

Elements of PAC Communications: Solicitations

A good political action committee should be about more than money. It should also educate and motivate employees. By being strategic about your communications, your PAC can create a feeling of community among contributors. One vital component of a PAC communication strategy is the solicitation. The way in which you ask for contributions makes all the difference and often sets the tone for the PAC program. Below are tips on how you can create an effective, best-in-class solicitation based on hundreds of member companies' samples.

Whom Should I Solicit?

- First, approach members of your senior management:
 - They should be familiar with the basics of PACs, but give a quick overview just in case they aren't. Make sure to show the value of your PAC and its importance to the organization.
 - They make the most money, so they have the most to donate.
 - Before doing a broad-based solicitation, your target should be obtaining 80% of senior management support.
 - Senior management support will help others in your company understand the value of their participation, as in "If my boss is doing it ..."
- Second, expand to your eligible class:
 - The eligible class is the only group of people you can legally solicit. To learn the specifics of your eligible class, visit www.fec.gov.
 - Since every organization has a different culture, it is important to discuss with your HR department the people *you* can solicit. Even though it may be legal, some organizations limit their eligibles to certain salary levels or titles.
 - The larger your eligible class, the more opportunities you have to grow your PAC. If you have questions about who is eligible that your HR department can't answer, or is reluctant to answer, contact the Council for recommendations.
- Can I solicit non-eligibles?
 - You can through a regulation known as the twice-a-year rule. This rule from the FEC allows you to solicit everyone in the company, regardless of their eligibility status. (However, often the return does not justify the investment because there are a number of legal requirements and restrictions). If you are a well-established PAC trying to go the extra mile, this may be an option for you.

When Should I Solicit?

- Avoid the holiday season. Donations to PACs come from eligibles' 'extra income,' of which there are so many other demands on this during the holidays. Also, keep in mind that holiday bills generally arrive in January, so budgets may be tight then, as well.
- After tax season. After April 15, eligibles may have unexpected reimbursement checks.
- In accordance with your organization's bonus season. Shortly after receiving bonuses employees often have extra income to spare, but internal morale is often higher around this time as well.
- Try not to compete with other company fundraisers. Find out ahead of time when fundraising efforts such as United Way will be held, and schedule accordingly.
- Give yourself time prior to elections to make the most of your disbursements.

What Do the Best PACs Include in their Solicitations?

- **Why it's important for your colleagues to participate in the PAC.** Facts and figures are great, but if you don't answer the *why* or the *what's in it for me*, people won't feel as compelled to contribute.
- **Send information before the 'ask.'** Try to send out information, either by hard copy, or in e-mail form before the first solicitation. You don't want to alienate your eligible class by just asking for money.
- **The sense that PACs are a team effort.** Tell them that "We're in this together," or, "Together, we can do more."
- **A positive outlook.** Don't apologize because you're asking for money. If you don't agree wholeheartedly that contributing to the PAC is important, it will be hard to convince others.
- **Ease-of-use.** Make it easy to contribute. Include links to your PAC's Web site or a mobile friendly donation page; include an enrollment card (complete with payroll deduction) and your contact information.
- **A conversational tone.** Write the way you speak. The solicitation should sound genuine and professional, but not stuffy.
- **Language that motivates.** Don't start your solicitation letter with "I'm writing to ask you to join ABC Company PAC." Say things like "Our industry is under constant scrutiny; our government affairs team works hard to get our issues heard in Congress, but with your help, we can do more."
- **Emphasis on involvement.** Encourage your eligibles to make PAC Board nominations, or suggest candidates worthy of PAC support. This will make your PAC more democratized and make everyone feel welcome.