

Philanthropy Coaching Case Study: Chad ***Focus and Planning for the “Big Dream”***

With Mark Ewert, *The Giving Coach*



Context

Chad (pseudonym) is an urbane middle-aged man, settled in a career, home, and partnership. Like many people, he has handled his money responsibly so is quite secure, yet not wealthy by most measures. He has also been financially generous with his gifts to non-profits over the years. Recently, he and his partner have bought a second home in a warm climate as an investment, to prepare for retirement, and as a place where Chad’s parents can go in the winter when it is snowy where they live.

Introduction

After attending a financial planning seminar series that I hosted, Chad approached me about philanthropy coaching. In recent years he had been thinking about his legacy and what he wants to accomplish more broadly in his life. He considers charitable giving as a way to make something lasting, and derives a lot of pleasure from his giving, so wanted to shift into a higher gear with it.

After a preliminary conversation over coffee, Chad decided to contract with me for the *Skillful Giving Coaching Package*. Like many couples, he and his partner have some shared financial resources and some separate, although they already started planning their retirement together. They also had different philosophies about philanthropy, so most of their charitable giving was not shared. Chad decided to do *Skillful Giving* just himself and include his partner later, once he himself was clearer about his giving priorities.

Goals

In our first session, which includes some orientation to the process, Chad was glad to hear that I would not be asking for access to any financial accounts, or even a spreadsheet about his financial resources. I would rely on him to report on his finances as we needed that information and make decisions on how to fund his giving. I assured him that, although I am neither a lawyer, investment professional, nor an tax accountant, I would provide information about the different legal and accounting options he could use to fund philanthropy projects. That way he would be knowledgeable when talking to his other financial advisors.

After we spent some time talking about his life course so far, his career, experiences, and important relationships, he set a couple of goals for his philanthropy: to maximize his giving by increasing the amount he gives and being more strategic to achieve more impact. He also wanted to focus on a “big dream”, although did not yet know what that would be.

Chad had a history of giving to a lot of organizations for different reasons. Some were long standing relationships, some were newer. Some were to organizations that he knew almost nothing about and some where he was deeply involved in other ways. There were a couple of organizations that were connected to his family, because of the geography or focus of their mission activities. He did some research between our meetings to find out more about these organizations, using guidance I gave him in coaching.

Outcomes

Through his analysis and research, Chad reduced the number of non-profits he would benefit going forward, and significantly increased his giving to some of those remaining. He did this first by deciding to increase his overall philanthropy budget, from 7% to 9% of his income, and then by eliminating some nonprofits that he deemed essential to his purposes; he reallocated those funds.

He also found a couple of organizations that would help him to achieve the “big dream” he had discovered in the coaching process. With those priority organizations, he realized that he could benefit them in three ways. First he would increase his giving and in one instance include them in his estate plans. Secondly, he would volunteer and identified the type of volunteer work where he could make the most difference to their mission. And thirdly, he could engage people in his life in these particular nonprofits, which might increase their charitable donations and gain them more volunteers.

After our work was done, Chad planned to do some more financial planning to see if he could free up more resources to allocate to charity, and to share his plans with his partner to see if this might create an opportunity to plan their philanthropy together. He also wanted to engage the rest of his family about opportunities for making some donations together.

Reflection

Through the *Skillful Giving Coaching Package*, Chad gain more focus, strategy, and perhaps most importantly excitement about his philanthropy efforts. He came to understand that gaining the greatest impact from his charitable dollars starts with his own education and planning. Chad determined that the cost of the *Skillful Giving Coaching Package* was about 7.4% of his total giving goal for one year. As he estimated that his plan would be good for the next 5 years, and the education much longer, he considered this a very good value for the investment.

About Mark Ewert, the Giving Coach

I am an independent professional, not the agent for any cause or nonprofit, so I serve only the best interests of my clients.

As a Georgetown University and ICF-certified coach, I specialize in philanthropic and leadership coaching, helping to grow skillful financial generosity within families and communities. My background as a nonprofit fundraiser, and a consultant for religious organizations, allows me to bring: intelligence about how nonprofits work, experience with community-building, and a grounding in a range of faith traditions. My new book, *The Generosity Path: Finding the Richness in Giving* is out now: www.generositypath.com/the-book/



**Call Mark Ewert today to start
being a more skillful giver.**

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Sometimes philanthropy seems like a little boat floating precariously on a vast and angry ocean. But I've come to believe that in answering a few key questions we can shape the rudder and sails of that boat.

- Alan Alda ; actor, author, and thoughtful philanthropist