



Stanford eCorner

Fundraising for the Non-Profit

Christine Benninger, *Humane Society of Silicon Valley*

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We may not always feel comfortable asking for money, but it's a crucial component of a non-profit enterprise's success. But don't think of it as requesting a handout, says Christine Benninger, Humane Society Silicon Valley's President; think of it as sharing an opportunity. People love being a part of your mission, she says, and it business-critical to keep your operations afloat.



Transcript

One of the things I had the students who have covered with other guests is the whole idea of raising money to support the venture. Talk a little about how you think about that problem because it's fundamentally different than the start-up, the technology for profit sector that a lot of times they hear about. Love to talk about the capital and financial base. So one of the things that really scared me about the job when I took it was fund raising. I mean, I think that that's not something that culturally we feel comfortable in our community doing is asking somebody for money. It sort of reminds us of the homeless person on the street asking for a quarter. What I found is that if you really believe in something, it's not about asking for money. It's actually sharing an opportunity. We are incredibly reliant on our community, either to support us through donations or to utilize our services. And, you know, it's really about getting your message out there.

Really believing in what you're doing. Not being afraid to help share. Giving other people an opportunity to make a difference in the community. We get turned down but more times than not, you don't and people love being a part of what we're doing. So. So just to be clear. How do you pay the bills? What's the business model of HSSV? So the business model of HSSV right now is 60 % of our revenue stream comes from donations, community donations, 40 % from services. So the services are adoptions, they knew that we have a pet store. We are always looking to sort of expand our service opportunities. In the new facility one of the exciting things about that is we are expanding the services that we have.

We're offering to our community and that will expand our revenue base and allow us to diversify our revenue base. So we're not as dependent on any one particular type of revenue stream. But our funding model is very heavily driven by our community donations.