
THE BOLD, NEWFACE, OF PHILANTHROPY

Jason Franklin's Plan for Better
Living through Bigger Giving

By GINA SAMAROTTO





Jason Franklin is not necessarily who one might picture when envisioning a philanthropic heavy hitter. Bearing no resemblance to any staunch, moneyed stereotype, the thirty-something Franklin is a freshly minted PhD with an air of approachability; a guy who wears his charming allure as easily as he does a ready, boyish grin. In his lofty position as CEO & Executive Director of New York's Bolder Giving, Franklin is at the helm of a nonprofit focused on providing high-level gives the inspiration and support needed to reach their ceding goals and sail to soaring, altruistic heights.

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A community activist and self-professed "policy geek", Franklin cut his teeth in the world of philanthropy by following in the footsteps of his family's foundation work. After receiving an inheritance of his own, he had the means to support his heady passion for human rights, economic justice and social change and started on his chosen path to more prominent giving.

"I was a kid when I made my debut as a community organizer," Franklin reminisced. "I was enraged—in the way only an indignant fourteen year old can be—by proposed budget cuts to the public education system in my home state of Oregon. I felt I needed to do something and so I co-founded a student group that worked to help save our schools. That group grew from being a handful of kids to an organization of ten thousand students within six months. I was hooked. I had just experienced, first hand, how powerful involvement could be."

From that point on, Franklin was stalwartly dedicated to his philanthropic endeavors and set off on a path that placed him - academically, professionally and personally—squarely in a position where he would be able to best serve the causes he supports.

Beginning as an aide in the Clinton White House, Franklin went on to work with various groups including the 21st Century School Fund, the Rockefeller Foundation's Next Generation Leadership Network, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families. Putting his time and effort, not to mention money, where his mouth is; Franklin currently serves on the boards of Resource Generation, Proteus Fund, North Star Fund, and Social Justice Philanthropy

Collaborative and sits on the advisory board of Wealth for the Common Good - all in addition to his positions as an NYU Adjunct Professor of Philanthropy and CEO & Executive Director of Bolder Giving.

It was as a bold giver that Franklin first came to know and admire the work done by the organization he would ultimately lead. His involvement with group grew exponentially from that first exposure, eventually landing him a seat on the Board of Directors under the organizations founders, Christopher and Anne Ellinger, and ultimately ending with his appointment as Executive Director and CEO.

"I was already familiar with the work, but sitting on the Bolder board of directors reinforced to me just how inspiring the stories of these givers were," says Franklin. "Here's this group of people all wanting to give, all looking to make positive change and most pledging to give at least 50% of their income, assets or business profits to make it happen. It's a moving, amazing experience to see outrageous generosity at work and to see the huge impact these bold gifts make. It is easy to just give, but Bolder Giving teaches people how to give well. We ask, 'what would make you dance with joy if it happened due to your giving?' and when the answers begin to flow, it's a transformative moment".

The impact of the organization proved impressive enough to attract the attention of perhaps the boldest of all givers, Bill and Melinda Gates. The Gates, crediting Bolder Giving with helping to provide the inspiration leading to the billionaire's Giving Pledge they created in collaboration with Warren Buffett, offered the organization a three-year challenge grant. The grant allowed Bolder Giving to expand their reach, the organizations resources grew 700% over a four-year period and a philanthropic star was born.

So how, exactly, does Bolder Giving support and inspire their bold givers?

"We help people imagine their giving. We connect with them to help define and share their stories," explains Franklin. "We show our givers just how transformational it can be when you add yet another zero to your pledge. And we show them that you don't have to be a billionaire in order to give big".

