The 4 Things You Need to Know about a Prospect

One of the most helpful things I ever learned as a development executive is this: there are only four things you need to know about a prospect.

Through the years, I have used this framework to quickly and systematically evaluate prospects, regardless of type or size. This framework helps drive prospect management discussions and identify where the weak links are as a prospect is led toward solicitation.

1. **Financial capacity**
   What is the prospect *capable* of giving? Notice, this is not what a prospect *likely* to give. Is the prospect capable of a planned gift, a six-figure major gift, or a smaller, annual fund contribution? Obviously, the higher the capacity, the greater the interest of the development executive.

2. **Relationship to your organization**
   Is the prospect aligned or linked to your non-profit organization? If so, how? For how long? If the prospect is not linked, how can the development office stimulate a relationship?

3. **Philanthropic interests**
   What is the prospect interested in giving to philanthropically? Where do those interests align with what you're raising money for? Are there variations on a theme that might make a gift plausible for your organization?

4. **Personal network**
   Who knows the prospect? Who has influence with the prospect? Who can make contacts, get appointments, make solicitations, and encourage gifts?

By using this framework for evaluating prospects, you will be able to quickly group prospects in terms of priority levels.