



Enhancing Trust

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

“Raising Resources During and After a Pandemic”

with Dr. Gary G. Hoag

Dan Busby:

Hello everyone, this is Dan Busby, ECFA President, and welcome back to another podcast from ECFA!

Today, I welcome my good friend Gary Hoag.

Gary serves as CEO and President of Global Trust Partners (GTP) which has this guiding purpose statement: “In obedient service to Jesus Christ, GTP multiplies faithful stewards and mobilizes peer accountability groups to build trust and to grow local giving in God’s work!”

In plain terms, he’s helping set up ECFA-type organizations all over the world. It was ten years ago he co-authored the ECFA Press book, *The Sower: Redefining the Ministry of Raising Kingdom Resources*.

He authored a total of three books for ECFA Press that have helped countless ministries integrate their faith with their work on resource development, faithful administration, and biblical governance. Those books are *The Sower*, *The Choice*, and *The Council*. To date they have been translated into multiple languages and have spread all over the world.

Gary, welcome back to the ECFA podcast. We are so excited to have you with us! First, tell us about your recent travels.

Gary Hoag:

I am thankful that in God’s providence He had me busy traveling in 10 countries in 10 weeks just prior to the pandemic, including opening up 4 new countries to peer accountability: Indonesia, El Salvador, Jordan and Palestine. I

returned home on March 4, 2020 just before things started to unravel.

Dan Busby: We are glad you made it home safely. Before we dig into today's topic of Raising Resources During and After a Pandemic, how are churches and ministries doing globally?

Gary Hoag: Thanks for your care and concern, Dan. It's been hard for them in three ways:

1. Survival - Many people are just trying to survive. Basic necessities and limited bandwidth have made it hard for people to navigate this season in places like India.

2. Social solidarity – this term was coined by one of my colleagues in the Philippines. While we talk about social distancing, they are talking about social solidarity in how they can help each other because everyone is struggling.

3. Lost outside support – Ministries in Egypt, for example, that serve the homeless and poor have lost outside funding. While GTP is trying to help them build local support, it's hard for entities that relied on outside support to lose it overnight. They have had to cease operations, so my email box fills daily with questions about raising money in these times.

Dan Busby: Gary, what advice do you have for us about raising resources during and after this pandemic?

Gary Hoag: Dan, let me give my counsel in three categories that may match the roles of your listeners: first, advice for ministry fundraisers whose primary job is resource development, second, suggestions for boards who are thinking about it more than ever, and third, a word of advice for CEO's and pastors. How's that sound?

Dan Busby: Just right! Tell us, Gary, what's your advice for ministry fundraisers in these times?

Gary Hoag: I have researched church history to find help from saints who have endured plagues in days past, and I have three words of advice for ministry fundraisers.

1. **Pray and avoid people.** The expression actually comes from a famous quote by Martin Luther who said, this in his Pastoral Writings:

“I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence.”

He practiced prayer and social distancing during the plague in his day. We get to follow suit, but this is counterintuitive for ministry fundraisers who want to be with people. What this global reset has done is remind us who supplies. It's God who supplies all things richly for enjoyment and sharing. (1 Tim 6:17-19)

Dan Busby: Thanks for the reminder for our listeners first to pray, and act responsibly. Often prayer can be a last resort and crisis situations can cause us to behave irresponsibly. What's your second tip?

Gary Hoag: 2. **Pause and write people.** It's not hard to pause because most of us are on lockdown, so let me give more strategic clarity to the two parts of this point. The pause part is to take time for people. The writing part is not first to seek a gift, but to see how they are doing.

I am hearing reports that people are either still employed and working or they are in hard times. If you write someone and they are hurting, minister to them pastorally. If they are doing well, encourage them to share their stimulus check or provide extra giving to their church and the ministries they support.

By the way, Dan, I have also been forwarding CARES Act news items from ECFA to givers to show them how charitable giving provisions have been expanded in the 2020 tax year to encourage them to give more generously.

Dan Busby: I appreciate the pastoral focus coupled with the strategic support to inform and inspire giving based on the expanded charitable provisions in the CARES Act.

Gary Hoag: Let me drill deeper on this part about writing people.

Most ministry fundraisers know who their major supporters are. Sure, text and write them and make the notes personal.

But if you serve a large constituency, while you're at home, reach out to the people who are clicking and opening your emails. These people are demonstrating that they are with you. Do this not just with your major givers, but also with the middle level givers that often get overlooked.

These tend to be faithful people who give, may still be employed and are able to help with an extra gift. They are showing their support by tracking with you. Pause and write them.

Dan Busby: That's good advice to reaching out to people who are clicking and opening emails. The crisis is an opportunity to engage them. What's your third word for ministry fundraisers?

Gary Hoag: This one is really counterintuitive, but:

3. **Celebrate and unite people.** While the world is filled with fear and death seems like it is haunting us, we just observed Easter, when Jesus was victorious over sin and death.

The aim is to unite people in this global reset to deploy their resources to the Kingdom of our victorious King. I learned this one from Cyprian of Carthage, who back in the mid-200's

reminded everyone that despite the death around them, they should celebrate the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

They used more primitive forms of communication back then, but I encourage people to use social media and to use emails that drive people to your website to celebrate and unite people. Tell stories and show pictures on your Facebook or other social media pages that show how God is still at work through the ministry. People are connecting there with each other and they will see and celebrate with you.

In uniting people around the ongoing work of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ, we bring hope, and that's what people need today. They need hope to ease the pain of a lost relative. They need help to remember that the God we serve is bigger than this plague.

This also inspires them to shift from hoarding to helping which is God's desire for us in crisis. In plain terms, it's giving people a pep talk, reminding them what is true and to live out their faith for such a time as this.

Dan Busby: Good words for fundraisers everywhere. What are you telling boards today?

Gary Hoag: I have two suggestions for boards.

1. **Discern direction** to help the CEO navigate the new normal. If you want your organization to stay true to your purpose and mission, and you're wrestling with "But how will that be accomplished in this world where everything has changed around us?" I'm telling them to go into the scriptures.

For example, I have a board meeting this week. We will read Habakkuk 2:1-4 in the heart of the meeting. Why? I want the board to help me discern direction in how our programs need to change.

If everyone reads the three chapters of Habakkuk in advance of the meeting I'm having, they are going to see that lament for what was broken in the world is what Habakkuk pours out of his heart.

If you read Habakkuk 1, it's as if Habakkuk is writing today. He starts his oracle with, "How long, O Lord, must I call for help but you do not listen?"

They also see pivotal words in the middle of the book. God tells Habakkuk to write down the revelation and to make it plain so the heralds can run with it. In short, I want our board to pray with me regarding what we need to do. What are we hearing from God?

2. Then, we will spend time in silence, sharing, and supplication to share how God may be prompting us to deliver our programs in different delivery systems for the world. Bottom line, we are asking the Spirit to speak first in how we discern direction, and we're positioning the Spirit to guide us through this crisis.

Dan Busby: Thanks for sharing what you will do in your board meeting this week to discern direction. That is so important. Don't miss that, listeners. It's an example of *The Council* model in action. Put Scripture reading, silence, sharing, and supplication in the heart of your meetings to discern direction in difficult times. Gary, can you advise any other Scriptures for boards to meditate on?

Gary Hoag: James 1 may be the best because it deals with both seeking wisdom in trials and listening before doing.

Dan Busby: What's your other advice for boards?

Gary Hoag: As you discern direction,

3. help the CEO on the revenue and expense sides by **asking good questions**. The answer to a crisis is not just "raise more money."

I love that we've had conversations about the importance of having buffers built into your budget. Buffers such as planning to raise more revenue than expenses, buffers such as having cash reserves, and buffers such as making sure that you have reserves to make it through a crisis. But what people are thinking in a time and season where everything has changed is, "How has it changed for your organization?" So, boards can ask good questions to help the CEO see where expenses can be trimmed, or to discern what activities the CEO and staff are going to do to generate revenue, but also, to dig deep as board members and give generously as a board. That way you are really helping the CEO both on the revenue and expense side to navigate this new normal.

Dan Busby: What a good word for boards, Gary. **Discern direction** because programs will change and **Ask questions** to help both with revenues and expenses, and to demonstrate that help through generous giving. OK, what's your final word for CEO's and pastors to raise resources?

Gary Hoag: This one hits home because I am a CEO. The temptation in times like this, is to speak in terms of how much I need to meet budget in raising funds for the ministry. The same temptation is there for pastors.

What we, CEO's and pastors, need to do is jettison that thinking right now. Get rid of it. This is not about whether or not we meet the budget. Everything has changed for everyone, so our message needs to change. Our job is to **steward change**.

My advice is to show how we're **stewarding change**. Show what ministry is continuing, what needed to pause, and how giving and ongoing support will help us stay true to our purpose during these difficult times.

This has a spiritual side and a strategic side. The spiritual side must remain compassionate and sensitive to the brokenness all around us. The strategic side reminds people that the

pursuit of the mission and purpose continues, and you want their ongoing partnership.

That may mean you need more funds to pivot online, to provide help for the needy, or to make big shifts in program delivery. Communicate clearly how you are stewarding change and you will build confidence and deepen their trust.

And people will give. They won't give to help you meet budget because their budget had to change and so should yours! Show them how you are stewarding change and how their involvement fits in the new normal and invite them to participate with what they have. I would gather you may even raise more money in this crisis if you steward change well.

Dan Busby:

Here's a summary of the advice for Raising Resources During and After a Pandemic:

CEO's and pastors need to show how they are stewarding change (which is not asking for a certain amount of money to meet budget.)

Boards must discern direction from the Spirit and ask good questions to help the CEO with revenues and expenses, while continuing to support the work through their giving.

Ministry fundraisers should pray and avoid people, pause and write people (and that extends beyond just major givers) while celebrating and uniting people around the hope we have in Christ.

Those are great words, Gary. Thank you for sharing them.

Gary, this has been such a helpful time together. Thanks again for making time to offer this counsel. May God give our listeners wisdom and strength to apply these keen insights.

That's all for now. Remember to email your questions or ideas for future episodes of the podcast to Podcast@ECFA.org.

We look forward to being with you again soon for another ECFA podcast!