



## 20 Closes

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## 00:00 Greeting

Hi, I'm Nick Fellers, thanks for listening to this audio on closing. You know, through For Impact and The Suddes Group, we have the opportunity, the occasion, the chance to work with hundreds of different nonprofit leaders, NGO leaders, for profits, and really what we're calling "for impact" leaders. All of them need help with more resources, more funding. So we provide a lot of training and coaching, and one of the common questions I always receive is, "How do you get to the ask?" Or maybe I'll hear from somebody that says, "Nick, I can really tell the story, I get very passionate about that. But then I clam up when it comes time to ask, when it comes time to close."

I've titled this "All About Closing," but it's really all about asking: the questions to ask, when to ask, what to ask. At each of our boot camps, we do several role plays. We demonstrate to you how a real visit might work. And everybody's always trying to take notes. They're trying to write down exactly what we said on the ask. I'm going to talk a lot about authenticity. I resisted putting together this audio for years because I didn't want to create a bunch of parrots out there; I want you to think for yourself, I want you to be authentic. But, you know what, I thought back to when I was getting started, and I must have listened to Zig Ziglar and Brian Tracy and other salespeople hundreds of times on their audio cassettes. So I'm putting this together with the idea that you'll listen to it, you'll be inspired, you'll build confidence, and develop your own closings. And really, what I want to do is I want you to be able to authentically ask--engage people in a dialogue.

I'm going to frame this around a number of different closes or questions. In general, I'm going to talk about when to use the close, what to say, and where I can, I'll offer stories and examples of what someone might be able to say to you in return. Of course, you know, you can mix and match closes and develop your own closes.

## 02:05 The Clueless Close

So with that, I'm going to dive right into the very first close I love, called the Clueless Close. This close has made more money for more people coming out of the boot camp than just about anything else we have to offer. And I think it does because it's very easy. You don't need to know anything. It's one question: "Where do you see yourself?" That's the question. And here's how it works.

Maybe you walk through your funding plan with somebody, and this could be a classic campaign funding pyramid. So imagine you have a funding pyramid on the table in front of you, and you're with a prospect, and it depicts that you need one prospect at \$1 million, two at \$500,000, four at \$250,000, and so on and so forth. And you simply ask, "Based on everything we've talked about today, where do you see yourself?" It's a great way to start a conversation. I'd say it's raised more money for more people coming out of boot camp. People have told me, they've told Tom, "You guys wouldn't believe it, we've raised millions of dollars just putting that pyramid on the table and asking the question." It's a great way to start, and I use the Clueless Close when I genuinely have no idea what to ask for. It's a great way to start the dialogue.

Now, let me tell you what, gang, you can't use the Clueless Close when you need to be asking for a million dollars. No one's ever going to look at the sheet of paper and select a high number on there. So you've got to be prepared for that. But it's a great way to get someone invested, engage, involved. Start the dialogue--the Clueless Close.

### 03:35 The Listening Close

The next one is called the Listening Close. But it really, for me, is just listening. As you work your way through this audio, you're going to be thinking about a lot of different things you could be saying. Selling is not telling. This is not the first audio to tell you that--if you've read any sales books, you've been to boot camp, or you've ever done any selling, period, you know that selling is not telling. It's really much more about listening to the prospect and responding, or responding with a question. And I've isolated this or broken this out as a specific close because sometimes, gang, it's not about what you say, it's about just shutting up and listening.

I want to tell you a story about one time I was working on a sports commission campaign. Sports commissions are--they're coming about in a number of different cities now--often started by the Convention Visitors Bureau. They're really... the purpose for them is to drive economic development by bringing sporting events to cities, such as the Olympic Trials, Final Four, these kinds of things. (Indianapolis has a great sports commission.) Well, one time I was doing some visits and I went to go visit with one of the members of our advisory boards, not very engaged with the project of the program. I started out the visit and I simply asked, "Mr. Investor, what do you know about the project?" And gang, he unloaded on me. He was angry. He was... he proceeded to spend the next 25 minutes telling me everything that was wrong with our program. I took notes, I made notes about everything that he was talking about, and about 25 minutes into the visit, he just said to me, "You know what, Nick, if we were just doing bass fishing, heck, I'd put money into that." Wouldn't you know it, gang, we had bass fishing as part of our plan. I simply had to turn the sheet of paper over and show it to him and said, "Mr. Investor, that's fantastic. Because that's exactly what we want to talk to you about." And that was closed right there.

Sometimes, gang, you will be in a position where somebody wants to just unload on you. And I think we're all a little scared of that. You don't need to be scared of that. Very often, if you're going to go out and visit with a prospect one-on-one, face-to-face, shoulder-to-shoulder, you've got to remember, this is probably one of the first times in the history of your organization that somebody has actually gone out to listen. Maybe it's a board member. They come in and attend board meetings; no one's ever said, "What do you think about the organization?" So if you find yourself in that situation where someone's unloading, and they seem to be angry, what I want you to do is realize that as passion. Let them talk, and just listen. And sometimes, they'll talk themselves into funding your project.

## 06:30 The Higher Level Close

Next, I want to talk about the Higher Level Close, and I really think I could call this the Steve Jobs Close. There's a story, an urban legend; I don't know if it's true, but it's quintessential Steve Jobs. You know, in 1984, Apple was looking to hire a new CEO. They said, "Thanks, Steve, you're doing great, and we want to bring in someone who's maybe a little bit more experienced, skilled, seasoned." So they interviewed John Sculley of Pepsi-Cola. And they spent a few days with him talking about benefit packages, the market segment, market plans, and everything else. At the conclusion, he said, "Thanks for interviewing me. I'm not really interested." Now, again, urban legend, no idea if this is true, but as the story goes, Steve Jobs said, "Let me have a stab at it." So he flies out, meets John Sculley, and they go for a walk. At the conclusion of the walk, he turns to John and says, "Here's what it comes down to. Do you want to sell sugar water to kids all your life? Or do you want to change the world?"

Well, John Sculley took the job, said he wanted to change the world. Now, he went to Apple and tanked Apple. That's a completely different story. But I love that as a Higher Level Close. How can you incorporate that into your conversation? "Do you want to sell sugar water all your life, or do you want to change the world?" I think what Steve did is: he really went back up to the higher level, the higher purpose. I'm a really big proponent of selling and closing at 30,000 feet. And here's why. You ARE changing the world. You're all changing the world. You're saving lives, changing lives, and impacting lives. You're transforming your community.

Not too long ago, I was on a visit. And we got... we were trying to do a new building for Junior Achievement, one of the campaigns I was working on. Somewhere along the lines, the building... we got very into the mechanics of the building, and what would be the restructuring and refurbishing costs. And I thought, "Man, we are getting really deep into this, how am I going to pull this back out to the real big picture?" And I did a Steve Jobs. I said, "Mr. Investor, here's the deal. The building is just a vehicle. It's just a means to an end. Really, everything we've talked about here today, and everything on the sheet of paper in front of you, and the discussions we've had, it's really about transforming Cincinnati. It's really about transforming this city. And that's the discussion we need to be having. And that's the question we need to be asking is, is that something you'd like to help with?"

It's amazing where you can take the conversation and the question if you take it back up to 30,000 feet. So that's a way to close someone at 30,000 feet, bring it up back out of the weeds. "Is that something you'd like to help with? Because if it is, I'd like to talk to you about being the lead in that vision." "I'd like to talk to you about helping us make a lead investment in this campaign." Or, "I'd like to talk to you about helping us with one of the projects that's really going to be helping us to transform Cincinnati." So many different ways you can use that. But again, if you find yourself lost in the weeds, just remember Steve Jobs: "Do you want to change the world?"

## 09:57 The Qualifying Close

All right, up next is the Qualifying Close. You know, very often we're talking about strategy and someone will say to me, "Well, Nick, we're not ready to ask for money yet. So instead, here's all these things we're going to do in the interim." You call it cultivation, I call it a waste of time. I want you to ask, always ask. And if you feel like it's too soon to go for the close or the ask, you can do the Qualifying Close. Maybe you're a startup; you need ten angel investors. The discussion might go something like this. You might say, "Nick, here's where we are right now with our funding plan. In order to get from point A to point B, we're going to need ten angel investors at \$100,000. And you know what, Nick, this is the first time we're getting together, so I want to acknowledge that. But what I want to know is, would you be willing to have a conversation sometime this year about maybe being an angel investor?" Or you could say, "Nick, would you be willing to have a discussion about this angel investor level in the coming months, or as we continue to work together?"

Now, why do I like that? You have a number on the table, you're qualifying everything, but you're not trying to hit someone over the head. So a quick story about the Qualifying Close; a few weeks ago, I received a phone call from a client, and we got to talking, and he says, "Nick, I've got a great prospect." And here's how he... here's how he described the prospect. He said, "First of all, you need to know that he's... my client's very much into ending poverty." That's the message, that's the napkin message. The person with whom he spoke was very much into trying to end homelessness, so they overlapped a lot. This person, we thought, had a lot of capacity. And my client says, "Nick, we had a great first conversation, but he's not ready for the ask yet, so we started figuring out ways we could work together. And we put together this great way for him to pilot his program at 40 of our sites over the next year. It could be... it could be big, Nick. It could be the kind of thing that could be on Oprah."

Well, a couple things happen there that make alarm bells go off in my head. First, how many of you have chased the pathway to Oprah? Now I love Oprah, don't get me wrong, but we need to be figuring out if this person is a prospect long before Oprah, number one. And number two, here, we're talking about restructuring our entire organization on the hope and the dream this person is going to be a prospect. I said to my client, "You need to ask a qualifying question." And right here, I'm going to refer to it as a Qualifying Close. See, my client needed ten angel investors for a million dollars over the course of the next year. We put together a strategy whereupon the next time they were together, my client would walk through his funding plan and say to the prospect, "Mr. Prospect, now this is one of the first few times we're still getting together where we're looking at our project together. But I want to walk you through the funding plan. And as I show you this, so we're talking about the angel investors, and my question is, again: acknowledging that we're just starting to work together, would it be possible to explore being an angel investor for \$100,000 in our organization? Would it be possible to have that conversation later on this year? Would it be possible to have that conversation at some point in the future?" A few different ways to ask the question, but it's a non-threatening way to do it. You're not exactly hitting someone between the eyeballs for \$100,000, but you're still getting the number on the table. It's a great qualifying question.

So here's what actually happened, and I love it for this story. The prospect came back and said to my client, "Actually, oh goodness, I feel like I've... I've misrepresented everything. Actually, we're looking

for people that we're working with to put \$20,000 into us," for each of their sites. You had two people playing each other, and neither of them were ready or willing to ask. Meanwhile, if they hadn't asked, they would've spent the entire year trying to get on Oprah.

Ask the qualifying question. Maybe it's the first time you're getting together with somebody and you're not comfortable hitting them between the eyes with a number. I hope this audio helps you get more comfortable with ways to talk about it, but there's many ways you can use the Qualifying Close. You could ask leadership, "Our leadership levels, would you be willing to explore that? If we got you in, and you saw our organization, and everything were up to par, and you really liked it?" Or, "This project over here around research or education--could we continue to talk to you about possibly supporting one of those projects in the coming year or two?" Or you could do as my client did: lay out the number. "We need ten angel investors; would it be possible to have the conversation with you later this year?" And in fact, I used some exact language or phraseology a couple seconds ago where I said, "Hey, I want to acknowledge... I want to acknowledge that we're just starting to get together. But I want to know if it'd be possible to have this conversation at a later time."

## 15:27 The Math Close

Up next, I want to talk about the Math Close, or I also call this the “Last Piece of the Puzzle.” This is really good for any of you that have got a very, very big funding goal. Let's say you're in a small town, and you have a \$14 million funding goal. And usually when people look at you, they think... usually when people look at you, they kind of give you that furrowed brow, kind of like, “How the heck are you going to get there?” I like the Math Close when I need to really be asking for some pretty big numbers on a pretty big vision. And here's how this might work.

My good friend, Tim, who's out in Washington State, uses this. He's doing a \$14 million campaign in a small town. And what Tim will do is, he'll actually take out a whiteboard, and after they've gone through their purpose and their priorities, Tim will actually say, “Okay, we need \$14 million. Well, I want to let you know that \$4 million of that, we're going to save for a second phase, because we've tried to make this manageable.” And maybe one of the lines Tim uses sometimes is about eating an elephant. If you've ever heard the expression, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time,” well, that's what Tim's doing here. So he's taking the \$14 million, he's starting to make it manageable. He says, “Mr. Prospect, Ms. Prospect, I'm going to take \$4 million out and just set that aside for right now. Now, that leaves us with \$10 million. Of the \$10 million, we know we've already got \$2 million committed from our parents. So now we need \$8 million. Of the next \$8 million, we've broken that down into a funding plan. And we're going to need one person at \$1.5 million, we're going to need two people at \$750,000,” and he continues to break that down in a manageable way.

And then he starts to work through and he'll say, “But you know, we've... we're already talking to somebody up here about the \$1.5 million level. And we believe that if we get that \$1.5 million, we can get everybody we need down here at the \$10,000 level. So that leaves us with about \$2 million in between.” He keeps slicing that down until there's one number left, so that the person that he's with feels like he is the last piece of the puzzle. Then he can do the Math Close. He can look him in the eye and say, “Does this all make sense? Because I'd like to talk to you about helping us with this piece of the puzzle.”

Hey, we use this all the time at colleges and universities that are running very, very large campaigns. Imagine laying out a campaign goal of \$1 billion or \$2 billion. Imagine being the prospect--you've got to be thinking, “Well, what the heck is my investment going to do towards that?” I use the Math Close when if it were me, if I were the prospect, I'd be asking that question, “What difference does it make?” And I keep breaking it down and breaking it down. You can see how the different pieces leverage off of each other. There's a great leverage line in there too, which is, “Right now, I'm talking to somebody about the \$1.5 [million] lead. And I know that if I could get two other people to step up at \$750,000, that that would help us to close the \$1.5 [million].” So you can keep breaking the math down until that piece of the puzzle seems extraordinarily... no, let me rephrase that: IS extraordinarily impactful. It's up to us to rationalize the number and communicate that to the people that we're with. The Math Close, or the “Last Piece of the Puzzle” Close.

## 19:07 Conversations to Have With Your Board

Next, I want to take you through some conversations you can have with your board. Now, if you follow Tom and I on other audios or in all of our publications, you know that we're not really big on the whole "give or get." We're not really big on board members asking their friends for money. Instead, we lay out these three funding responsibilities for every board member. First, they've got to be able to champion the cause or the organization. Secondly, they've got to be willing to invite others to hear the story, for a tour, to participate, whatever "invite" means for your organization. And thirdly, they've got to be willing to make a commensurate commitment, one that is commensurate with their own personal capacity, financial capacity, and their relationship to the cause.

Breaking down all three pieces of that, number one, got to be willing to be a champion. What does that mean? Well, I'll tell you what it doesn't mean. If the board member were to go with you on a visit, he or she cannot be apologizing for you being there. That happened to me one time, not a champion. So, at a very basic level, got to be able to speak positively about the organization.

Invite others. Now I, Nick Fellers, will actually say to the boards I'm working with, "You do not need to go ask your friends for money." In our model, and what Tom and I are trying to do, is not have the board members asking their friends for money because they end up trading dollars. Right? "You asked me this week for the Boy Scouts, and I'm going to come back and ask you next week for the Girl Scouts." You know it, they know it, it's the whole quid pro quo thing. It's not very effective, quite frankly. There's no way to really maximize the relationship. And let's think about it. First of all, we're asking the board members to ask their friends for money. And secondly, they're not very close to the programming; they can't answer those questions. And finally, they're not really engaged with the funding plan and the selling process like you are every single day. Now, if you have a board member that's out there doing incredible asks, by all means, keep using that person. But my message to you, and our message to you, is that most of the time, putting that responsibility on the board is ineffective. So instead, in our model, we have staff people making professional presentations. And again, returning to that, I'll actually say to my board members, "You do not need to ask your friends for money, but I need your help. You don't have to ask your friends for money, but I do need your help in inviting them down here to hear the story, or helping to create the invitation so that I can get into the office and set up the visit."

Thirdly--and where I'm going with this close--is, they've got to be able to make a commensurate commitment. Commensurate; that's a very important word, one Tom's used for years, and we've started using for everything. That "commensurate" word is commensurate with both their capacity and personal relationship to the cause or to the organization. That word allows you to take the conversation up a level. If you have a board chair (which by the way, means incredible relationship, right? By definition, chair of the board), and secondly, that board chair is chairperson of a Fortune 500 company, well, then he or she cannot very well look you in the eye and make a commensurate commitment for \$1,000, right? So the Commensurate Close--used very often with board, but you can use it with other great champions. Gang, a lot of us have board members that maybe are not... a lot of us have board members that maybe don't serve as a chairperson for a Fortune 500 company. Maybe this board member has, maybe this board member's active in the community, has a number of kids in school, and

it's really not possible for he or she to step up and take the lead gift. Well, kind of like the Clueless Close, in this case, I would just ask them to make a commitment that is commensurate with their finances and their relationship to the cause. And I would talk to them heart to heart. And really, I wouldn't give them a hard sell or hard close, because whether that board member gives you \$1,000 or \$1,500, it's really not going to impact the broad scope of your funding plan or campaign.

But it works the other way as well. If your board chair is chairperson of a Fortune 500 company, and they're giving you \$1,000 right now, that's not very... that's not commensurate, is it? And first, to be fair to the chairperson, most organizations have never stopped and asked. They wonder why their board doesn't give more; they have not stopped and asked one-on-one, they have not stopped to actually have a dialogue and expressed the need or expressed the funding plan and why they need the board member to give at that level. But you can use the "commensurate" word to bring about the conversation. If I were the chairperson, you could say, "Nick, you're chair of our board. And we... we need to be talking about, we need to be talking to everybody about a commitment that is commensurate with where they are in their heart, and where they are in life, and with their... with their business and everything else. So with that in mind, Nick, I need to revisit the level that you... that you're supporting us at, the level at which you're supporting us." So it's a great way to introduce you pushing them up a few levels, by using that "commensurate" word.

I've found you can also use this out in the community with somebody who has been a vocal champion for your organization and has known capacity. You can use the "commensurate" word to explain why you're pushing up a few levels in terms of the conversation, you can use the "commensurate" word to explain why you're revisiting a gift level when a commitment was made a couple of months ago; commensurate, it's a fantastic C-word.

## 25:19 The Binary Close

Moving on, I want to segue into one of my favorite analogies, which is binary and analog. Sometimes, the conversation that you have is binary, not analog, meaning it's not about the funding level--it's more about having the person in or out, right? So, binary, they're... it's either on or off, in or out. Now, sometimes I'll use the Binary Close if I'm visiting with a community member whose name, if they're investing in our cause or our organization, would lend tremendous credibility. I'll use the Binary Close if maybe, it's one of the first times I'm visiting with that profile, meaning they have not been on our board, meaning they don't have a giving history with us, meaning that there's no rationale for me to look them in the eye and really... point to a really high number. In that case, I'll use the Binary Close, and I'll say, "Hey, listen, this one's not even about the number, we just need you in. We just need you in and supporting this."

Maybe it's the museum. If you're the museum, and this person supports every cultural program in the community, supports other museums, and is a huge advocate and has come out and said that they're a fan of what you're doing, you know what? You need them in. Maybe it's not fair to ask them to take the lead, because they're taking the lead on many, many projects. And maybe it's only the first or second time you've ever visited with them. But you need to get them in; you need to get them closed. And quite frankly, as you're worried about the funding level, it's probably not fair to ask them to step up and take the lead, because it's the first time you've been in there with them. Keep in mind, it's a relationship--you can build on it. But you need to get them in; you need to ask them, "Are you in or out?"

So again, the words I'll use or a question I'll ask is, "Are you in?" Or I'll simply say, "Hey, we need you in, it's not even about the number." And I can use that when it's not about the number. Sometimes, you need \$10,000, \$30,000, or \$50,000 from a prospect, and their credibility is going to do more than you trying to do some sort of cultivation game over three years to get the million dollars. I'll tell you what my answer to that is: get them in for \$10,000 right now, then do a great recognition--get them down to your museum and show everything, do a special dinner, and continue to work on the funding plan. So sometimes it's binary, not analog.

## 27:37 Holy Audacity

Moving on next, I want to talk about Holy Audacity. And if you're listening, you're probably thinking, "How is Holy Audacity a close?" Well, we work with a lot of... with our Notre Dame background, we work with a lot of Catholic schools and Catholic education, and the Christian Brothers are one of the orders that we work with. And about five years ago, there was a new Christian Brothers school being started, and one of the brothers used the term "Holy Audacity." They had to have Holy Audacity to go into this community where the diocese had pulled out and closed a school a few years earlier. Holy Audacity, meaning people in the community didn't believe it was possible. But the brothers, through their Holy Audacity, brought the vision in, started the school out of some trailers, and have built a school up into something that has a wonderful... now, a wonderful alumni base, a number of kids have graduated. It's now a true asset to the community. But we talk about Holy Audacity, what it had to do... what it really must have taken to walk into that community, which had just closed a Catholic school, and said, "We're going to put one here."

Now, if you're not following me, the diocese had just closed the school. So imagine all the funders putting money into it and the school closing. They become skeptics. They become skeptics, they start wondering, "If I put money into you, how do I know you're not going to close?" So to ask people to support that? Yeah, Holy Audacity. But I love that, especially for people that have any sort of a mission tied to religious faith. Or, if you're truly embracing Holy Audacity, I like to recall that story. Or maybe, the founder of your organization used Holy Audacity; I like to use that as a framing device for what it requires us to do. As those people that are out having the conversations, I will actually say it requires us to have the kind of Holy Audacity to talk about numbers with people--really big numbers.

The first time we introduce the project, I'll actually say it just like that, and what that's doing is that it's setting me up to be able to talk about some really big numbers--\$500,000, maybe it's \$3 million. But you're doing it, you're framing it in a way in which it doesn't make you seem completely insensitive. You're framing it in a way that reminds everybody that you're doing this mindful of the higher purpose of your institution. And one way this might work is to share your funding plan and look someone in the eye and say, "Now, again, back to the whole Holy Audacity thing. We've really advanced this school over the last five years, and we could not have that rate of incredible achievement if we didn't embrace Holy Audacity at every step along the way. And, including meetings like this, where we're meeting with wonderful people from the community for the first time, we need to keep that Holy Audacity in mind, which is what allows us to talk about this funding plan. So, with your permission, I'd like to talk about that today. And I'd like to talk about some pretty big numbers."

Again, you're getting buy-in, you're getting permission. I'm going to talk more about a Permission Close here coming up. But I use the Holy Audacity as a framing device. It's almost like you're asking for permission, or maybe you're even apologizing. You're saying, "Look, I know I'm about to hit you square between the eyes, so I'm going to be fair with it." And if the person doesn't completely freak out, if the person doesn't put on the skids, you then have permission to be very bold with your ask. Gang, I don't... I don't know that Holy Audacity is just for those that are starting a Catholic high school. I think many of you should talk about audacity. If you have the audacity to think that you can end homelessness, if you have the audacity to think that you can change the community, then I think you

need to be mindful of that and remind people of that mindset as a great way to frame for why you're going to go to the numbers--either on the first or second visit--or why you're going to talk about some really big numbers. Let's say you do have a model that you believe is ending poverty. You might say, "Nick, we believe we have a solution. It's not a band aid, and I wouldn't be as assertive with this if I didn't believe that. But because we have a model and it's ending homelessness, I'm asking everybody we're with to enter some sort of a serious discernment or serious conversation around these top funding levels." Holy Audacity in a secular way, I suppose. Do you believe in your case? Do you believe in your cause? Because if you do, I think all of us can have the kind of Holy Audacity to put big numbers on the table.

## 32:41 The Permission Close

And moving right along, have you ever been in a situation where you find yourself in someone's office, maybe somebody else set up the visit for you, and you want to talk about your presentation, your case for support, and someone says, "Nick, now listen, before you get into this today, Marianne, who set up the visit, she promised me you weren't going to ask for money"? All right. Let's keep that in mind. Gang, if you've not properly predisposed somebody to asking for the money, or presenting the opportunity, then I think you have to be fair for that. On our website at [forimpact.org](http://forimpact.org), you can get a lot of stuff about predisposition, setting it up so that they know you're there to talk about it. But whether you've done a great job of predisposing or not, I think you can work your way towards the Permission Close, which is this: After you work through your purpose, and after you work through your priorities, you can simply ask this question, "Would it be okay if I walked you through our funding plan and talked about how you could help?" Or, "Would it be okay if I... if I were to walk through our plan, and begin to have a discussion about how you could help?"

Now what could they say, right? Very often, you're not going to get a no. You might get something like, "Well, I suppose. What does that mean?" But as long as you don't get a no, it's actually an invitation and it makes you more comfortable to proceed along that line. And gang, if they say no right there, then you really haven't sold them on your purpose. You can't have a great conversation around ending cancer and get a no right there. So you're throwing that question out there, and it's... as Tom likes to say, it's permission to proceed. You're getting permission to go to the ask. You can use this at the beginning of the call. You can say, you know, you can confirm... with the prospect, you could ask, "We have about 30 minutes here. Would it be okay if I run through our plan and get your input and feedback and then talk about how you can help?" I'm always looking for permission to proceed.

## 34:53 The Goonies Close

Hey, at this point in the audio, I want to have some fun with you. I want to talk about the Goonies Close. The Goonies was that great movie made in the '80s, and... The Goonies was a great movie made in the '80s, and, you know, if you've seen the movie, this is going to make all the sense in the world, but if you haven't seen the movie, then you know what? You need to go rent it right now. But The Goonies... now, there's a scene in The Goonies--these are a bunch of nerds, outcasts, people that aren't always popular in school--and what's happening is their community, where they live by the ocean, is being taken over by developers. All their houses are being foreclosed on, and they're all being forced out. So these kids, they go on this pirate hunt, and they're underground. Now there's a scene in the movie where they're in a wishing well, and someone finds them--they're up above, 30 feet above--and then they lower a bucket. And there's a scene in the movie in which one of the guys says, "I'm getting out of here, it's scary." And they're shouting up to the person that's found them, "Get me out of the well." And Mikey, one of the lead characters, he says to everybody else, "Guys, we've got to band together." He says, "Up there... up there, it's their time [meaning his parents]. But down here... down here, it's our time, it's our time to make something happen." Let's say that again: "Up there, it's their time, and down here, it's our time, our time is now."

I love that for all the organizations out there that have been struggling for the past 15 years, or for the organizations that get together at every meeting and say, "Oh, woe is me. You know, we... we've just always been on the cusp of doing something great." There's a point in time in which you've got to say, "You know what, it's our time, we're going to stop apologizing for being mediocre." That's the... that's the difference between yesterday and today. Because without the Goonies Close, how do I know, as the prospect, that you're not just going to continue to be mediocre, right? It's for the organizations that think, "You know what, we've got to do a lot of branding, we've got to prove ourselves." Nope. I'll tell you what, guys, sometimes greatness is a decision--it's not a process. It's a decision that from now on, today, we're going to be different. And you can use the Goonies Close. I've even... you know, I'm all about authenticity. I even reference that. Being on a visit, and maybe I'm with a board member, that's where I use the Goonies Close a lot. I'm with a board member who says, "Ah, yeah, you know, Nick, I'm just wondering, I've been on the board for three years now, and, you know, we always talk about doing great stuff, and... I just don't know, are we ever going to get there?" Well, you know what? Up there, it's their time; down here, it's our time, and it's time to do something. It's like planting a flag and saying, "Hey, we're going to do something here." It's a great way to say, "Who cares where we've been?" It's a great way to say, "Who cares if we've been losers?" It's a great way to say, "Who cares what our organization's done in the past? Right now, we're going to do something great."

And I use the Goonies Close to get someone to take me seriously. I've been on visits before when I can tell six other development officers have been through that office in the past four years. Six other development officers have talked all about, you know, different events and... and how the organization was about to be great. First of all, they've never come in with a very clear plan. They've never closed, they've never asked a question. And I... and I do this as a way to say, "Ms. Prospect, this is a serious conversation, and I want you to be excited." And I don't think there's anything wrong with that if you're excited, and if you're doing great things, and if you have a great plan. So please, go rent Goonies and

watch it. Remember the scene: wishing well, the bucket comes down, and Mikey says, “Down here, it's our time, let's keep going for it.”

## 38:34 Top of the Mountain Close

Hey, sometimes gang, the close is not so much about what you say, it's more about what you do and the vision you lay out, visually. There's the Top of the Mountain Close. In the '80s, The Suddes Group did a campaign in Missouri--"Missoura," if you're from the area. It was for a camp, and the camp had a big hill, and what they did with their lead investor was: they put the person into a Jeep, drove up to the top of the hill. At the top, there was a beautiful view, spanning for just miles and miles across this... not quite a gorge, but a valley. And on the right, you could see 110 acres that the camp had, and on the left, connecting the top of the mountain with a stream, were 230 acres that camp did not have. The Top of the Mountain Close was just driving the prospect up there--through the dirt, open air--and saying, "Mr. Prospect, here's where we are. Over the last 50 years, we've built this up right now. But right now [and then a turn to the left] we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to expand our camp and take care of all of that, and we need your help with that."

Silence. Listen, let the prospect respond. In this case, majestic view, beautiful setting, you could literally take, well, I suppose not a 30,000 foot view, but you could take an aerial view of all the great things that were happening at the camp. You could see the kids way down below, in the lake. You could see kids walking out of the craft cabin. You could see people playing basketball on the basketball courts. And you're just showing somebody what is and what could be. And you're asking them, "Can you help make that happen?" Top of the Mountain Close is perfect when it's not about the money. The prospect we took up there, he had the money. It wasn't about getting a number; it was about getting him to see the vision and say, "Yep, I'm in, I'm going to help."

## 40:45 The Predisposition Close

Sometimes, I think we make the whole closing process more difficult than it has to be. We tend to think--and again, it's my hesitation in making this recording--that there's a series of words we've lined together. You hear me talking about sharing the story on other audios; well, in this case, I actually want you to think about showing the story. When Tom was at Notre Dame with Father Hesburgh in the '70s, they would do fly-ins. They would take people up to the top... they would fly in prospects and take them up to the top of the Hesburgh Library. If you've never been to Notre Dame, maybe you've seen it on television. Hesburgh Library is more popularly known as "Touchdown Jesus." That's actually a library named after Father Hesburgh. Father Hesburgh would take people up to the top of the library—360-degree view, all glass, at night--he would light up the campus, and he would literally show where he thought to put the buildings and how he saw the vision laying out. His close there, by the way, was a Predisposition Close, a little bit different. He would sprinkle his magic dust, put everything out, and he would say, "Now, here's the deal. In the next few days, Tom is going to fly to your city and sit down with you (you and your wife, your wife and your husband, whoever was there). In the next few days, Tom's going to sit down with you. I have no idea what he's going to ask you for, but I know you'll do whatever you can to help."

So that one is a really good close in its own right, the Predisposition Close, laying out the vision and saying, "I have no idea what they're going to ask you for, but I know you'll do whatever you can to help." Hey, I love that one. Tom and I also call that the magic dust, sprinkling the magic dust. If you have a very, very charismatic leader, Executive Director, visionary board member, you can use them to sprinkle the magic dust. And then maybe you can have somebody else in the organization follow along and do the close. That's not to say that you have to do that at your organization. It's just a great way it worked at the University of Notre Dame in the '70s at that time. Tom always says Father Hesburgh never asked for a dime from anybody. He would show them the impact and have someone else convert that to the income. Pretty interesting. So predisposition, magic dust, Top of the Mountain Close.

## 43:10 The Action Forcing Event

Moving right along, I want to... I want to introduce a concept to you that's really not a close, but really a way to close. It's called the Action Forcing Event. Now, an Action Forcing Event is actually exactly what it sounds like. It's an event that forces action. And this came about about three years ago; I was in the field and I was meeting with a prospect, and the campaign we were working on was dragging on. And see, what had happened is, we'd been doing a lot of asks, we'd been out in the field, but we had a lot of "pendings," people saying, "Yeah, I'm going to get to that," "Yeah, I want to think about that," and we really had no way to go to everybody to close, to say, "You know what? I need you in, I need you to make your decision." And this gentleman who was with me, who I was visiting with--an advisor--he said, "You know what, Nick? You need an Action Forcing Event." I said, "What's that?" Well, he was in the State Department at one point, and he said, "You know what, Nick, I was with the government, and it's kind of hard to get things done there. So every once in a while, we would just make up an event; we would make up an event to force action. We'd make up an event, we'd send out a press release, we'd tell everybody on the staff, 'You have to have everything finished by the time we launch this event.' It's an Action Forcing Event."

An Action Forcing Event for you could be a groundbreaking, it could be... it could be a number of different things. But really, it's kind of an artificial timeline. It's a reason to go to somebody and say, "The reason I'm going to you right now is because we need to have a decision by that date." Without an Action Forcing Event, that could be a pending gift forever. Sometimes, I'll put together an "action forcing action plan," to take this out one step further. I'm working on a campaign right now where I've got a lot of people out there, a lot of people that have--previous to our involvement--been asked and they've never been followed up with, or maybe they've been followed up with but not closed. So I laid out an "action forcing action event." I told all the board members and everybody we'd been involved with that we were going to make 100 visits in 100 days, and it was our goal to complete the entire campaign in 100 days' time. I rallied everybody around the 100 days, told them we needed decisions by then, we were going to continue to follow up because of the timeframe, and people were actually inviting us to be persistent, to close them. They would get back to us right away and say, "Nick, I know you're under the gun with this 100 days thing, I want to get you my decision right away."

Without that 100 days, which was supported by the board... without that 100 days, I feared that we would be closing for the next four years, so we put that there. I used that too with board members who'd keep saying, "You know what, Nick, I will bring people down to tour the center," or, "Nick, I will open doors and take you in and we'll have the visit." I'd been hearing that for three months prior to me outlining this 100 days of activity. And I used that to say, "It must happen this quarter." Without me putting that timeframe, without me putting the "action forcing action plan" or event in there, I believe we would do what's human nature, which is: work on the urgent and not the important--that comes from Covey--we would put off the visits. Why? Because we can.

So what kind of an Action Forcing Event can you create to help you close, to help you get the visit? Maybe the Action Forcing Event, as I said, could be a groundbreaking. Maybe it could be a high-level meeting. It could be as simple as saying, "I'm getting ready to visit with our \$1 million lead investor in two weeks, and I'd like to be able to share with her that we've got 10 more gifts closed. So Nick, that's

why I'm calling you today, because if we can work on this together, I can actually leverage that with our leadership to get them to open more doors, to get them to raise their level of commitment." The Action Forcing Event. I think if it works for the State Department, then it might be able to work for you.

## 47:17 The Practice Close

The Action Forcing Event is really all about action. Here's another one that's all about action: it's practice, taking us into the Practice Close. As many of you know, we've been doing our Funding Boot Camps now for about 10 years. And about a year ago, I heard back from somebody that left and she said she'd raised a lot of money over 30 days' time. Her name is Maryann; I said, "Maryann, what was your secret?" And she said, "You know what, Nick, in the bootcamp, we had to make a practice visit. That was a lot easier for me to do. It was a lot easier for me to go through and practice, because I felt like there wasn't any pressure. And when I came back, Nick, I lined up some practice visits. I lined some up with my board, I lined some up with current and past funders and other community members, and the funniest thing happened. I would be doing a practice, but I would get real money." And she said, "So ever since then I just keep practicing."

Well, Maryann's on to something, both in terms of a psychology but also in terms of a real way to do this. Tom and I are always stamping "draft" on everything. We do this because I really, truly believe, in the way I present, that I'm asking you to give your input and feedback. The plan is subject to change based upon our leadership and our funding--now, not changed dramatically, but changed in terms of the nuances of the presentation. So I'll stamp draft there, and that's a great way for me to kind of say, "Hey, I want to do this with you. I want to build this with you. I want to test this on you." Well, Maryann took that to another level, and she would say, "I want to practice." Well, practice was a great way for her, psychologically, to get in the door. It was a great way for her to rationalize being there. But what happens when you practice? You still go through the great parts of the presentation, and the goal in your presentation is to get the prospect to say, "This is incredible. I want to help."

So Maryann does college access. She would walk through, "What is college X? It's getting first generation college kids to college," the napkin version of that. She would walk through their funding needs, the number of kids that they were serving, and the idea that it's \$1,400 to provide a last-dollar scholarship, meaning: there are kids out there right now that can get into college, and they're not going for lack of \$1,400. Just by her practicing that message, people would say, "Are you kidding me? Like, you have kids right now?" And she'd say, "Yeah, I've got 40 of them why?" And they'd say, "Oh, that's ridiculous. We want to help." And what transpired were these people funding the last dollar scholarships.

Ever since then, we've instituted a practice. At the conclusion of our Boot Camp, for a challenge, I challenge everybody to go make three practice visits within 10 days of the conclusion of Boot Camp. I have to tell you what, almost everybody goes out and raises a lot of money. I think it proves a few points--the magic is in going and having a conversation, not being perfect. You're listening to this audio right now, you could very well spend forever trying to figure out what words to say. You'll never get them perfect; I can't even get the words right, and I've thought about this for three years. But in practicing, we get out there and we develop our own close. You develop it on the fly, you develop the questions, you don't have time to think.

## 50:44 Getting the Ask on the Table

As we're working our way through here, it's a great time to remind you: again, we're always asking. If you've ever heard the term "getting numbers on the table," well, I want to broaden your thinking around that. For me, it's getting the number on the table, or getting a project on the table, or getting a level of engagement on the table. So a level of engagement could be around involvement, a membership society, a priority initiative, legacy or leadership, or transformation. But the idea that that's where the conversation's going to go, it's a qualifying level. Getting a number on the table--getting a number on the table could be tied to a project, it could be \$100,000, \$1 million. But again, once that number's on the table, that's what allows you to begin having a serious discussion. Or maybe, again, it's tied to a project: "one child for one year;" the science center; seed money for a new initiative. But whatever it is, I bring this up now, because very often, the conversation does not really begin until we get one of those three things on the table.

So let's keep that in mind as I work my way through a couple of the... I think what a lot of people call objections; to me, they're just dialogue points. Your goal is to have a dialogue around your funding plan. And you know, in preparation for this, I thought back to all the really large gifts that we've secured, and most of the time, the very first response is something like, "Well, that's a number higher than what I was thinking." Or, "You know, now's not a really good time." I want to help you work your way through that. And to do that, it's very important that you remember that once we get either the number, the project, or the level of engagement on the table, it's a dialogue. You're not a one hit wonder; you didn't ask the question and then they said, "It's not the right level," and you walk away. It's an attitude. So you can continue to come back with a number of these closes--I might use four or five closes in a dialogue. So let's run through those.

Let's take that first one. What if the prospect says, "Hey, you know what, Nick, that's a number that's a little bit higher than what I was thinking." I probably would not go back to the prospect's number, because to be fair, if you're not asking for a higher number, then you're not asking them to discern or think about or contemplate a level that's high enough. Guy Kawasaki, who's an Apple evangelist, he now does venture capital startups, and he says your goal when you do a pitch---now this is for venture capital--your goal is not to get them to write a check. It's to make them want to do due diligence. I love that line right here because I'm not trying to get the \$10,000 in the pocket; I'm trying to get the prospect to seriously contemplate a higher level of engagement... in most cases. That's not always the case for \$1,000 or \$10,000, but I've learned that nobody has discretionary income. I've been with billionaires; nobody has an extra \$1 million laying around and says, "Sure, yeah, that sounds great." So it almost always requires a conversation or a dialogue. I want to prepare you for that because when you hear some of these things that would classically be called objections, I don't think they are that. I think they're an entree to a conversation.

## 54:18 The Handful of People Close

So, “Nick, here's... that's a level that's higher than what I was thinking.” Well, one of the things you've got to be able to do here, gang, is be authentic. And if you only have a few people--as Tom would say, if you only have a handful of people to be talking with at those higher levels--you might use the Handful of People Close. You might come back and say, “Nick, I understand. If I could, Nick, there's... there are only a handful of people that we can be talking to at these high levels. So you're one of a handful of people. We don't have a whole lot of people we can push on. So I want to return to that, Nick. With that in mind, is it a possibility for you to look at that number?” Great line right there. Again, the key here is we have to be quiet and let them respond. They come back and they say something like, “Well, just not right now, Nick, I'm just tied up in so many projects,” I think you have to keep going.

Now, the question I always get is, “How do you know when you're pushing too much?” Again, I think about this differently. To me, it's not pushing; to me, it's actually being authentic. I think you have to draw a direct line in your brain from your ask to saving lives, changing lives, or impacting lives, because if you can't back that up and be authentic in what you're doing, then you're not going to come across as such. But if you remember that and you have a funding plan, your funding plan is going to tell you, “Nick, I've got to keep pushing with this person. If I can't push with this person, there's nobody better to push with.”

So with that in mind, I'd probably keep going a couple of times. And I'd say, “Okay, tell me about that.” Very open ended. “Tell me about that.” I'm not asking them to commit to a number because I want to keep the conversation going. Let's say I asked for a number... I asked for a million, and the prospect said, “That's a number higher than I was thinking,” and I came back and asked to push a little bit, and he or she still said it was a higher number. I'd say, “Tell me about that,” and just listen for a little bit. Now, what I'm listening for, there are times, though, when I'm listening... I'm listening for one of two things that's going to make me back down: one, if I learn right then that the prospect genuinely does not have the capacity; or two, genuinely is not that interested in us. Until I understand one of those two things, I'm probably going to keep pushing in the most polite, assertive, and authentic way.

But if and only then the prospect comes back and says, as this happened to me recently, “You know what, Nick, I... I really want to do it. But the challenge for me, Nick, is that I'm committed to 12 major priorities right now. I'm in multi-year funding commitments for 12 huge priorities. I love what you do, I just can't take on another priority.” In that case, gang, I had to look at the prospect and say, “That's understandable.” They've given you a reason; 12 priorities, I don't care how much money you have, that's a pretty big deal, right? So is that a reasonable objection to come back to me? I think in that case, in this particular case, knowing this prospect, it was. But if they just come back and say it's a number that is higher than I was thinking, well, then you need to continue the dialogue around that.

Now, when this gentleman came back and said, “That's a number that's higher than I was thinking,” I said, “You know what? That's understandable.” In that case, then, I went to the Clueless Close. “Why don't you tell me what would be a better number to look at? And then, with your permission, what we'd like to do is to continue to get you engaged and involved, and as those priorities clear up, I'd like to see if this project can't become a long term priority.” And he said, “Nick, I think that makes all the sense in

the world.” Ended up committing some \$10,000, and in that particular case, I’d asked him for \$150,000. But we're happy to have the \$10,000 right now, and we're going to continue to get him engaged and involved, and I'm certain that this can be one of his priorities when one of the other 12 clears up.

## 58:19 The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Close

Along the lines of, “That's higher than I was thinking,” you know, gang, again, of course it's higher than they were thinking--we've never asked them to think at that high level before. I can recount for you so many stories, and many of you listeners have them as well, where we put a huge number on the table, and then what happens is the self-fulfilling prophecy. Generally, you're meeting with entrepreneurs, people that have been successful in business, or maybe people that are working with foundations, and by planting that seed, even if you can't close right there, that seed begins to grow. Oftentimes, I'm with an organization for three months, six months, or 12 months, and maybe we do an ask and the person can't close right there for that number. But it's amazing; now that they've got that number in their head, they begin to think. They begin to think about ways to get there. And I've actually turned that before into a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Close.

If I'm with a prospect, and we start talking, and I know that they're clicking--they're clicking with me, they read the Earl Nightingale and they read all that positive thinking stuff like I do--I've actually found myself saying on a couple of occasions, “Mr. Prospect, I know you get what a self-fulfilling prophecy is. I'm going to... I'm going to go a different route with you. I'm going to hang that number out there and ask you to think about it and see if we can't make that a self-fulfilling prophecy.” Now again, you've got to be with the right person, you've got to be in the right circumstances, and you have to be the right person to say that, but what you're actually saying to somebody--in this case, it was an entrepreneur--“I know you can go make money.” An entrepreneur can do that, it's just a question of: What do they want to do with their time and their resources and their energy? And in this case, you know, we didn't have to go too deep into... we had that kind of cosmic connection around the self-fulfilling prophecy. But he says, “You know what, Nick, I get it. I'm willing to... I'm willing to go ahead and throw that thought out there and think about it.” And, you know, the case I'm referring to right now was about a year ago. We started at \$250,000, and we're now up to \$750,000, and we're both working towards the \$1 million number.

## 1:00:35 The Momentum Close

And if you're following along, it's a great time to introduce the Momentum Close. So in this case, I threw the \$1 million out there, I went to go visit with this gentleman again, and he says, "Nick, I'm not there yet, but I can do \$250,000." His name was Jim, and I said, "Jim, that's fantastic. Would it be okay with you if we booked the \$250,000? It's going to be a wonderful momentum commitment for our campaign. And if it's okay, could we continue to have the dialogue and discussion ongoing about that \$1 million level? Because I can't quite let off of that." Again, that's how I said it authentically in that moment. You might... you might say it differently. You might say, "Would it be okay to continue to have that dialogue to continue to explore that?" You might say, "Would it be okay to continue to seek discernment around that number?" Whatever it is for you. And he said to me, "Of course, Nick. \$250,000 is just where I am today." In fact, it's kind of funny, gang. To give you a funny note from the field, he said, "You know what, Nick, we're all over 21 here, we can talk about it whenever you want."

A couple things happened in there. Number one, I kept the momentum, I kept it going. I was seeking permission to keep the dialogue going, and this illustrates from me, Nick Fellers, to you, the listener, that it's a relationship, not a transaction. I've never really worried about under-asking or over-asking, because that's my mentality around the \$250,000. That's where he is now, and, "Can we continue to explore a higher level?" "Of course, Nick." It's not done. It's not finished. So many people spend years in their office because they're worried about under-asking or over-asking. If you're over-asking, they'll let you know, and you'll go through the series that we're going through now. And if you under-ask, that's okay. It's a relationship and you can continue to build it. While you under-asked, maybe you asked for \$10,000, and the prospect said, "Sure, sounds great," and you think, "Well, maybe I didn't ask for enough." Well, here's the magic of asking. Here's the magic of doing what we're talking about in this audio. While you asked, and you learned that maybe \$10,000 was under-asking, you got the \$10,000. You got them... in the binary fashion, you got them closed, that prospect is in. You're furthering the relationship, while everybody else at every other organization out there is planning in their office for three more years, doing a little bit more wealth screening, doing a little bit more planning, waiting for the market to be just right. Well, you know what? In three years' time, you will have built that relationship around the \$10,000--a real investment, by the way--and you'll have all the confidence in the world to talk about \$100,000 investment, or a \$1 million investment, or whatever it is for that prospect.

## 1:03:26 The Importance of a Funding Plan

Now, gang, let's back up to some other ways that the ask for \$1 million could go. Maybe it wasn't a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Close. Maybe you laid that out as a Leadership Close, asking someone to take the lead and consider it. Maybe you come back for a second conversation, and the prospect comes out preemptively and says, "Hey, you know, Nick, I was thinking I'm going to do \$250,000." Where do you go from there, right? Well, as I throw these big numbers around, there's an important concept that I'm assuming you're employing while using this audio, and that is that you've developed a funding plan. A funding plan, again, could be as simple as laying out how many people you need to do \$1 million, \$500,000... It could be a campaign pyramid. And you've taken that and you've overlaid or you've matched that with your prospect list, so you know what you need your lead gift to be and you know what you need to ask your lead person. And the reason that's important right now is because that's going to give you the authenticity. It's going to give you the rationale to continue to push. If you haven't done that, if this person is not who you believe to be your best prospect, then it's unfair for you to push. But, on the other hand, if you believe that person is your best prospect, and if you believe you need \$1 million to head up your funding plan, that allows you to take the conversation in this direction.

You could say, "\$250,000? That's fantastic. That's wonderful. If I could"--again, that permission thing--"I'd like to continue to push on that." Now use Tom's Handful of People Close. "There are only a handful of people that we can talk about at that leadership position, and to be candid, to be frank, if we can't push on you and take the direction up a few levels, then there's not anybody else that we can be more comfortable doing that with." It's true. If you can't push on your best prospect, who can you push on? So it's a great way for you to frame; it incorporates that idea of being commensurate. It's your lead person, it's your lead prospect. Now, again, gang, you're just going to have to feel your way through this for that lead. If this person were to come back and say, "Nick, I'm bankrupt," well, then you actually know it's a capacity issue, you need to go ahead and back down. It's always going to be your decision for when to back down, but this is why the funding plan is so important. If I let that person off the hook for the \$1 million, I need to have a backup plan. Maybe that's getting two other people at \$500,000. Maybe it's getting four people at \$250,000. The beauty, and a concept I'm trying to emphasize here, is that you have a plan, because there's a point at which you realize, "I can't let anybody else back off the numbers." Or, I'll find myself in a position where I have to get \$10 from 10,000 people--not realistic. So again, continue to match those up, and that's what's going to determine the level at which you ask. It's going to determine the level at which you authentically push. People are always asking me, "How did you know to ask him for \$1 million?" I didn't know. I knew I needed \$1 million, and I knew this was my lead prospect. You'll never know until you ask.

## 1:06:59 Handling Objections

Hey, this has happened to me before where I've asked someone for \$30,000, and she said, "You know what, Nick, I can't do it." Now I want to switch over to my internal monologue. She says, "Nick, I can't do it," and I'm thinking, "So what the heck does that mean?" She can't do it... she doesn't have the money? She can't do it... now? She... what? So again, you've got to come back with some more questions, gang. If you don't know what that means, you've got to come back with some questions. So in that case, I just simply said, "Well, tell me about that. What do you mean, you can't do it?" And she said, "Well, Nick, right now, all my money's tied up in real estate, I don't have any cash." Again, internal monologue time--I thought, "Holy smokes, she wants to do it, but she thinks we need cash." In which case, I responded to her, I said, "You know, we can take real estate," and she said, "Oh, you can?" Now, if she had just said, "I can't do it," and I would have said, "Thank you very much," and walked out, we would have missed out on \$30,000. And actually, we would have missed out on \$57,000, which was the parcel of land that she gave to the organization and we were able to value and liquidate.

So you need to ask; if you don't know... if you don't know what they mean by, "I can't do it," you need to either continue to ask a clarifying question, or simply say, "Tell me about what you mean." I'm not a big fan of saying, "Okay, what level are you at?" because I want to keep a dialogue going. Very often, I'll be with somebody and I'll get that, "Hey, you know what, Nick, I can't do that right now." I'll say, "Right now, tell me about what that means." Again, I'm asking that because I don't know. I've had three occasions in the last year when someone says, "Well, right now, all my money is tied up in the stock market." Ding, ding, ding. It's a great way for you to come back around and ask--or inform, I guess, in this case--and say, "You know, we can take stocks. We can take those as a gift." Oftentimes, people just are not thinking in that way. They want to help; they don't know how. And that's where a lot of these questions are coming from.

If someone says, "Not right now," you need to figure out what that means. Is it a timing issue? Is it a capacity issue? Or is it a relationship issue? A relationship issue, they could actually say, "You know what, Nick, I'm just not at that level yet," in which case, they might be saying to you, "I like what you're doing. I'm not prepared to make that kind of a commitment." In that case, there's no close you can do there. They're telling you, they're actually being honest with you, "I'm not quite there yet." I might find myself saying, "Well, that's okay. That's actually understandable. Where are you?" Or maybe, if you'd asked for \$50,000, "Would it be possible for you to explore this level of commitment"--perhaps pointing to \$10,000--"and continue to explore a \$50,000 level over the coming months, or even years, as we get you more engaged and invested in the project? I'm always leaving that out there." Or maybe, "Not right now," when you start to ask about it, someone might say, "I'm in the middle of a number of multi-year pledges." Have you ever heard that? Again, I go back to my question around leaving it open ended or leaving the dialog open. That's not a close, but it's a question.

I think you always have to be fair to the prospect. If they're telling you, "All my money is out, invested, doing great things right now," there's nothing you can do; all you can do is maximize the relationship at this given moment. But you can use the information. If someone said, "You know what, I'm pledged to a lot of projects right now," I would, again, go back to that dialogue around leaving it open and saying, "You know what, that makes all the sense in the world. But for us, this is a relationship. And we want to

continue to have that relationship with you, and we hope we have that relationship with you for many years to come. We hope we can continue to show you a return on investment and how you're actually making a great impact in the community. So would it be okay, or would it be possible for you to participate in our membership society, or our leadership society--maybe that's a level for you at \$1,000--and continue to get you engaged with the organization, with the idea that we can revisit that level from time to time in the years to come?" And I think sometimes too, there's a way for you to add, there's a way for you to qualify the objection.

Now, I've got tell you, this is one Tom uses all the time, but for me, it doesn't come out authentically all that often. So I'll give it to you, and maybe it would work for you. And that line is this: "Is it something you'd like to do if you could?" Now I have used that before in an authentic situation, but, "Is it something that you'd like to do if you could?" Because if he or she wants to do it, then it's just a function of mechanics. And I think there's a point in here, gang, where the prospect wants to do it, meaning they want to make that level of commitment, but they're just not sure how. And this principle comes into play the higher the gift. I don't know that it's really about the "how" when you're asking for \$1,000, but if you're looking at a number that's maybe a little bit bigger, or a stretch, or transformational for a prospect--\$100,000, \$200,000, \$500,000, whatever that number is--a lot of times, what we perceive to be objections are really just them dealing with the mechanics. And there, you need to go back to one of the first stories that Tom ever told me about selling at a higher level. He talked about a sports agent--wasn't Jerry Maguire, but one of those studs--and he would say, "All I'm trying to do is to get the NFL team to acknowledge that my client is the best left tackle in the NFL." Because after that, everything else is mechanics. After that, then I can get them to agree that he should be paid like the best left tackle in the NFL. And there's a couple of ways for you to go with this. It's kind of the Steve Jobs, Higher Level Close. There's a point at which you look at somebody and they're having a hard time, and you say, "I think today is really just about discovering or figuring out if this is something that you'd like to do. Because we can come back and follow up with all the mechanics; we can look at over how many years; we can look at if it's through stock or planed gift or annuity. But the question today is, is it something that you'd like to do?"

## 1:14:11 The Transformational Close

Hey, I want to walk you through a position that we'd all love to be in. Every once in a while, you're looking at a project and there's some disparity between what the top level gifts could be, or maybe even the top one gift. There's a disparity between the leadership and the capacity of the leadership for the top gift and everybody else. Said more clearly, the person most involved with your organization could give any amount of money in the world, and everybody else that you're working with right now maybe has the capacity to do \$100,000, \$50,000, or the point of this part of the exercise or conversation is that we know they couldn't do \$10 million. So let's throw this out there in a hypothetical for what we call the Transformational Close. You're always looking to rationalize the number, and there's a real challenge--if you've got a \$20 million campaign, it's a real challenge to rationalize to somebody why they would do \$5 million, \$10 million, or \$15 million towards that campaign. In fact, it's impossible. It's unfair to ask one person to step up and bear the brunt of that... unless, of course, it's not about the campaign. Unless, of course, it's really about transformation, and here's what I mean.

There are times in which someone could put a lot of money into your organization, and you need a way to rationalize that in order to have the conversation. And what we need to do there is put together the best story we can, the best discussion and case for support, and then get to this way of framing, or this way of thinking, or a close. "Nick, would it be possible for you to consider a transformational gift? We have the opportunity right now to look at some numbers that would completely alter the way our organization is doing business. We have the opportunity right now to look at a level of investment that we think would bring up the bar for our impact; it would completely transform the way we're doing business."

## 1:16:39 Wrap-Up

Wrapping up this segment, I just want to remind you that the first response after you get a number or project or level of engagement on the table, if it's not a "yes," it's not necessarily a "no." So be thinking about that. How can you turn it into a dialogue? How can you keep the conversation open? How can you remember: this is a relationship you're going to continue to explore over time and not a transaction which ends today?