

The Ketchum
**Leaders in
Philanthropy**
Series

Remarks by

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to
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Leaders in Philanthropy® Series**

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Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen for coming out this morning. I also want to extend my thanks to the people at Ketchum, to Marnie Spears and Ross McGregor.

As we were coming in today, someone described this event to me as a convention of people who can't say 'no'. I count myself among this group and I am going to address this today because I think one of the challenges is to find more people who can't say 'no', or more appropriately, who want to say 'yes'.

My friend Tim Griffin, who's here and is the Chair of the St. Michael's Hospital Foundation came over to me and said he hoped he was going to hear something he hadn't heard before. I want to say there are a number of my friends from St. Mike's and the United Way and the Salvation Army and other organizations that I've been privileged to be associated with who are here today and I appreciate that, as I am sure, does Ketchum.

The truth is, today you are probably not going to hear anything you haven't heard before, but I think some of the messages that have come from different people who have spoken at this event over the years, bear repeating.

I am a person who just loves to be involved in community organizations. I find it one of the most fulfilling parts of my life. I actually love to raise money. John Hunkin has called me a serial fundraiser. One of the fundamental things I want to talk about today is why volunteers are so important.

First of all, I should say I think the professional fund raisers who are represented in this room in great numbers, great competence and great experience are vitally important as well. There isn't a campaign that I've been associated with - big or small - that has not benefited from having some consistent, professional direction from people who know the rhythms of these campaigns, who know the latest techniques and, who have the ability to be involved with the campaign day in, and day out, which volunteers, by definition, do not.

But at the end of the day, the fuel that drives these campaigns, the fuel makes them go, is the fuel that can only come from individual volunteers. As in many aspects of life, people really give to people. They give to causes, they support good causes, there are many causes for which people develop a passion; but it is that individual connection between people that often makes the difference between getting and not getting when it comes to asking for money, even for the most worthy of causes.

I don't think that's really any different than in many other relationships that people have in life. When I was in the legal profession we used to talk about whether we should be spending money on brochures or putting ads in the newspaper to market our services. But when you really get down to it, how many times have you retained a lawyer, or even thought of retaining a lawyer, on the basis of an ad in a newspaper or a brochure? How many times have you thought of hiring a particular law firm? You are much more likely to hire a lawyer at a law firm – someone you have been referred to by someone else; an individual that you know and trust.

The same principle applies to an investment advisor. The likelihood that you're going to hire someone based on an ad you saw in the newspaper is not that high. You're going to hire somebody that you've either heard about or that you know and trust. And I don't think it's any different with community causes. I think that people give to people as well as to causes. The importance of volunteers is that they are people who can talk to their friends and talk to other people who trust them. By being involved and helping out with a particular cause they are also setting an example for others because they have chosen to be there,

they have chosen to be there as volunteers. I don't think that example is something you can replicate.

Not long ago I spoke at a political convention about the importance of volunteers. In politics, and this also applies to fundraising, it's true that you can hire professionals to do just about everything, including delivering brochures door-to-door. But at the end of the day what's missing from that process? Delivering brochures is simply a funded mechanical exercise.

Study after study has shown that the single most important point of contact for a voter in an election campaign is person-to-person contact. The candidate showing up at the voter's door has the greatest impact; followed by the candidate's representative showing up at the voter's door. Again, it is a people to people thing. If you're a candidate people want to hear, firsthand, why you're running for office or why a door-to-door volunteer is supporting you.

So yes, in fundraising you can hire people to do direct mail and telemarketing and to do this, and to do that, but at the end of the day nothing can replace the importance of people who have signed up and chosen to be there.

Where do the volunteers come from? Well, I'm a great believer that a lot of volunteers will come from the example they see today, and that the more we can establish this as a tradition and as a value to be embraced to among a broader segment of the community, the more people are going to come forward. I also believe, from my own personal experience and from what I've seen on the part of others, that if you come forward.

I also believe, from my own personal experience and from what I've seen on the part of others, that if you come forward and volunteer because you've seen it to be a value that you want to emulate, that you're going to have a such self-satisfying experience that you will continue to do it, and do it many times over.

In my own family, volunteering was something that was a value and a tradition. I saw it in my own household with my mother and father, both of whom were dedicated volunteers. My mother in particular was an incredibly active volunteer and both of my grandmothers were people who had very leading roles in the community as volunteers and who initiated and took up all kinds of causes.

I can't say that I consciously took note of that and specifically made it my own business to go out and become a volunteer, but there's no question in my mind that seeing that kind of example set in my own household, and in my own family, made a difference to me.

As volunteers, I think we can feel good about the activities we are involved in and that we will probably be setting an example to somebody, somewhere - either in our own families or elsewhere. But I think it is even more important that as volunteers, we recruit more and more people, because each and every one of them, in their own way, without even intending to do so, will be setting an example that will help charitable organizations thrive and spread the spirit of volunteerism throughout the community.

I also believe very strongly that a lot of people become community volunteer because of the type of people they are. The people in this room today are probably very similar. We are all people that are very active, that want to be involved; want to be committed; have opinions; have a point of view; have commitments to causes; and have fundamental beliefs that drive

us forward. We are multidimensional people who have more than one thing we like to do in our lives.

But I believe there are many others out there who would be very likely to volunteer if they were only asked. There are always going to be the people who are touched by a cause and I think we have probably done an inadequate job of recording who those people are, and going out and sitting down and talking to them.

One of the things the United Way is fond of saying is that a million people each year in this community are touched by its work and the work of its agencies. This certainly explains the broad appeal the United Way has in terms of donors. But to me, it also means there are a million people out there in this community alone, who have the potential to be tomorrow's volunteers. There are a lot of people touched by different community organizations who could be taking a more active role than simply being a donor, and I think in most cases, the reason they aren't, is because they haven't been asked.

I can tell you that based on my own personal experience, when people are asked they rarely say no. Three years ago the United Way came up with the idea of developing a separate cabinet that would deal with individual major gifts. A major gift was defined as more than \$5000. The staff at the United Way asked if I would chair this initiative and the first year we recruited 25 people. These people were basically at the CEO and senior executive level. The idea was that they would each take on half a dozen calls and talk to their colleagues who were in the category of potential or actual major givers.

The United Way staff and myself made up the list of 25 potential cabinet members and I recruited them and not a single person said no, they all said yes. In the second year of the exercise, we had 50 people in the individual major gifts cabinet. This year, I am back co-chairing the major giving cabinet and we have recruited 70 people.

Since we began this program, I have probably made a total of 95 calls to recruit people to be on this individual major gifts cabinet and only one person has ever said no, and that person said it with such regret and took so long explaining why they were unable to be a volunteer that they ended up apologizing to me, instead of me apologizing to them for intruding on their day.

Now what was it, aside from the appeal of the cause that caused us to be so successful in recruiting these people? Well, I think first of all, in many cases these were people who had been asked to do things before and were, by definition, activists. But not all of them had volunteer experience. We basically had an unwritten contract with all of our prospective cabinet members. I didn't articulate it exactly that way, but I've come to believe that's really what it is. I told them that if they helped the United Way, we would promise them an effective and disciplined use of their time.

The assignment we laid out for the cabinet members was very tightly defined. We asked them to take on five calls and to come to three meetings over the course of six months. That's all. The meetings last from 7:30 a.m. to 8:50 a.m. We told them: 'We won't harass you and we won't ask you to take on more than five calls.'

By limiting their assignment in that fashion, it was not intimidating to people. They didn't look at it and say, 'I know what's going to happen here. I am going to sign up to be part of this group and end up with 50 calls to make, and they're going to hound me every day and I'll have to attend a meeting every week' and so on, and so forth, because as much as some people are willing and anxious to do that and more, there are others who just can't.

We also told them that they would have support from professionals who work at United Way and finally, the most important thing we did and I think it's important, in politics, in business and in community work, we did what we said we were going to do. We've had the three meetings, no more, we asked people to take on the five calls, no more, and we haven't had the meetings go on beyond 8:50 a.m.

The growth in the major individual giving cabinet from 25 to 70 has been matched by an exponential growth in the dollars raised through this program. Our target this year is to take in \$17 million with this group. I think there are two core messages here. The first is that if you don't ask, people won't say yes. Secondly, if you make a contract with your volunteers and you honour your word with respect to that contract, they will keep coming back and will do a good job.

The reason this cabinet has been able to grow from 25 to 50 to 70 members is because the original 25 have come back year after year. In addition, the number of people in this group who have chosen to deepen their involvement with the United Way is very significant. One of the things this shows me, and I've learned this in a number of organizations that I've been involved with over the years, is that it is possible to develop a passion for an cause or organization.

It goes without saying you are more likely to have a passion if you've had a personal experience with a specific cause or organization. But most of us haven't had an experience that has galvanized us into being active. Over and over again I've seen it is possible to develop a passion for a cause, even if it's not there initially, simply by becoming involved and seeing the good you are doing.

This holds true in my case, with my involvement with the Canadian Football League, it was always as a volunteer. My initial involvement with the CFL came when I was doing some legal work for them and they then asked me to take on the role of the chairman of the organization. The more I got involved, the more I came to believe that this was a threatened Canadian institution and it became a passion of mine to preserve it. I felt it was not good enough to let our Canadian institutions just slip away, one by one.

The other thing I've found, that's a great selling point, and it's certainly been a selling point for me, is the friendships you develop. The friendships that I have developed over the years in politics, in sports and in community work are just beyond counting. These are people I enjoy being with in all parts of my life and I think many of you would say the same thing. I think there is often an impression, if you're involved in politics or involved in community work, that it's a bunch of hard chair meetings where you sit around with papers and read reports. In fact, if you go back to the original premise that volunteer work is about people with a bit of passion thrown in, it is really a lot of fun.

I believe that multidimensional people in positions of leadership in the community are people who will learn to make clear decisions and who will be able to see the world in a better context. They will be more complete leaders and will learn more about their communities and the world because of their exposure to so many different slices of life. The satisfaction you derive from this kind of thing makes you a more complete person who is more adept at coping with the challenges of whatever it is you are doing in your day-to-day life.

I went to a very interesting meeting of the Conference Board of Canada .It is a meeting of about 40 people from business and the academic world and government and you get to speak for eight minutes on any subject of your choosing and then others get to comment on your talk.

During the course of these various talks there was a theme that emerged that called for a need for the leadership of this country to do something about this, or about that, and I was struck by the fact that although these people, in and of themselves weren't the leadership of the country, they were certainly people who were in the position to show leadership. I think in many cases the third party group they were referring to was government. And so, a discussion ensued about the fact that people, such as us, who are in positions of leadership and trust, should be the ones that take the initiative - and the same is true of community work.

We have a superior quality of life in this country that is second to none. It was recently announced that of the top five cities in world in which to live, three are in Canada. This is no accident, but I don't think it is so much about our social programs and the amount of money we spend on them that makes Canada such an attractive place to live. Social programs are important because they represent an underlying set of beliefs and principles and make a statement about the way we want to live together. But what has really caused Canada to get where it is in terms of its superior quality of life is due to the way we have chosen to live together. What people from all over the world see is a place of hope and opportunity and where we take care of each other and where we have harmony, tolerance and civility.

Canada is really a miracle of tolerance, diversity and safety as well as a miracle of caring. And what's important to me isn't how much money the government spends on this program or that program. Our efforts empower government. What the government does is driven by the kind of values we have as individuals that causes us to get involved in community issues and to become active in these causes and that's what's important.

I think it is also about an investment in jobs. The people who want to come to Canada are coming hope and opportunity on the economic side of the ledger as well. The ability to employ these people is made possible by those with the means to invest in the country, and such people are open to investing in the country because of the fact that we have a superior quality of life. So, it's a circle.

The quality of life that we keep, not so much because of government-funded social programs, but because of the commitment of individuals to stay involved in social issues and to make a difference and maintain the special way of living we've established, will keep this country attractive for investors. In turn, jobs will follow and the jobs will produce the tax revenues necessary for the government to continue with programs that will backstop those people who may get into trouble or who may need help stabilizing themselves at a given point in time.

In the last number of years there have been some tough decisions made by governments regarding the financial management of public funds. They were tough, but necessary decisions but they did have a definite impact on social programs. During this time, many people also experienced personal financial problems, as a result of an economic downturn and the destabilization of the stock markets and so on.

Often when we hit difficult times, there is a tendency for people to look at the government and say it is your job to sort out social programs and so on. When that happens we should give ourselves a shake and say no, it's not really about the government, it's about us.

I had the opportunity to go as part of the city summit, which I had the privilege of co-chairing on a tour around the city. On our tour we went to a number of places, but ended up in Thorncliffe Park. This is a Toronto community where there are 42 languages spoken. When you go there it's a wonderful sight to see children from every country in the world

playing and having a good time. But when you look beyond the playground you notice that there are 56 portable classrooms in the schoolyard. The notion that we would have a school in the heart of Toronto with 56 portable classrooms just doesn't strike me as being quite right and we have to ask whether we would tolerate this in the neighbourhoods we live in. I don't think so.

But to me the solution isn't to go to government to solve the problem. Government should certainly be part of the solution, but all of us need to get involved in these causes as volunteers, to do something about social problems. It isn't up to someone else to do something about it - it is up to my neighbour and me.

I think governments do some things better than others but I don't think anyone does things as well as volunteers. If you take volunteers out of the equation you miss out on passion, ingenuity and great entrepreneurship. Some of the greatest entrepreneurship in this country comes out of social service agencies, where they have very limited resources and have to perform miracles.

I think it's time for all of us to stand up and be counted, and at the same time get five other people to stand up with us and become volunteers. I believe underneath that librarian-like exterior of most Canadians, there beats a passion for the inherent values that make our country great and potential passion for any number of causes. I think that there is that kind of passion inside lots of the people we know - whether it's a passion for activism, a passion for the community, a passion for fundraising or a passion for a cause. Remember if you don't ask people to be involved, then they won't say yes.

I long overcame the fear of someone saying no. Ted Rogers helped me with this fear. Years ago, when I was Vice Chair of the campaign for Osgoode Hall Law School, I went to him and asked for \$250,000. At the time I thought this was an untold amount of money and even though he was a person I knew, I was afraid.

But he said yes and since then I've become fearless. I'll ask anyone for any amount of money now, and ask them to do anything for any cause because to me there is no reason to be afraid of someone saying no. Very few people do say no and when they do, it is often for a very good reason. But the joy of hearing people saying yes far overcomes any fear that anyone might say no.

We have to care enough and have the courage to ask others to volunteer. We have to be willing to take a risk and live up to our promises. It strikes me as I go about my own community responsibilities that I tend to run into the same people doing the same work for many different causes. What we need to do is expand that circle and get more people to come out and say yes. We owe it to ourselves, our community and, most of all, to those that need help.

Last year during the course of the United Way Campaign, the tragic events of September 11 took place. This was a monumental reminder that there is a very thin line indeed that separates those of us who are in positions of privilege and those who are not as fortunate. September 11 illustrated that people can go, almost in the blink of an eye, from a secure position to, through no fault of their own, losing everything. I think what we want to do is keep as many people as possible on the right side of that thin line.

If I sound passionate about my volunteer work, it's because I've had immense satisfaction from it. I intend to continue to do it because I get immense satisfaction from it and maybe next year we will be able to take the United Way's individual major gift cabinet to 120 members; and maybe the year after that to 200. It means you make a whole bunch of new

friends and raise more money for the community in the process, and what's wrong with any of that?

So if each and every one of us can continue to do the same, I think we'll be in good shape.