giving the phone a major role and realise you were looking at a particular part of the Stewardship Spectrum.

#### **5.4 Pan-spectrum indicators**

Other concepts/definitions, media and KIS's/KPIs were not so easily associated with any particular place on the spectrum. This was because they were open to different interpretations depending on your ideas about stewardship.

The main pan-Spectrum indicators were:

##### **5.4.1 Thanking donors concept/definition; donors thanked KPI**

Active and passive stewardship both value thanking donors, but for different reasons. Thanking donors in passive stewardship is almost a matter of relationship fundraising ideology. It's been stamped into our heads so much that we should thank our donors that it's as if it's a knee-jerk reaction to respond that thanking donors is essential for stewardship. When people recording thanking donors as being 'essential' for stewardship in Q1, it was then often correlated with other passive indicators such as attrition rates, unrestricted income and getting details up to date.

However, if they thought thanking donors in Q1 was either a building block to or a component of stewardship, then it was more often correlated with active indicators. I gave an example of this in s5.2.3 above.

I interpret this to be that people who are more actively involved in building more personal relationships with donors do not have to be 'told' to say thanks to their donors. For them, it's just something they do as a usual part of a relationship with another person rather than a bit of fundraising doctrine.

##### **5.4.2 Taking personal responsibility concept/definition**

Taking personal responsibility could, really, mean anything you want it to mean and it was quite hard to spot any trends or correlations with this concept – i.e. it was not confined to any part of the spectrum. I think this is because, whatever it is that you do, you still see it as your personal responsibility to make sure the donation is used properly and you tell the donor who it has been used, whether this is in a DM letter compiled with very accurate data or over a glass of port in an exclusive bar with a very rich donor.

However, when this concept was correlated with the 'helping people choose', this was often an indicator of active stewardship (s5.2.4).

Respondents who put that taking personal responsibility was essential did not appear to vary significantly from the average responses. This is why I think that, perhaps, personal responsibility is seen as a 'default' option for stewardship.

#### **5.4.3 Reporting to donors KPI**

Active, proactive and passive stewards think you need to report to donors but, like thanking donors, I think this is for different reasons. For passive and perhaps active stewards, it is about relationship fundraising theory. But for proactive stewardship, it is about maintaining a personal relationship.

#### **5.4.4 Stewardship department KPI**

I thought the need for a stewardship department would be a key characteristic of passive stewardship. I thought that people would be thinking along the lines of a customer service department such as the NSPCC runs, which would ensure passive stewardship across the whole donorbase.

As can be seen from table 7 there was very little support for the stewardship department KPI (which I admit is not quite the same question as 'do you think your charity needs a stewardship department?' – perhaps I should have asked that one). So it was difficult spotting trends. I think there was a definite tendency for some support at the passive end, which trailed off in the middle. That supports my idea of a stewardship-department-as-customer-service because once you get to active stewardship with higher levels of 'personal responsibility' combined with 'helping people choose', then fundraisers think they can make sure they are doing everything needed without someone looking over their shoulder.

However, support for a stewardship department returns as we get to the proactive end of the spectrum. A lot of people who thought that events and meetings were crucial (and so also supported a culture of philanthropy and staff buy-in) also wanted a stewardship department. I think this may be the sort of department that tries to engender a culture of philanthropy rather than a customer service department.

#### **5.4.5 Conservation ethic concepts/definitions**

There were variations, but it was very hard to pin them down to any particular place on the spectrum or any type of stewardship activity. I think the conservation ethic is something that fundraisers might or might not hold, but doesn't affect what they put into practice.

## 5.5 Types of Stewardship along the Stewardship Spectrum

### 5.5.1 Passive stewardship

Passive stewardship is characterised by the idea that stewardship applies to as many donors as possible, if not all of them (or at least all those that want to be stewarded). Passive stewardship therefore needs mass-communications techniques such as direct mail, SMS and email. Fifty-two per cent of respondents who think that maintaining accurate data is an essential part of stewardship also assign a 'major' role to direct mail, compared to the average of 38.6 per cent.

Passive stewardship is more focused on mass fundraising. It's about how you steward all of your donors. So this makes one-to-one meetings with donors impractical. Passive stewards were much more likely to give one-to-one meetings a subordinate role, rather than the crucial role that proactive stewards give it.

Because they are process-oriented, passive stewards put a lot of emphasis on the donor care aspect of the Stewardship Hierarchy, so getting data accurate is vitally important and they rated this as an 'essential' part of fundraising, where for proactive stewards, getting the data right is a component or building block – it's something you must do before you can start stewarding.

Because there are too many donors for fundraisers to contact individually, even through mass communications media, passive stewards are also proponents of putting the donor in control as much as is possible. For instance they put emphasis on always acting according to the donors wishes and communicating with donors only when asked.

Out of the group that put that thanking donors was a 'self-contained definition' of stewardship (admittedly a small sample of 15 people, so the variation might be more noticeable), 60 per cent thought that 'always acting according to donors wishes' was also a self-contained definition of stewardship, compared to an average (see table 1) of 13.3 per cent.

Respondents who thought that acting according to donors' wishes was essential to stewardship were split 52.6:47.47 on the need for a definition of stewardship, which tends to the passive side (respondents who gave passive responses were much less likely to see the need for a common definition of stewardship). And 82.1 per cent thought thanking was also essential (compared to an average of 64.8 per cent) – a passive indicator.

Personal responsibility for passive stewards means making sure everything works smoothly, that processes are followed, details are accurate, donors are thanked on time, and that you do what they want you to do, when they want you to do it and that

you don't upset them. If you get it right, they'll give you a higher average gift, more unrestricted income, attrit less, and complain less.

It's debatable whether this is actually 'stewardship' according to any accepted definition of stewardship. It is really a traditional customer service or customer care ethos.

### **5.5.2 Active stewardship**

As you move along the Stewardship Spectrum, you begin to move away from the most passive customer care type of fundraising stewardship and into the more active areas of stewardship. Supporter journeys sit here, but not all active stewardship is about supporter journeys – there is also upgrading donors, recruiting them for events, thank you calls and a lot more.

Active stewardship has an emphasis on events at around or slightly below the average. But it gives more major roles to direct mail, email, and, especially, the telephone. The phone really comes into its own as a mass communications medium here.

Respondents who thought that moving donors onto a higher giving programme was a 'component' of stewardship – which I've interpreted as both an active and proactive indicator – were also much more likely to give the phone a major role. In fact 82.1 per cent of this cohort assigned a major role to the telephone, compared to an average of 52.0 per cent. They were also just as likely as passive fundraisers to favour DM though, with 53.6 per cent giving it a major role: higher than the average of 38.6 but about the same as the passive example given in s5.5.1. It is greater emphasis on the phone that is a key indicator of active stewardship. I believe this is because the phone offers more personal contact than direct mail and allows more contacts than events and one-to-one meetings, and is less time consuming.

Active stewardship is also more correlated with non-donors beginning to give and donors supporting in other ways. Passive stewardship doesn't show this because it lets the donor decide and doesn't offer alternative options to support, while proactive stewardship is only concerned with donors – people who are already giving and ensuring they continue to give money and not an alternative.

However, because active stewardship shares many things with passive stewardship, it's pretty tricky disentangling passive indicators such as attrition rates and unrestricted income from the relevance they also have to active stewardship.

Social networking sites did not come out of this survey particularly well (in fact digital is a very confused area – see s5.6.3). However, active stewards sometimes assigned a greater role for social networking sites because this lets the donor take some control over their own philanthropic destiny and can be a good way of moving

them through and around an organisation (perhaps they substitute for events and meetings because active stewards don't have the time and resources to do those things).

So, of the group that assigned events only a subordinate role in stewardship (a minimal role for events was the passive indicator), 66.7 per cent also assigned a subordinate role for social networking sites. This was half as much again as the average of 43.1 per cent and the highest rating that social networking sites got in the entire survey.

### **5.5.3 Proactive stewardship**

Active stewardship emerges naturally out of passive stewardship, employing similar techniques (phone, direct mail) in a more integrated, interactive way and adding a few more (events and meetings, if possible, social networking sites). However, as you move along the spectrum past active and into proactive stewardship, you enter a different way of operating.

Proactive stewardship is not the same type of stewardship as passive and active stewardship, but done more 'actively' – it's a different animal all together.

For a start, it's directed at far fewer donors, which is why meetings and events are just so much more important to proactive stewards – it's their bread and butter way of building and maintaining relationships with donors.

But they also give crucial and major roles (communicating key messages to key donors) to the phone (especially), direct mail, email and charity websites (though not social networking sites because, I guess, this gives too much 'control' to the donor).

Of respondents giving a crucial role to events, 30 per cent give a similar role to email, compared to an average of 25.5 per cent.

Of respondents who give events a major role, 61.9 per cent give a major role to the phone (compared to an average of 38.6 per cent); 38.1 per cent to SMS (19.0 per cent); 57.1 per cent to email (43.1 per cent) and 52.4 per cent to charity websites (37.3 per cent). Even poor old social networking sites are up as well.

I don't think this is mass communication phone and email however. In active stewardship, phone and email is just part of having a personal relationship with someone and is not a formalised communications medium. However, I reckon the high value for direct mail is probably because active fundraisers are thinking in terms of high value donor mailings, or sending reports and updates of projects to their donors.

The difference between active and proactive then is that, while there may be major roles for these direct communications methods, it is the very high roles for meetings and events (66.7 per cent of people giving a major role to meetings gave a similar role to events, compared to an average of 36.6 per cent) that set proactive stewardship apart from active.

Although you might think there would be a high correlation with the ‘personal responsibility’ concept of stewardship, this doesn’t seem to be the case. Like thanking donors, I think active stewards just accept this as part and parcel of their roles.

And there is very rarely a strong correlation between proactive indicators, such as reliance on events and meetings, with the ‘helping people choose’ concept of stewardship. For instance, respondents assigning a major role for events give an ‘average’ score for ‘helping people choose’ of 3.38 compared to the overall average of 3.50, because fewer of them consider it essential to stewardship and more think of it as a component or building block (but remember this is not a true Lickert scale so the ‘average’ is for guidance only).

I think this is because proactive stewards presuppose that the people they interact with already are and will remain donors only. The donors they deal with have already chosen how to support so proactive stewards see their job as not to help donors choose *how* to support their charity, but to help them give money to the charity.

#### **5.5.4 Third level stewardship**

This survey doesn’t lend much support to the idea that I proposed in my 2007 white paper – *Pretenders to the Stewards Throne* – of ‘third level stewardship’. In third level stewardship, the fundraiser begins to take real personal responsibility – meaning that they have some degree of autonomy to act on behalf of the donor.

I couldn’t really spot many patterns regarding the two ‘conservation ethic’ ideas of stewardship while most respondents thought that they had some kind of ‘personal responsibility’, if not the third level type I was thinking of in this survey.

However, my ideas about third level stewardship were always aspirational, because I thought this is something we could work towards with our ideas about stewardship and I think the Stewardship Spectrum will help in working out how and where third level stewardship might sit.

Also, I know from personal experience that many fundraising do think in terms of third level stewardship of their donors. I know of fundraisers who have had ‘debates’ with programme staff about funding issues because they don’t think a particular project is the best use of their donors’ gifts. That’s real third level stewardship.

So I firmly believe that, as we become more sophisticated in our stewardship thinking and practices, the third level will evolve and develop.

## **5.6 A few anomalies and curiosities**

### **5.6.1 'Crucial' roles and 'crusaders'**

Speaking very generally, respondents tended to group their responses at particular ends of the questions and this was especially true if they'd assigned crucial roles for communications media or rated KIS's/KPIs with a score of 5.

So, as a generic example, if you'd assigned a 'crucial' role to DM, you were much more likely (than average) to also assign a crucial role to other media and give much higher ratings to the KIS's KPIs.

One possible reason of this, I suspect, is that some fundraisers are very 'crusaders' for the power of their chosen communications medium. A number of times, people who had given crucial roles to comms media also had higher than average ratings for getting donors to support in other ways and getting non-donors to give, even though they had also given below average scores for 'helping donors to choose' in Q1.

So, it seems, these respondents thought they could get non-donors to give, even though they weren't targeting them directly. That's very ambitious and a bit optimistic.

### **5.6.2 A stewardship department and a common definition of stewardship**

There was very little support for a stewardship department as a KPI of a successful stewardship programme. As can be seen from table 6, 33.0 gave it a score of 1 and 26.8 gave it a score of 2, meaning that 60 per cent of all respondents scored it 1 or 2.

However, there is one very strange difference between the 33 per cent who scored 1 and the 26.8 per cent who scored 2.

You'll remember that the overall split between the need for a definition of stewardship was 60:40 in favour of a common definition.

Respondents who scored a stewardship department as 1 (the least favourable rating) were 75:25 in favour of a common definition of stewardship. This is an active/proactive indicator and they also showed some other active indicators (though not overwhelmingly so and not enough to firmly say that this group of respondents were all fans of proactive stewardship).

But, when you looked at respondents who had given a stewardship department a score of 2, they were 46.2:53.8, so they were against having a common definition of

stewardship. This is a passive indicator and although there were some other passive indicators, again this was not overwhelming.

I'm totally baffled by this finding.

### **5.6.3 Digital**

I think it's fair to say that fundraisers are yet to find a role in stewardship for digital fundraising techniques. Data relating to the digital options was quite random and erratic. You thought you were seeing a trend only for it not to be there the next time you looked.

Generally, email shadowed the telephone in how people thought it could be used. No-one had much faith in social networking sites. There was little support for using SMS in stewardship (but those who did were pretty gung-ho about what SMS could do!).

Digital is still developing and looking for a role in stewardship. Or to put it another way, fundraisers aren't entirely sure how to use digital comms in stewardship. Which is pretty much a microcosm of digital's place in the fundraising world generally.

Identifying what role digital fundraising has in stewardship is a whole new task for another day...for someone else.

### **5.6.4 Face-to-face**

I wasn't expecting there to be much of a role for F2F in stewardship but the results to this survey shows that some people think it can play a role. In fact 8.9 per cent think it can play a crucial role.

To be honest, with so much to analyse and wade through, I didn't spend a lot of time looking at F2F, even though I spent a lot of my career as a fundraiser in F2F (perhaps that's why). I might take another look at it later.

There were a few interesting stats though. About a quarter of respondents saw no role for F2F and a similar number saw a minimal role. But of those who thought that 'communicating with donors only when asked' was not part of stewardship, only 6.7 per cent saw no role for F2F and 46.7 per cent saw a minimal role for it. Perhaps that's not very surprising. What is also quite interesting is that 52 per cent of people who gave SMS a major role in stewardship also gave a major role to F2F.

As I said earlier, F2F is the point at which the relationship with a donor starts so it's the point at which good stewardship should start too. But whether you can steward the donor any further along the active part of the spectrum, I'm not so sure. Perhaps F2F and its role in stewardship is something the PFRA could look at in the future.

## 6 Conclusion

The idea that there is such a thing as ‘fundraising stewardship’ as a single, unified practice is myth. There is no such single thing. But there are different ways to practise stewardship, which can fit on a sliding scale between passive and proactive, depending on how involved with a donor you want to get.

I think this survey confirms that talking about ‘fundraising stewardship’ is actually meaningless, because you could be talking about three (at least!) quite different concepts.

This is probably what a lot of people expected, but it's good to be able to see some data that actually backs up their gut feeling.

We asked people a range of quantitative questions because this meant we could tease out of them what they really thought about stewardship. With focus groups, people often say what they think they mean or what they think they ought to say. I reckon we would have arrived at a different interpretation if I'd have commissioned a series of focus groups.

Of course, these findings are open to interpretation, and the indicators are generalisations only, not hard and fast rules – just because you don't think we need a definition of stewardship doesn't ‘prove’ you are a proponent of passive fundraising. If any serious fundraising researcher wants to examine the data to see if they draw different conclusions, I'd be only too happy to help.

However, I believe the existence of the Stewardship Spectrum *is* undeniable. The correlations *are* there and I think anyone else looking at the data would come to the same broad conclusions.

In *Pretenders to the Steward Throne*, I called for a common definition of stewardship. I stand by that call though I am prepared to revise it. We don't need a common definition because, as the Stewardship Spectrum shows, there can't be a single definition of stewardship. But there is so much confusion around the term, that we do need it clarified, because how fundraisers practice stewardship is very different depending on which part of the Stewardship Spectrum they're on.

Perhaps the Institute of Fundraising could take a lead on this and develop some guidance on the different types of stewardship that exist. Having done so much work on it, I think the Stewardship Spectrum would make a good starting point. However, as long as we get to the end of 2009 and find that a lot of the confusion about stewardship is evaporating, I'll be happy.

ENDS

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## Appendix 1

List of alternative concepts of stewardship given in answer to Q2 – What is stewardship, along with, where given, how it was rated as part of stewardship

5 = self-contained definition

4 = essential

3 = non-essential component

2 = building block

- Send a Christmas Card, 5
- continue to inform and engage about the charities work 4
- ensure compliance to charity laws re fundraising
- A PERSONAL ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT SERVICE
- Donors preferred method of communication i.e. via email 3
- Tailored and segmented communications, 4
- Ensuring Best Value for the "Mission" 5
- Stewardship is your promise and delivery in reporting back to donors on how their gift is used - 5
- Keeping promises
- Nurturing carefully, not exploiting or taking donors for granted
- Updating donors on the impact of their donation on the organisation 4
- Any communication with donors
- Personal Thanking - B'Day, Anniversary, Xmas Cards
- The donor responding to God's generosity 5
- Being truthful in content 5
- Give them a call or regular update about programmes, 5
- nurturing community 4
- Having donors at the centre of your universe, 5
- maintaining contact with donors through regular communication 4
- Dealing one on one when a donor requests it.
- Building a relationship over time which deepens understanding between the need and the donor and leads to additional support and longer tenure -
- trustees and senior staff actively engaged in stewardship
- The 90 degree shift – putting yourself in the donor's shoes 4
- Stewardship is making sure that every touch point between a donor and an organisation is an experience that will help them reach a new level of interaction and giving, 5.
- Ensuring that the supporter and the charity feel comfortable with each other's actions in relation to each other.
- Send an update report on project funded, 5

- Nurture supporter confidence/trust through communications 5
  - Understanding the donor's motivations for giving, 5
  - Helping donors identify closely with the "Mission" 5
  - Two way engagement
  - Recognising donor's gifts (plaques, dinners, gift societies)
  - Personal Touch - Hand signed certificates
  - ensuring communications from most appropriate person in charity
- 
- Listening – and really hearing 4
  - Good stewardship is an art but it needs basic components (accurate database, etc) to work effectively
  - Eventing to events related to project, 5
  - regular Communication with supporters - Tel, txt, ezine

## Appendix 2

List of alternative concepts communications media given in answer to Q5 – What communications methods have some role in putting stewardship programmes into practice, along with ratings where given

6 = only or predominant

5 = crucial

4 = major

3 = subordinate

2 = minimal

- visits to services - 5.
- depends entirely what the donor wants
- not sure this part of the plot...
- third party approaches, 4
- Real-life Social Networking! 5
- All of these communications methods are valid and their use (or not) depends on organizational readiness as well as demographic of the donor groups ... in other words this questions can't be answered out of context.
- How about encouraging advocacy / visible support
- Vismail 4
- Peer group communication
- Donor to donor communications, 5
- organisations newsletter or mag 4

- letter writing, 4
- Personalised written correspondence e.g. sending reports the donor might be interested in or project updates, 5
- Semaphore 2
- Opportunity to meet beneficiaries (where appropriate and practicable)
- Vismail, 2

### **Appendix 3**

List of alternative concepts communications media given in answer to Q8 – What KPIs and KIS's could be used to measure stewardship, along with ratings from 1-5, where given

- Donors introduce other prospects to charity
- donors bringing other new donors to the organisation
- number of non fundrasing oportunities to get involved
- Senior management team and trustees lead
- Average annual donation per donor
- Increase in life time value.
- Quality of thanking (as opposed to time taken to thank)
- Increase in real (inflation adjusted) lifetime gifts
- Cumulative Giving year to year - 5
- Donors tell you! often on their response slips
- it's oportunities and numbers of complaints, NOT reducing them.
- New supporters are referred to charity by existing supporters
- Donors are interested in more projects to fund
- targets set for stewards (non employees)
- Proportion of gifts made tax-effectively (Gift Aid etc)
- Communications should be tailored to individual donor
- Legacy intentions
- Wider networks are accessed
- We ask them at least once a year
- Life time value