



Generating the will to give



The Novarese Community Foundation has embraced fund development by thinking long term and by getting out into the territory. Here, Gianluca Vacchini, describes their approach of asset building through generating knowledge and trust. This has resulted in over 100 active funds, and importantly created the opportunity for attracting the ‘unexpected’ donor.

*Gianluca Vacchini,
Secretary General,
Novarese Community Foundation*

First, let's provide a framework for our foundation. Fondazione Comunità Novarese is a foundation that is about 25 years old (it was established on April the 19th, 2000), and operates in the province of Novara. The city of Novara is in Piedmont, on the border with Lombardy, forty minutes by train from Milan and one hour from Turin. Novara has about one hundred thousand inhabitants, its province has about three hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, forty thousand of whom are of foreign origin. The territory is divided into eighty-seven municipalities. The unemployment rate is six percent, the average taxable income is more than twenty-four thousand euros.

Our Foundation, in its early years, did not carry out any fundraising activities. The board of the Foundation believed that it was enough to talk to already know entrepreneurs and thus obtain large donations. And the management's concern was: 'Yes, but if you are successful in fundraising then we have to hire staff to handle this new work!' With the economic crisis of 2008-2010, we started fundraising for those who were in need due to job loss. The response was extraordinary, at least for our volumes, because in a very short time we raised more than one million euros.

FCN currently has more than one hundred active in-house funds. There are funds established in memory of loved ones, funds established by families, thematic funds, funds established by associations and parishes. The number of funds established by companies is increasing as they see the Foundation as a partner for their CSR strategies. Companies, including small and medium-sized ones, create current expenditure funds to support projects submitted by non-profit organizations, projects that have been examined and selected by the Foundation. The Foundation becomes the donors' guarantee, assuring them that their donation will be successful, that their chosen project will be realized. **If a donor, whether an individual or a company, asks**



for anonymity, the Foundation guarantees anonymity: many of our donors ask us to guarantee their anonymity.

To increase the Foundation's assets, we nowadays aim to obtain charitable wills and bequests. In recent years we have collected eleven of them for a total of around eleven million euros.

How do we manage to obtain so many wills? **We certainly have our own communication campaign**, preparing brochures and printed materials to be handed out to those who contact us for information. The slogan we used in our new campaign is 'The Future is the most beautiful memory you can leave behind'. **But this is certainly not enough to attract new people interested in creating a will.**

In fact, we do fundraise, and bequest campaigns every day. How? By being present on the territory.

For every contribution we donate to a non-profit organization, we ask for two meetings: one with the association's board, where we explain our working method, who we are, what we expect from them. We explain to the non-profit organization how to introduce our working method to their local community. In fact, we expect that in return for a contribution from the Foundation, the local community will collect donations that will pass through our bank accounts and that we will make available at the end of the project, together with our contribution. **The donations we collect for projects are small, under 50 euros on average.** But they allow us to get in touch with a lot of people.

The second meeting is a gathering for the local population, where the association explains the project to the community, and we explain what we do. In this way, we also help the local associations, which are not normally used to explaining their projects to the communities, to their neighbors.

On these occasions, we talk about the possibility of making a will in favor of the Foundation. **With these meetings in the area, more than a hundred a year, we meet a multitude of people** and so the Foundation becomes known among possible donors. This is also how wills are received.

A peculiar thing: **many wills, or many large donations, come from 'unexpected' people**, people who have accumulated real fortunes over the years, without being famous or having held important jobs in the past. In the fundraising imagination, these are not worth asking. And, instead, **they are precisely the people we are looking for!**

Our idea is: everybody tends to donate to UNICEF, to MSF, to these big organizations that have the possibility to do very big and expensive communication campaigns. **How can we, a small community foundation that cannot spend on structure or expensive marketing campaigns, convince the local community to also donate to their community foundation?**



Simple: we have to meet the people. People tend not to know what a foundation does, let alone a community foundation, they do not know what philanthropy is.

In these meetings, we **explain** to people that the foundation does not only accept large donations, but also small donations. That **anyone can donate**, not just rich people. That even a **small local company** can donate through the Foundation, not just a multinational corporation. That you **can write a will** even if you have children, and that it is better to write a will if you do not have children. And that in your will you can also include the small organization where you live, not just the big international organization.

These meetings generate knowledge and trust. And, sooner or later, wills, or large donations, arrive.

Is this process tiring? Of course. But it is possible.

Gianluca Vacchini

Secretary General, Novarese Community Foundation

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