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Economy Makes Trustees Less Willing to Raise Money

The economy is making charity board members and other volunteer fund raisers increasingly reluctant to ask friends and colleagues for donations, writes fund-raising consultant Penelope Burk in her [Burk's Blog](#).

“Volunteers worry about opening up embarrassing conversations with friends and colleagues who have been hurt by the recession,” Ms. Burk writes. “It’s not that they’re afraid of getting a ‘no’; it’s that they’re convinced they’ll get, ‘Are you crazy? ... You’re asking me to give in this economy?’”

That’s what development directors and chief executives were telling Ms. Burk about their board and volunteer fund raisers last month.

Ms. Burk spent the month of March traveling the country to speak about [a new survey](#) of 22,000 donors who had given a median of \$2,000 to charity last year, meaning half gave more and half gave less. The donors were asked in January how the recession would affect their charitable giving this year.

According to the survey’s findings, recession-related fund-raising fears among volunteers are unfounded, Ms. Burk writes.

Forty-three percent of those surveyed said they would make a first-time gift to a charity if asked by a key volunteer or someone they know personally. And 79 percent planned to give the same or more to charities they supported before this year if asked to give by a volunteer or someone they know.

“So we seem to be in a fund-raising Catch-22,” Ms. Burk concludes. “Donors can be influenced to give because volunteers make the ask, but volunteers aren’t asking for fear that donors won’t give.”

What about your organization? Have you seen trustees and other volunteers shy away from solicitations because of the economy?

— [Holly Hall](#)