The Big Ask SOP

Ask for the big number, then prove every line until they say yes.

THE PLAY (ONE LINE)

Make the ask nobody on your side thinks you can win, build it out of the small numbers, answer every "prove it" in full, and count every request that is not a no as a step closer.

Why this matters

"Hey, you don't ask, you don't get." - Barry Moline

During COVID, Barry's group of electric utilities asked the California legislature for a billion dollars to cover customers' unpaid bills. Their own CEOs told him the door would be slammed. Barry says the legislature never said no. It said "prove it," again and again, and the answer was a spreadsheet with every customer on it.

25%	$1B	120	$2B
customers not paying, per Barry	the first ask	legislators talked to	total, per Barry

Figures are Barry Moline's recollection on the episode (recorded November 2026), not independently verified.

The 7 steps

1. **Name the ask and size it.**
   Write the number down and open a folder for it. Barry saw the state had money, knew the unpaid bills ran about a billion, and said "let's go get a billion."
2. **Ask your side for permission, not belief.**
   "Is it okay with you if we ask?" You don't need them to think it will work. You need them not to stop you. Expect to take the arrows alone at first.
3. **Build the big number from small numbers.**
   Every big number is a lot of small ones. List every line: each customer, job, invoice or unit, and what it costs.
4. **Answer every "prove it" in full.**
   When they ask for more, send it, beyond a shadow of a doubt: spreadsheets, records, a person who can explain it.
5. **Count every avoided no as a win.**
   "Bring us more information" is not a no. Log it as a step closer and keep going.
6. **Tell holdouts the deal plainly.**
   Supply the information and you might get something. Don't, and you won't.
7. **Set up full accountability.**
   A clean structure to receive and pay out the money made the second billion easy, Barry says.

The Big Ask SOP

Your prove-it log and checklist.

Your big ask

The ask (one sentence): _____

The number: _____

Who decides: _____

Who on my side has to say "okay": _____

The prove-it log

One row every time they ask for more. A "more information" answer is a win, not a no.

Date	Who asked	What they asked to see	What we sent	Result
				no / more / yes
				no / more / yes
				no / more / yes
				no / more / yes
				no / more / yes
				no / more / yes
				no / more / yes
				no / more / yes
				no / more / yes

Checklist

- ☐ The number is written down and has a folder
- ☐ Every line behind the number is documented
- ☐ Every avoided no logged as a win
- ☐ A structure to receive, track and report the money
- ☐ My side said "okay, go ask" (support can come later)
- ☐ Every "prove it" answered in full
- ☐ Holdouts told: supply the info or get nothing
- ☐ Ready for the second ask

"Every big number, when you hear a big number somewhere, it's always comprised of a lot of small numbers." - Barry Moline

From "You Can't Change Minds: Barry Moline on Persuasion and Leadership," Unscripted Small Business, hosted by Jeremy Rivera. Full recap: unscriptedsmallbusiness.com/barry-moline-persuasion-authority-leadership/