

Letter/Phone Strategy

In a unique way, God has chosen to use college-aged men and women throughout history as a driving force behind the expansion of His church. The great spiritual awakenings of past centuries, which were the seedbeds of missionary expansion, usually began as students gathered to pray. As students experienced personal and corporate renewal, they invariably came away with a burning desire to help evangelize the world.

One such student mission thrust was the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM). In the latter part of the 19th century, the SVM saw more than 20,000 students, the cream of an entire generation of American society, sail to foreign mission fields. Those who stayed behind were no less instrumental in the movement's success as they bore the responsibility of underwriting the costs of those who went.

The torch has now been passed to you and to a new generation of Christian college students. Impact will help you meet the challenge to reach your campus, community, city, and world for Christ. One of your responsibilities in accepting this challenge is to represent Christ's cause to others. As you prepare to attend the Impact conference, you are in a unique position to invite others to invest financially in His cause.

The scholarship development strategy outlined in this paper can be your key to achieving this goal. It is summarized in four words:

1. Namestorm
2. Write
3. Call
4. Thank

As you place your trust in God and carefully implement each of these four steps, you will see success.

STEP 1. NAMESTORM

Start by developing an initial list of potential ministry partners. As with brainstorming, in name-storming there is one cardinal rule—anything goes. **No name is unqualified.** Don't decide for an individual whether or not he or she is interested. If you limit yourself to those you feel will or can give, you may prematurely disqualify those who God wants to become ministry partners. Later you will need to prioritize whom to contact first, but for now, don't disqualify anyone.

You may be thinking you could never generate more than a handful of names, but research has shown the average individual has a personal network of at least 400 friends and acquaintances. So, you should easily be able to develop a list of at least 20-40 potential ministry partners.

For instance, you've probably had at least a dozen teachers alone. At the church you regularly attend you probably know Sunday school teachers, elders, deacons, and other friends who attend church. If you've ever had a toothache or a cavity, you know a dentist. If you've ever been sick, you've probably been to a doctor. As you think about your hometown's business district, no doubt the cleaners, the bakery, the hardware store, and numerous other sources of contacts come to mind.

As you name-storm, associate various professions, businesses, your church, and places, with any friends and acquaintances they bring to mind. To aid you, we have provided 91 thought-provokers in the following list. Take plenty of time—an hour or more—to mull over these categories. Push yourself...see if you can come up with at least 200 names

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| 1. Parents | 32. Rotary club | 65. Realtors |
| 2. Brothers | 33. Hospital personnel | 66. Veterinarian |
| 3. Sisters | 34. Community leaders | 67. Grocery store |
| 4. Labor union
representatives | 35. Milkman | 68. Apartment manager |
| 5. Former employers | 36. Family attorney | 69. Real estate agent |
| 6. Former customers | 37. Christian business groups | 70. Dog clipper |
| 7. Relatives | 38. Beautician | 71. Civic clubs |
| 8. Friends of parents | 39. Barber | 72. Mayor or other civic
leaders |
| 9. Accountants | 40. Church friends | 73. Church missionary
committee |
| 10. Former salesmen | 41. Policemen | 74. Sunday school class |
| 11. Architects | 42. Foundations | 75. Church directories |
| 12. Avon lady | 43. Garbage collector | 76. Pastors |
| 13. Florist | 44. Wedding lists | 77. Downtown businesses |
| 14. Mailman | 45. Neighbors | 78. Church-related news ads |
| 15. Missionary societies | 46. Neighbors at former
residence | 79. Military personnel |
| 16. Banker | 47. Shoe salesman | 80. Bible or prayer groups |
| 17. Parents' employers | 48. Editor of local paper | 81. Christmas card list |
| 18. Parents' associates | 49. Butcher | 82. Chamber of Commerce
directory |
| 19. Former college professors | 50. Baker | 83. People you've led to Christ |
| 20. Former high school
teachers | 51. Advertising agencies | 84. Referrals |
| 21. Sorority sisters | 52. TV/radio stations | 85. Telephone directories |
| 22. Fraternity brothers | 53. Bottling companies | 86. Engineers |
| 23. High school & college
friends | 54. Printers | 87. Farmers |
| 24. Dentist | 55. Plumber | 88. Eye doctor |
| 25. Dental hygienist | 56. Servicemen | 89. Fellow students |
| 26. Doctor | 57. Tax men | 90. Ministry staff |
| 27. Doctor's nurse | 58. Retired people | 91. Those who've spiritually
Influenced you |
| 28. Dermatologist | 59. Bible bookstore | You |
| 29. Dermatologist's nurse | 60. Insurance salesman | |
| 30. Service station manager | 61. Morticians | |
| 31. Kiwanas club | 62. Bank presidents | |
| | 63. Coach | |
| | 64. Teammates | |

After taking an hour or so for freewheeling name-storming, label each name in priority as either "ML" for Most Likely, "L" for Likely, and "LL" for Least Likely. These designations refer to your evaluation of how likely they are to give. Start by contacting your most-likely people first, and then work through your likely and then least-likely people.

STEP 2. WRITE

You can see much success by handwriting a personal letter presenting your needs and then making a personal phone call to ask potential ministry partners to join your team.

While it would be good to send a handwritten note to each person, it's not always feasible to handwrite letters to 200 people. Since most people have access to a computer, you can write and print the same letter to each person, personalize the salutation, and sign it.

When writing a letter for scholarships, the personal segments in the sample letter that follows must be written. However, the body of the letter should be copied substantially as is. The following are items that all letters should include:

1. Give your letter a specific date.
2. Type your greeting to a person - not "Dear Friend". If you handwrite the letter, then write your greeting.
3. Acknowledge your relationship with the reader. What can you say that will help the person identify with you? Refer to your last visit or letter, business concerns, sports interests, known struggles, hobbies, etc., to help him say, "I know who you are."
4. Bring your reader up to date on what you're doing.
5. Educate your reader. Explain what the Impact conference is, its purpose, why you've decided to participate, and what you hope to accomplish by going.
6. Explain your need. The purpose of your letter is to give your reader an opportunity to help. Make sure you explain exactly what you need.
7. Involve the reader by asking him for specific action, based on the needs you have shared. This can include challenging him to cover part or all of the cost of the conference, stating the deadline by which you need the money, sharing the benefits to you and to the reader as the need is met. Specific action includes not only your request, but also your commitment to follow up by telephone if they do not respond by mail.
8. Acknowledge your relationship again with an emphasis on thanks, appreciation, gratitude, partnership and commitment. This ties your opening acknowledgment to your request.
9. Close the letter and sign it.
10. Add a "P.S." Commit yourself to a specific action you will be taking. (Example: "I'll be calling you on Nov. 1, if I don't hear from you by October 25th.") If you are sending a printed letter, write your P.S. in a contrasting color of ink.

Note how these items are used in the following sample letter.

Sample Letter

November 24, 2000

Dear Fred & Ethel,

How are you? I thought of you a lot this past week as I reminisced over the family reunion. Didn't Aunt Minnie really throw down on those greens, and Uncle Charles barbecued the ribs pretty seriously? I'm still trying to get that barbecue sauce out from underneath my fingernails. The tea was good too. Have you developed your pictures yet? Please send me copies when you get them.

As you know, I am studying at Morehouse. As a student I want to invest my life in helping to meet people's deepest needs. I believe their deepest needs are spiritual. This winter I will have the opportunity to attend a national conference called Impact 2000 in Atlanta, December 27, 2000-January 1, 2001. Impact is designed to equip African Americans to take the truth of Jesus Christ to their campus, their communities, and around the world. Special features will include a celebration of worship, hearing from dynamic national speakers, a day of community outreach, and seminars that focus on character development and sharpening ministry skills.

It is my desire to return to my campus more prepared to face the challenges that college brings both spiritually and academically as I help take the truth of Jesus Christ into the next millennium.

In order to attend this conference, I need to develop a team of ministry partners: people who would join with me by giving financially and praying for me. The needed funds will cover the costs of transportation, food and lodging. The total amount I need to raise is \$400. To meet this goal as quickly as possible, I am asking for a gift of \$100, \$75, \$30 or more. Whatever you are able to give will be greatly appreciated.

If you would like to become one of my ministry partners, please make your check or money order payable to **IMPACT** and enclose it in the envelope provided by December 15.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this letter and prayerfully considering my need.

Yours in Christ,

P.S. If I do not hear from you by December 1, I will give you a call to find out what you have decided and to answer any questions you may have.

HELPFUL TIPS WHEN WRITING and SENDING SCHOLARSHIP LETTERS

1. Pray -- ask the Lord to provide you with funds as you step out in faith and ask people to give.

Do not apologize for writing or calling a person whom you wish to involve in helping you meet a need. You are providing him with an opportunity to be involved in a spiritual ministry through his resources. Remember, the giver needs to give far more than any person or cause needs to receive a gift. "Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek the profit which increases to your account" (Philippians 4:17). When you apologize, you end up appearing to be a beggar rather than a child of the King!

2. Always ask for a specific amount with a time frame in which to take action.

Challenge people to give a specific amount or range. The specific challenge of \$150, \$75, \$50, or more has been included in this material. If people want to scholarship you but cannot give at least \$50, they will let you know and not be offended by your request.

3. Never use group slang without first explaining what you mean (i. e., Impact Movement or Campus Crusade, Livin' Large, Action Group, sharing 4-Laws or the gospel, etc).

4. Always enclose a self-addressed, return envelope for a quick and easy response. Research shows that the easier you make it, the higher the response rate will be. So, make sure to include this critical element.

5. Do not wait until the last minute to get your letters out.

Be sure that you allow enough time to follow up the letters. It isn't reality to send a letter to 100 people in one mailing and promise to call them all by the same date! It dishonors the Lord because you will not be able to keep your word. Send group mailings of 20-25 at a time and give yourself a week from the date that you send them to make 20-25 phone calls. However, don't forget to change the date that you will call them by for each new set of mailings you send out.

6. Have your letter printed. Make sure you have enough envelopes and stamps as well.

7. Mail your letter along with an Impact brochure, and a self-addressed envelope to those who are too far away from campus to allow for a personal visit.

Give them a day or so, after receiving the letter, to pray and think it over. Call them and ask for a decision and answer any questions. It is definitely worth the investment it you have to make a long distance call. Ask them to mail the check to you the next day, if possible.

8. Arrange a personal visit for those near campus instead of sending a letter.

Ask for 15-20 minutes of their time. During this appointment, explain **what** you are doing and **why** you sense God wants you to attend this conference, and finally **how** they can partner with you. Tell them briefly about the conference: where it is, what will happen, the cost, etc. Clearly explain your financial need and how they can be a part of this opportunity financially. It is an investment in the future leadership of our community. Thank them but do remember to send them a thank you note later. Honor the Lord by honoring their time and stay only 15-20 minutes. If they invite you to stay longer, that's fine, but **let them invite** you to do so.

9. Lastly, ask all to pray for you and be sure to bring back a report for those who gave to get you to Impact. Note: Please keep your report to ONE PAGE.

STEP 3: CALL

The degree of your success in the letter-writing strategy depends on your follow-up call. The follow-up phone call is critical for three reasons.

1. Most people suffer from "Information Overload." Consequently, mail is easy to ignore or forget.
2. Your time frame. You have a lot of money to raise in a short period of time. A follow-up phone call will help you get decisions as quickly as possible.
3. Courtesy to your sponsors. Many people will want to help you but won't unless you answer their questions. Your phone call takes the burden of response off them and puts it on you.

CALL FOR A DECISION

NOTE: It might be a good idea to have a copy of your letter on hand for a reference point.

1. Introduce yourself.

Hello, this is _____ calling. How are you? Let him respond. Take a few moments to establish rapport but be brief.

2. Explain your reason for calling. If he has not opened the letter, continue the conversation by tell him what the letter was about. If he has, then continue with the statement below:

"As I mentioned in my letter, I am planning to attend a national conference in Atlanta called Impact 2000."

3. Share what you hope to see God do as a result of your time. (Reiterate or elaborate on this portion of your letter)

"At the Impact conference God is going to equip, motivate, and show me what He wants me to do to help reach other African Americans, and the world for Jesus Christ."

4. Be very specific to ask for a definite response.

"In my letter, I mentioned that I'm in the process of developing a team of partners to help me attend the conference. I asked you to consider becoming a partner through giving \$100, \$50, or \$25. How has God led you in this regard?"

Let him respond.

- a. If an individual decides to become a partner:

Arrange a time to stop by and pick up their check. This should always be your first option. If they live out of town, ask them to mail it in the self-addressed stamped envelope you enclosed with your letter. If you arrange to have the partner send you a check and it doesn't come, you will need to follow up with a phone call within the week. After getting a person's decision, always ask them to refer you to other people. See #3 below in "Getting additional names to contact"

NOTE: Your partner's check must be payable to IMPACT in order for them to receive a tax-deductible receipt. If he makes it out to you, you can still accept the check, but the donor will not receive a receipt.

b. If he has not made a decision: Set another time to call within a day or two.

GETTING ADDITIONAL NAMES TO CONTACT

During this fund raising process, you may run out of people to contact before you meet your goal. What do you do then? You can continue to add names to your list of potential sponsors. Please read on.

1. Who to ask for additional names

Ask everyone you contact. Both those who join your partnership team and those who are unable will want to help you complete your team.

2. When to ask for additional names

Whenever you are speaking to someone on the phone or in person. First, ask him to give, wait for a decision, and then ask for other names. If you do not wait, your request for names will distract them from making their decision. BUT DO ASK everyone at the time they give you their decision, whether their decision is yes or no.

3. How to ask for additional names either in person or on the phone

a. Get your pencil and pad out and be ready to write.

b. Say, *"There is another way that you can help. I've found that most people, whether or not they can give, are excited to hear about my involvement with Impact. Fred, what are the names of some friends or business acquaintances you know?"* (This type of question cannot be answered by yes or no and it keeps the person from making a value judgment about another's ability to give)

NOTE: Do not say, *"Do you know anyone" or "Can you tell me the names of..."*

c. Give him time to come up with as many names as possible, but lead the conversation by suggesting categories (From the name-storming section). *"Perhaps, you know some people from church."* Or *"Can we browse through your church directory?"* (He may also have a business or club directory) Suggest one category at a time and **wait** for a response. *"Whom do you sit with at little league?"* We strongly recommend that you practice asking for names with a friend.

d. Once you have the names, ask for addresses and phone numbers but not before then. You do not want to disrupt his train of thought.

e. Assure the individual that *his* friends may or may not be able to help financially but they may know others. That gives the individual more freedom to refer you to others.

f. Often a partner will be willing to call the people he has referred you to, adding to your credibility. If you sense an individual may be willing, suggest that he do so. This should be your first option after getting referrals. If this doesn't happen, then say, *"Mr. Wilson, would it be okay to use your name when I call your friend?"*

STEP 4: THANK

Send a thank you note the same day you call for his decision. Be sure to keep good records of this so you'll know to whom you've sent one. You do not want to send **two** to the same person.

This thank you letter is a very important part of showing your appreciation and developing a friendship with your partner. Also remember to send a thank you to those individuals who gave you referrals. There is no need to mention the amount of money their friend gave you. Simply state that they were positive, encouraging, and helpful. **ALL** thank you notes should be handwritten and signed. See the sample below.

Sample Thank You

Date

Dear Fred,

(Include something personal first.)

Thank you for your decision to become an Impact conference partner. Your prayers and finances are greatly appreciated. Your investment of \$_____ will have far-reaching results as I head to Atlanta to be equipped to effectively reach people for Christ.

Please join me in praying that God would continually deepen my commitment to the cause of Christ. Your prayers are most important. Thanks again for your gracious help.

Sincerely,

Leon

Two Important Reminders:

* Make all checks/money orders payable to: IMPACT. We cannot cash checks or give tax-deductible receipts for any checks made out to you. Please cash checks made out to you before you arrive at the conference.

- Please don't forget that the money you raise is already committed to your Impact expenses. Ask the Lord to help you resist the temptation to spend His money on other thing.