

advice, and having a board indicates that you're not afraid to ask for help if you need it. Despite the importance of establishing credibility, Sobhani still advises aspiring projectpreneurs to embrace their youth. "Don't hide behind a suit; don't hide behind a title. You're young. Be young," he says.

specificity rules

You've got plenty of enthusiasm, and you're not letting your age stand in your way—now what? Be specific. Once you've developed a well-thought-out plan for your project, the trick is to pinpoint the best people to give you money. Donors, be they individuals or business entities, want to understand exactly how their contributions will be used. And organizations providing grants and fellowships generally require that projects fulfill their specific aims and missions. In other words, if you've never taken a marketing class, you're in for a crash course.

First, think about how you can cater to each potential donor, and present your project in the way that best suits their needs. If you're seeking corporate sponsorship from an athletic apparel company to swim the English Channel for charity, for example, emphasize the physical challenge. Generally speaking, you'll have trouble being specific unless you've done your homework. If you're seeking a grant or fellowship, apply only to those organizations whose mission directly relates to your project, and be sure to meet deadlines. Also, don't scare away potential investors with an exorbitant request out of the blue; rather, investigate their sponsorship track record and know ahead of time what they're capable of offering. In many cases, corporations list their sponsorship activities on their web sites. Check newspaper and press release archives and seek out key people within companies to fulfill your informational requests. In other words, don't aim your attention at the president if the assistant can answer your question.

No matter how specific you are, though, you should still offer potential donors more than just one way to help you. If you give them several options, donors will typically

appreciate the chance to choose just how involved they'd like to be. When Sobhani approached Basel Dalloul, CEO of Magnet.com, he suggested several ways Dalloul could help his cause: He could give money directly, throw a fund-raising party (Sobhani's research showed Dalloul sometimes did this), fund the bike ride, or sponsor the It's for the Kids web site for a year. In the end, Dalloul chose two options: He immediately wrote the organization a \$5,000 check and threw a party that raised nearly \$10,000.

With artistic endeavors, concentrate on your presentation. Approach donors only after you have a focused idea and a detailed, yet succinct, summary of your project. As a budding artist, you can also seek the advice of professionals in your field. Before embarking on her project, Cazabon wrote letters to producers and editors in the film industry asking them to share a cup of coffee with her. Of course, specificity was important. The letter opened with an assurance that she wasn't trying to sell them a script, nor did she want a job, just advice. Everyone she contacted met with her.

Armed with entrepreneurial skills, any goal remains within reach—expenses for that eco-challenge, a summer-long stay at a writers colony, even breaking a Guinness

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World Record. And if your project is related to a good cause that stirs your soul, there are grants out there for everything from business pursuits to educational projects. Perhaps the only limit is the realization that nothing stands in your way. So what are you waiting for? ◀

Boston-based writer Amy Marcott would someday like to pursue a project involving creative writing with handicapped and terminally ill children.

PROJECTPRENEURS say...

"don't reinvent the wheel. Pick people's brains and take advantage of their experiences."

—Andrée Cazabon, 26, found funding for her docudrama

"The greatest thing we've ever done? print up letterhead. The second you have letterhead (and T-shirts on college campuses), you've got credibility."

—Stephen Sobhani, 22, founded nonprofit It's for the Kids

"offer to generate publicity for a sponsor whenever you can. That might mean talking at a school, writing articles for the local paper, or passing out hats, posters, and postcards."

—Nicole Freedman, 28, got sponsorship to train for the Olympics

"Diversity is key. don't put all your eggs into the foundation basket."

—Jared Katsiane, 35, found funding for a variety of film projects