Evaluating and Rewarding Major Gift Officer Performance

An article from Veritus Group to help you succeed at major gift fundraising.

by **Richard Perry** and **Jeff Schreifels**

What you will learn

1. What metrics should be used to evaluate MGO performance;
2. How to determine whether a gift should be credited to an MGO's work;
3. Whether your nonprofit is paying the right MGO salary, and when a raise or bonus is appropriate.

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In major gift programs, we at Veritus believe that good management is at the heart of good performance. When major gift officers have plans and goals that are worked out in advance with managers, and when communication is strong, the resulting team can produce powerful results.

The interesting thing about major gifts (this is a generalization) is that most nonprofits do not measure cause and effect. And if they do, they do it wrong. It is not enough just to say “we have a 10% increase over last year in our major gifts category” and really feel good about it. Much more is needed.

Key to this process is performance reporting, which leads to the potential for rewarding superior work. We have had long discussions about what to measure in major gifts work. Is it the number of face-to-face visits? Or is it just reaching financial goals? Are we tracking the level of MGO activity, or are we just tracking results? It goes on and on. There are arguments and debates about MGO compensation – should we have some form of economic reward for good MGO performance? There are pros and cons to all the points on this subject.

Since the subject of MGO performance and the related subjects of performance metrics, credit issues and compensation are hot topics these days, we have created this White Paper to help guide your thinking and present some tangible ways to measure and reward performance.

Measure the Right Metrics

It was an interesting conversation. The manager argued that it was the number of face-to-face visits and amount raised that matters in measuring MGO performance, and we took the position that “meaningful connections” and amount raised are what matters. We were going back and forth on the subject with deeply entrenched beliefs supporting each position.

Bentz. Whaley, Flessner 2014 Study		Veritus Metrics
Past Metrics	Current Metrics	
Total dollars raised	Total dollars raised	Total dollars raised
# of Face to Face Visits	# of Face to Face Visits	# of meaningful connections
# of Contacts	# of asks	# of stewardship calls
# of asks	# of gifts closed	# of asks
# of gifts closed	# of stewardship calls	Working the plan for each caseload donor
# of discovery calls made	# of prospects identified	How did each donor perform Yr to Yr
# of new prospects identified	# of discovery calls made	
# of stewardship calls	# of cold calls made	
	# of moves	

We wanted to explore this further. We wondered: what do others say about this?

In a 2014 study done by Bentz, Whaley and Flessner on “Optimizing Fundraiser Performance” in the healthcare and education sector, the authors stated that the major gift metrics had changed (in priority and emphasis) from 2005 to present as reflected in the chart to the right.

Note that the old face-to-face metric is still sitting there as an important measurement. The problem with the FTF metric is that it can be made to mean many different things. As one manager said recently: “the FTF thing can be gamed. A MGO, if they want to, can make that number really high.” It’s true. Or the MGO can meet with the same donor repeatedly, increasing the number. Or the quality of a "visit" can be really low and have no meaning as well, like the MGO that counted an encounter in a grocery store. Totally meaningless.

What really matters, in our opinion, is meaningful connections. What is a "meaningful connection"? It is one where the MGO has quantifiably moved the donor in the direction of fulfilling her passions and interests by giving to the organization. Quantifiably move? What does that mean? And "in the direction" – how do you know?

First, does the MGO know, without doubt, what the interests and passions of the donor are? You can measure that with a simple "yes" or "no." Secondly, has the donor taken an action or said something that shows they are moving in the direction of making a gift? It could be as little as "you know, I really would like more information on that" or "yes, I would like to meet with your program person to learn more about the X program" or "can you send me information how that program actually works?" It could also be the acceptance of an invitation to attend a briefing or visit a program site.

A meaningful connection can happen in a face-to-face, in an email exchange, on the phone and, yes, at the grocery store, an afternoon tea, a baseball game, etc. It is not limited to being literally face-to-face. A meaningful connection is when the donor takes an action or says something that shows interest – it is also fulfilling the move you have pre-planned for the donor. Here's the thing. You know when you have come face to face with a meaningful connection. You also know when it *isn't* one.

In a 2010 study by Bentz, Whaley and Flessner titled Major Gift Metrics That Matter, the author, Thomas W. Grabau, makes an important point that seems to support our position on metrics. He says: "All managed and assigned prospects (donors) should have a philanthropic capacity and connectivity rating."

A meaningful connection can happen any number of ways. It is not limited to being literally face-to-face.

Capacity and connectivity. The word connectivity helps define "meaningful." There is a connection. You know it. You also know when there isn't one.

We agree on the capacity/connectivity point Grabau makes.

In our system of caseload development, the MGO is instructed to develop a caseload from a pool of donors who have given the highest amounts most recently and have the highest capacity. This is a confluence of amount, recency and capacity. The second big point in caseload development is that the MGO will only have qualified donors – donors who want to connect – on their caseload. This addresses the connectivity issue.

In that same study, Grabau addresses what he calls the "Rules of Thumb" of major gift metrics:

1. There should be an average of 12-15 FTF visits per month.
2. MGOs should visit approximately 50% of their caseload donors each year.

3. Approximately 1/3 of a MGO's caseload should be in the solicitation stage.
4. A full-time MGO should raise $1 million a year on average.

Take a look at his study to see how he addresses each of these points. There is some very good and useful information there; and although we take a different direction on FTF visits (we think the MGO should connect with ALL the donors on her caseload), donors should be asked when they are ready – and the $1 million thing may be a good goal for a fully developed and mature caseload, but not one just starting out. That could be as low as $200,000 - $300,000.

Here is how we would frame the important metrics in major gifts:

1. First, the caseload should contain 150 qualified donors. This means no prospecting, and it also means that these donors want to relate – the connectivity point. There is no sense in paying a MGO to "work" donors that have "given a lot of money" but don't want to connect. It is a waste of labor. I saw one situation recently where a MGO had over 1,000 donors on his caseload! There is no way he can connect with all of those donors. I'll bet if we put those 1,000 donors through our qualification process only 250 would actually want to connect – and that would still be too many donors for the MGO to handle.
2. Then there should be a goal and plan for every donor. This point is critical. This means that there is a predetermined intention on the part of the MGO to meet with, talk to and connect with the donor. This point, by itself, is a huge performance measurement point, answering the question: "did the MGO work the plan for every donor on her caseload?"
3. Now measure the number of meaningful connections, stewardship calls, number of asks and how each donor is performing year to year. We will elaborate on these metrics in the next section, but the individual donor performance year to year is important. You want to know that the MGO has a "story" or explanation for why a donor gave less or didn't give at all.
4. And finally, make sure the MGO is working the plan. This "making sure" bit is why management of MGOs is so labor intensive and why most DODs just do not have the time, given everything else they have to do, to manage MGOs correctly. This is a controversial point for many development shops. Why should we hire or pay for someone to manage MGOs? The answer: because *you will not do it*. You need to spend a ton of time with every MGO going through every donor on the caseload to make sure the plan is being executed.
5. All of this should be written up for each MGO's performance evaluation. At the beginning of each year, once the caseload plan is done, you should write up the performance plan for the MGO – that list of items the MGO will be evaluated on – the points above this one. These are quantifiable, time sensitive items, which no one can argue with.

This is basically the essential elements for caseload management Grabau noted in 2010:

1. A clear understanding of the potential of caseload donors. We would add "qualified" donors.
2. Plans (for each donor) that drive results. This means there is intentionality on connecting with caseload donors. We would assume goals for every donor are in these plans and that the MGO knows why each donor has given less or lapsed.
3. Execution – Is the plan being worked? Are meaningful connections being made with all the donors on the caseload?

Fundamental and central to all of this is the donor. Are you serving her needs? Are you fulfilling her interests and passions? You will be if you are connecting. And you will be raising money if you are doing all of this right. That is what you should be measuring – are you fulfilling the donor's interests and passions?

What MGOs Should Report

The MGO needs to report regularly on various metrics, and management needs to provide feedback and help. One of the most frustrating things for managers and MGOs alike is when there is a misfire in this process. The MGO is asked to report on one set of factors, finance is expecting information on another set, and the two ships pass in the night.

This is a lethal situation because the only person who will lose here will be the MGO. We have heard some pretty serious allegations on the part of people outside of the MGO program – allegations that go something like this: "well, they said they were going to do X and all we hear is what they are doing in Y. I am not sure we are getting the real story." This one statement frames the problem and calls for a basic solution which, simply stated, is this:

How a MGO's performance will be measured needs to be carefully crafted and set *before* the evaluation period begins. It must then be widely published so that everyone has the same expectations and is aligned on what is being measured.

So whatever you believe is important in MGO performance evaluation, the one thing you need to do is (a) settle what is being measured, (b) have the MGO's agreement on it, and (c) be sure finance and others, anyone else who has a stake in the program, understand it and are aligned with it.

Before you start to measure anything, you need to have 4 things in place for each MGO:

Caseload	• Each MGO should have a *qualified* caseload of 150 donors.
Donor Goals	• Each donor should have a giving goal based on their giving history.
Individual Plans	• The MGO should form a personalized plan to create meaningful connections with each donor based on their interests
Tier Designations	• The caseload should be divided into tiers A, B and C to show their inclination and capacity to give to the organization. Tier A gets the most attention.

Once you have these four things in place, then you can set about reporting on performance.

Here are the key areas we believe should be reported on, at a frequency of reporting that everyone agrees on – (monthly seems to be the right pace for most):

1. <u>Number of meaningful connections</u> – You will want to know how many meaningful connections each MGO has made and that his or her time is being spent wisely in making those connections. There is a variety of opinion on how many connections should be made each month. You can develop the number that fits your organization. But the important thing to manage on this point is this: Is your MGO on a track to make meaningful connections with all the donors on her caseload? And does the plan for connecting take into account the tiering of donors done earlier in the plan? The MGO will spend disproportionately more time with her A donors, slightly less with the B donors and even less with the C donors. I am interested in knowing that a MGO is actually connecting with every donor on her caseload and that every connection is purposeful and progressively moving the donor-organization relationship forward. That relationship should build to where donor passions and interests are fulfilled, and the organization secures financial resources for program. If that is not happening, then the MGO's work is not effective. You need to measure that.
2. <u>Number of stewardship connections</u> – Once the donor has given, there needs to be stewardship of the donor, telling her she made a difference, providing her with "proof of performance" (i.e. that the gift she gave really did something), testimonials that a life has been changed or an environmental or animal problem has been addressed, etc. You will want to know that the MGO is actually providing all of this information back to the donor.
3. <u>Number of asks</u> – Conceptually, every donor on the caseload needs to be asked at least once a year. Some may be asked more than once, because the cadence of the relationship and the satisfaction the donor is receiving in the relationship is such that he wants to give more. But minimally, there should be 150 asks, and these asks should be calendared in a plan – which is why you can report on them. Were they actually done? Were they done when the plan called for them to be done?
4. <u>Working the plan for each caseload donor</u> – After actually creating a plan for each donor, the next most critical point in caseload management is working the plan. It is important to know that the MGO actually did what he said he would do. You need to measure this.
5. <u>How did each donor perform year to year?</u> – At Veritus Group, we like to have at least a four-year giving history of each donor on the MGO's qualified caseload. We want to be able to see quickly what the donor has been doing (or not doing) over time. You will want to know what the story is behind each donor's increase or decrease in giving. The MGO needs to know the story and be able to share it. At a macro level, you can report how many caseload donors are up YTD over last YTD, how many are staying even with last year's giving, and how many are down. For the donors that are down, you need to hear the story on those donors.
6. <u>Total Dollars Raised</u> – And then, of course, dollars raised. When you sum up all the dollars raised for every donor on the caseload, it gives you a good view of how the caseload is performing economically this YTD over last YTD.

We realize that many folks want to have solid numbers and percentages that measure every aspect of caseload management. What has been frustrating to many of our colleagues is that even when they have all of those metrics and measurements in place, the caseload doesn't grow, and the MGO seems not to be as effective as they would wish.

This very point is why caseload management and measurement of performance has to be more hands-on, and the traditional numbers can't possibly tell the whole story – a story that can only be uncovered by sitting with the MGO and going through the caseload donor by donor, making sure that (a) a meaningful connection is being made in each case, and (b) the connections are progressing toward the fulfillment of the donors' passions and interests, which will result in an ask and a gift.

This is precisely what the MGO is trying to do with each and every donor. He is sitting with that donor, uncovering what that donor wants in the relationship, and then setting about to make those wants a reality as they align to the needs of the organization. This is careful and purposeful activity that is measured, strategic, timely and progressive.

True caseload management is doing what we would ideally and strategically be doing with one donor, but doing it with 149 other donors and then making sure all of the activity is purposeful and effective. This is what we should be measuring and reporting on.

Who Gets Credit?

In most every situation our team goes into, there is always someone who is justifiably concerned, sometimes *obsessed* with who gets the credit in the major gift program. Most often it is a person in finance who is worn down by development people who, according to them, double count donations and take credit for gifts they had nothing to do with.

This concern is understandable. When a MGO has over 1,000 donors on his caseload and he is taking credit for every gift from every one of those donors and claiming brilliant success for his "over $1 million dollar caseload," it's no wonder the finance folks are up in arms. Everyone knows (except the MGO) that you cannot serve 1,000 donors.

Or there is the situation where a MGO meets a donor who is not on her caseload, and she discovers that the donor is about to give a six-figure gift; she quickly adds that donor to her caseload in order to take credit for the gift. This actually happens!

Or the MGO who does nothing with the donor on her caseload and just sits back to let direct mail bring in gifts from that donor – but she still gets credit for it.

It's no wonder that finance people and managers get cynical about credit issues. We don't blame them. Now, to be clear, most MGOs we meet are operating with integrity as they manage their caseloads and take credit for gifts that rightfully belong to them.

But there is a lot of concern in this area: what does the MGO get credit for? Here's a simple, straight-forward list of credit criteria which I have adapted from work we have done with The Salvation Army Western Territory.

A gift is attributable as credit to a MGO *if* all of these are true:

- The donor making the gift is currently assigned to the MGO (on his/her caseload)
- The gift was made by the donor after assignment to the MGO
- The MGO can document activity, prior to the gift, of purposeful and meaningful engagement and connection with the donor.

These criteria apply regardless of the channel through which the donor chooses to make the donation or a strategy or campaign that caused it including:

- Direct mail remittance
- White mail
- Family foundation
- Donor advised fund
- Matching gifts
- Securities
- Internet
- An event
- Capital campaign
- Telephone
- Planned gifts
- …or almost any other way a gift might come in.

As it relates to planned giving, the MGO receives 100% credit if the criteria above apply AND if the MGO engaged the donor in conversation about the advisability of considering a planned gift AND the MGO actively worked to involve a planned giving officer in the conversation.

Here's the big point. We assume that every MGO has a qualified caseload of 150 donors with whom the MGO is having meaningful connections. Between the MGO and the mailings and events that reach every donor, there is a lot of activity and communication going on.

All of this communication activity (direct marketing in any form: print, online, electronic and events and other types of messaging) will, most assuredly, cause some of the donors to respond affirmatively and send in a gift. Sometimes they will send in a gift via white mail – a plain envelope with a live stamp with no response device or clue as to what may have piqued their interest.

In some cases, the donor may have been to some public meeting or event, run into an executive of the organization, had a conversation and sent in a gift as a result.

Or maybe there is a capital campaign going on and the donor gave a gift toward it. Or the Planned Giving Officer may have had a conversation with the donor that resulted in a current gift. Regardless, in ALL of these situations the MGO gets the credit. *All of the credit.*

We had situation once where finance – bless their hearts – produced a report on one MGO (whom they seem to have had a particular need to put down) where his total year-to-date revenue was hacked down by over 40% because:

- This much came in a direct mail return envelope.
- This much came in from an event the donor went to.
- This much came in via white mail and would have come in anyway.
- And on and on and on and on….

We talked with the Development Director about this situation. We pointed out that before we started working with his MGO, the year-to-year value of the group of donors he was managing was dropping off at an alarming 56% the first year and 45% the second year. This means that if the caseload was $1 million in the first year, it was $540,000 in the second year and $243,000 the third year! That's a lot of money out the door!

And now the MGO's caseload was retaining value and growing. In fact, proper management of most caseloads will reduce attrition to single digits. Why? Because the MGO is having meaningful connections with the donors. So just moving value attrition from 56% to 7% or even 10% puts a lot of money right back into the organization. Most folks don't realize this or, if they do, they don't accept it.

Hmm… Why is this? Could it be because the MGO was engaging with these good donors and they are now receptive to all kinds of things?

So why does a MGO get credit for all the revenue that comes from their caseload donors?

**Because when a donor is engaged and managed by an MGO,
giving goes up from that donor or is, at least,
retained in equal value from prior years.
There is a direct correlation between
the MGO involvement and retained value.**

If you are having trouble with "the credit thing" in your organization and you have a finance department that is pecking the life out of you by taking away credit for many of the gifts your donors are giving, you need a manager who is your advocate and is arguing the case with management. Part of that case needs to be about reduction of value attrition.

If you don't have an advocate and your manager is part of the pecking game, you may want to leave the organization and let them have their year-to-year losses from the donors you are managing. Perhaps then they will understand what we are all trying to say.

Pay for Performance?

What should a non-profit organization pay for a fully functional MGO? Our Veritus team has seen annual salaries for MGOs in the teens – yes, below $20,000 – and as high as $180,000.

Then there's the question of paying for performance, i.e. giving bonuses or some sort of incentive to reward MGOs for "bringing in the money." More on that later.

One data point is true: competent and experienced MGOs are difficult to find, which is why they are likely to be paid more than the average salary in your development department. But should you pay 20% or 50% more than you pay others in your department? And if you think you should, how do you justify it?

Well, here is how we think about it, and it is a pure economic formula that has two parts. First is the overall economic context of fundraising in a nonprofit, which is measured by ROI (return on investment). Second, a formula for basing pay on the caseload value and other internal factors. Lastly, I will look at some performance incentives that are emerging in major gift work.

First, the overall economic context. One of the key principles of all fundraising is that there should be a ROI figure attached to every fundraising function. Why? Because the core objective of fundraising is to produce net revenue to do program – to accomplish the mission for which the nonprofit exists.

If you are spending $1 on fundraising, you should be getting back more than that dollar so that there is something left over to do good. This is true for all fundraising functions with the exception of donor acquisition – where money is lost in the first cycle in order to secure a donor who contributes much more in the future.

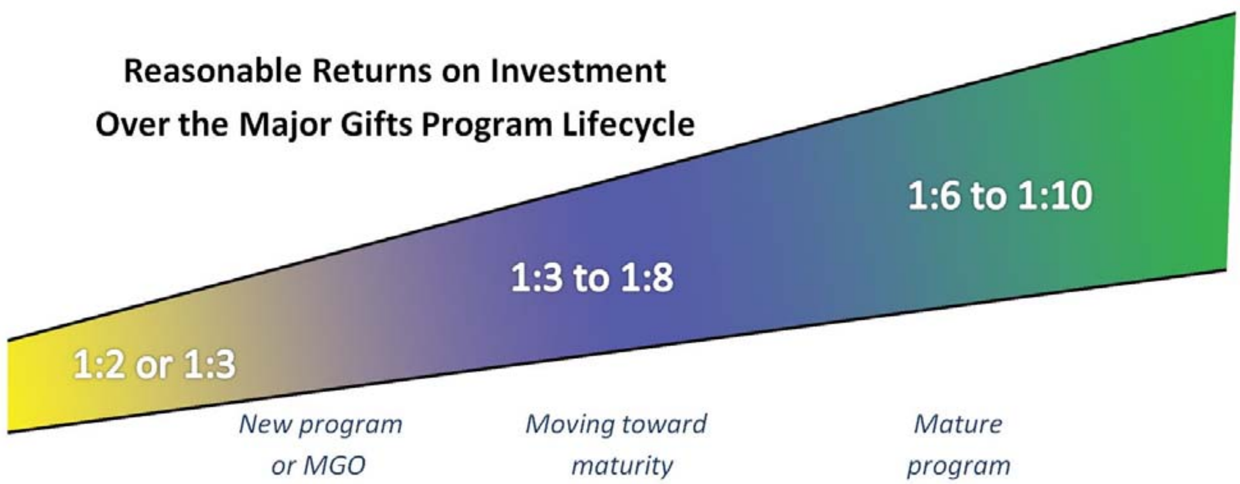
The major gift area, whether it is managing individuals or institutions (corporate, business, foundations, etc.), is an area that should always develop net revenue, because direct marketing has done the "heavy lifting" and delivered good donors from which a MGO can create a qualified caseload.

But what net revenue or what ROI is acceptable in major gifts? Here is how to think about it.

Most direct marketing programs are delivering a ROI of 1:3 or 1:4. For every dollar out, $3 or $4 comes back. So the first thing to do is get a fix on what ROI your direct marketing is delivering to the organization. That will set a baseline for how to think about major gift expenses and revenue and MGO pay.

The next step is to determine whether your major gift program is just starting out, developing toward maturity or mature. Since major donor relationships take time to develop, you cannot expect a high ROI when you are just starting a program. Our rule of thumb for ROI by life stage of the program is as follows:

- **Starting out:** ROI should be around 1:2 or more, although we have seen them at a breakeven for the first year, which is acceptable. Remember, it takes time to develop relationships; if you are just starting a major gift program, the MGO's all-in costs (compensation and operating expenses) need time to "catch up" to increasing revenue.
- **Developing toward maturity**: ROI should be in the 1:3 to 1:8 range – and it should certainly be equal to or better than your direct marketing ROI.
- **Mature**: ROI should be in the 1:6 to 1:10 or more range.



We sometimes get into some heated discussions with managers who want to argue that a major gift program, when starting off, should deliver substantially better value than a direct marketing program and that the initial ROI must be higher, like 1:5 etc.

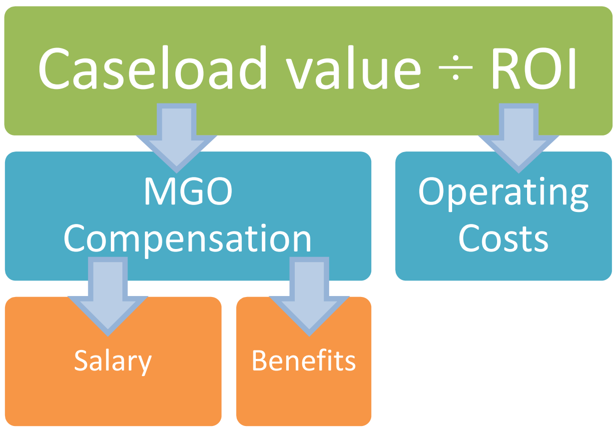
We have to point out to these managers that their direct marketing file is losing value and donors every year at an alarming rate, resulting in a very poor ROI once you account for attrition and the need for additional donor acquisition. When managed by a MGO, donor attrition slows dramatically in a way that has significant real value, justifying a lower ROI starting out.

For example, we recently looked at an organization's file where the group of active donors who gave at least $1,000 in one year experienced attrition at an annual rate of 41%. These are high-value donors who just went away or, at least, stopped giving – and the organization lost $3.2 million in one year's potential gifts from this group.

In that same organization, the attrition of caseload donors of the MGOs we manage is between 7-11%, retaining substantial economic value for the organization. The organization is far better off paying for a MGO to manage these donors, even with all of his or her expenses, than to leave the donors in direct marketing where there are substantial losses. **Just the reduction of loss in the first year is sufficient justification to allow for a low start up ROI in major gifts.** This is how a manager starting a major gift program should think about this.

So let's say you are willing to start with a breakeven or 1:2 to 1:3 ROI for your major gift program. Now the job is to figure out what to pay the MGO. Of course you have to take into account all your current pay scales and what HR and Finance think – although you should be careful with that, as you can quickly get into paying very little.

Here is how we would go about figuring out MGO pay:



1. Start with an estimate of the first year caseload value the MGO will handle. If you have 150 qualified donors on a caseload and the average gift of each of those donors is $3,000, then your caseload value is $450,000.
2. Then determine what your desired first year ROI should be. If it is 1:2 then you have $225,000 to play with on all in MGO costs. If it is 1:3 then you have $150,000.
3. Now figure out base pay and operating costs. Let's say you picked 1:3 ROI. Your expense budget is $150,000. Your MGO operating costs (office, travel, research – all the costs) could easily be $50,000, leaving $100,000 for compensation. But employee benefits could be $25,000 of that, leaving a compensation budget of $75,000 plus or minus.
4. Lastly, square this number with the internal ranges. You do have to pay attention to what others are paid, although in our opinion, MGO salaries tend to be higher, just like in the commercial world where sales rep compensation tends to be higher.

That's the formula with a bit of give and take for what ROI you pick, what the culture will allow, what the other pay scales are, etc. Don't forget to justify your first year ROI using the value attrition losses mentioned earlier. This is a real argument which must be considered.

Now to the question of incentive pay in major gifts. Drew Lindsay has written about this recently, and those writings will be the basis for us to take a look at this area.

The University of Pittsburgh has introduced a five-step salary scale that guarantees fundraisers a raise and promotion every three years — if they meet annualized targets on six measures of performance. Officials say the new pay system aims to answer a common complaint among major gift officers: that they have no clear career paths or tracks for advancement.

Here's how the University of Pittsburgh incentive pay system works.

Performance targets. Managers have identified six data points that most clearly distinguished the star MGOs from others:

1. Donor visits
2. Donor contacts
3. Agreements submitted to donors
4. Agreements accepted
5. Gifts originated and closed with a new donor
6. Total dollars raised.

Evaluation cycle. MGOs are evaluated annually based on the above six metrics averaged over the preceding three years. Awarding bonuses or pay raises based on a single year's performance is "nutty," says one executive, because of natural fluctuations in giving.

Five-step pay scale. MGOs move up in salary when they meet annualized targets in each of the six areas. MGOs at the bottom of the pay scale, for example, get a raise if they meet or exceed an average of:

- 45 donor visits.
- 1,000 MGO contacts.
- Six agreements submitted to donors.
- Four agreements accepted.
- Three origination gifts.
- $500,000 raised.

To reach the top of the pay scale, fundraisers must bring in $3 million per year when averaged over three years.

Big raises. MGOs will still collect university-wide annual pay increases, which have been 1 or 2 percent in recent years. University officials say the three-year performance pay bumps will be significantly larger.

Climbing the ladder. Performance expectations increase with each salary step, but not all MGOs will be able to move up. "This isn't a way to give everybody a raise," a university executive says. "This is to keep exceptional performers."

An end to bidding wars. Because the new salary scale establishes exactly what MGOs are worth, the university will no longer match offers that its major gift officers receive from other institutions.

Recruitment tool. The university, which will hire as many as 15 additional fundraisers in a new campaign, outlines its salary scale in a booklet given to job candidates. It states that they want people who want a career at the university, not just a job.

This plan balances donor contact (meaningful connections) and dollars raised, while giving the high-performing MGO a clear compensation path that benefits the organization. Some version of this system is worth considering – although we would skew the criteria toward donor retention and some metric that measures how effectively a MGO helped fulfill the passions and interests of their assigned donors.

The bottom line is that you cannot separate MGO compensation from the amounts they raise, since the ultimate objective is to secure net revenue for program. And there is merit to considering some sort of incentive program that rewards the high-performing MGO for helping donors fulfill their interests and passions. But be careful to not make this journey all about the money, because that is a very dangerous and worthless place to be. Ultimately you want MGOs who are passionate about helping donors fulfill their passions and interests, and then you want to fairly and generously reward those MGOs that do this well.

Keep Focused on What Matters

You can obsess about performance. You can worry about the numbers. You can compare yourself to other MGOs or other managers of MGOs. You can wonder why you don't get the credit you deserve. Your world can be filled with worry, angst, fear. There may be jealousy, anger and resentment. There may even be a touch of inadequacy.

This is the dark world one enters when the focus is ***only*** on performance.

It's true that MGO or major gift performance is an important area. And it must be done – the evaluation and measuring must happen.

But if that is all you do to yourself, as a MGO; or if you are a manager of MGOs and that is all you do – then you have left out the main thing – a focus on the good that has been done.

Remember the good that is done through your work:

- You have forever changed the life of another person through the help your organization gave.
- You have forever saved a forest, or a waterway, or an animal.
- You have forever changed a system that was unjust or participated in a life-saving discovery or affected the environment in a way that made a difference.
- You have forever changed the life of a donor, fulfilling their deepest passions and wishes for the good their money would do.
- You have spoken and written a kind word to a donor, making them feel special for caring, and affirming the good person they are.
- You have demonstrated kindness in your workplace and brought a renewed valuing of giving among those you journey with.
- And you have been good to yourself by using your gifts to help others address, in meaningful ways, some of the most pressing problems of our hurting planet.

Stop and take a look at what you have done. It is good. It is valuable. It is lasting. It is important. It matters.

Stop and focus on that. This whole thing we call major gifts is not just about the money or measuring the money or measuring the securing of money, as important as it is. This journey is about doing what really matters. And you are right in the thick of it.

Stop right now and be quiet as you read this. Bring to mind the conversations you have had with donors, program people and the beneficiaries of your organization – whether they are people, places or animals. Think about what has happened there and take it in. Focus on what matters. It will lift your spirit and get your eyes back on the right things.

And then remember to go to this place at least once a week, where you lift yourself up from the fray and remember what it is really all about.

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Veritus Group is a full-service mid and major gift consulting agency serving non-profits all over the world. We help create, build and manage major gift and mid-level giving programs by combining donor-centered strategy with solid management that is focused on accountability.

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