

# ONLINE FUNDRAISING

(from the Experts)



## Introduction

Care2 is privileged to work with some of best brains in online fundraising. These professionals have guided nonprofits of all sizes and stripes in raising millions of dollars through digital channels. Collectively, they represent a deep and trusted well of fundraising expertise.

To help causes like yours recruit and engage supporters online, Care2 asked these experts to share their online fundraising pearls of wisdom. We asked them all, *What should a nonprofit fundraiser focus on in 2013*?

Their recommendations reveal broad consensus in three areas.

- 1. Optimize for mobile. A growing and significant number of supporters are reading most or all of their email from smart phones and other mobile devices. Want to seriously boost results? Make it easy for people to give and take action from a mobile device.
- 2. Improve internal communication and data sharing. Is fundraising data in the same place as advocacy data? Are volunteer and event fundraising data connected? If your answer is "No," then you are missing critical knowledge to help identify and cultivate "super supporters."
- 3. One tactic to rule them all Storytelling. Nothing matters tools, data, analytics unless you know how to tell your stories. Storytelling is, and always has been, the heart of fundraising. Tell your story in a compelling, authentic way, and connect with supporters. Blather on, and watch your fundraising efforts flounder.

Each piece of advice is designed to help you break down a barrier, overcome an obstacle, open your practice for improvement. So pick a tip and run with it! And don't hesitate to reach out to a contributor for help (we've included their contact information at the end).

# PLAN. THINK BIG. MEASURE.

#### Set yourself up for success

Set up each and every marketing campaign for optimal tracking and analysis. In order to make informed marketing decisions, you'll want as much data and understanding of each campaigns performance.

Do you have a strategy in place to cultivate and convert leads to donors? In any acquisition or lead-generation activity, a post-acquisition messaging strategy is imperative. Think it through and have your plan in place before you push your campaign live.

-Katy Dubina; CDR



#### Dear Jackie Sleeper

Thank you for taking the pledge from Care2 to purchase Certified Humane® products where they are available. You have taken the first step towards greatly improving the lives of farm animals in the U.S. and Canada.

When the Certified Humane® program was launched in 2003, there were 143,000 animals raised under Humane Farm Animal Care (HFAC)'s standards. In 2009 there were over 25 million farm animals raised under our standards, and every farm that comes on the program has to make changes that benefit the animals.



#### Let your goals drive you

It's critical that nonprofits set meaningful goals and define how they will measure success. Manically focus on optimization so you can make the most out of every site visit, every email, and every landing page. Think beyond the first step - beyond acquiring an email address - to how you will build a relationship with this new supporter. Be open to new things, test and learn.

-Amy Gonzalez; Blue Print Interactive

## **Discipline is key**

In 2013, multi-channel campaigns will continue to drive more revenue than single channel efforts. To raise the most money, discipline is key. Organizations need to take time to carefully map-out and execute multi-channel campaigns, so that the experience any single donor may have with an organization "feels" the same – regardless of which, and how many, channels a donor uses. Any individual donor may connect with an organization through advertising, events, email, social media, the mail and on the phone. It is increasingly important that campaigns present one clear message across channels.

-Tiffany Neill and Lesley Hostetter; Lautmann, Maska Neill & Company



#### Market like a retailer

Take advantage of proven online tactics from the retail sector. Make retargeting, social media advertising and mobile advertising part of your media mix in 2013. And don't forget to continue to grow your online acquisition budget year over year, another strong trend in the retail sector.

-Rosa Del Angel; RedEngine Digital

## Get your back end in shape!

You may feel like you need a personal trainer for this one, but follow these 3 easy steps and you can have a beautiful back end in no time.

BootyCamp2013: Tips for getting your Back End into shape.

- 1. Start with a warm-up on the engagement ladder. Devote more attention to the logistics of collecting, databasing and using contacts so that you can effectively build stronger bonds with supporters over time.
- 2. Drills, drills, drills: Capture the right information, in the right way. Make sure you are capturing all the information that you will need from those people who express an interest in your cause!
- 3. Get back to the basics: Say thank you and then listen. If you forget to say thank you, you would probably be ridiculed by your peers for not following the #1 guiding principle to every touch point (Penelope Burke, anyone?). But how many of us are trying to listen and learn a bit more about supporters when they sign on to our cause?



Just remember, this is a slow burn, not a quick fix. Regardless of your current Back End fitness level, your program will reap the rewards if you consistently keep at it through the year!

-Deanna Bickford; Stratcom

Thank you!

#### **Benchmark for engagement. Prepare for the Millennials**

Incorporate new benchmarks for involvement. Move beyond conversion and transaction, and incorporate engagement benchmarks into all reports. This includes "opens", "clicks" and other measurements of online content viewing. Incorporate new elements of action steps: measure how many people respond to questions, polls, queries and call-to-action buttons in content. Then look at how many convert to higher engagement. Using this graduated scale of involvement, challenge yourself to increase each statistic.



Develop a group of online Millennial advocates to spread messages, write content and develop online conversations for you. Stop thinking that you need to generate this in-house. Become a facilitator of the conversation rather than the creator. Create this team to write about your work in various styles for different audiences. Your Millennial scribes could write about recent happenings, new ways to think about supporting the organization, and how you tackle issues. Let them become your personal journalists. Help them create a movement for you rather than creating one for yourself.

-Derrick Feldmann; Achieve

#### Create an editorial calendar for the year

Take the time to create an editorial calendar for the year as part of your overall content strategy, so that your communications have consistency of tone and relevance with everything you do. A little more planning in the beginning of the year goes a long way and helps put each unique fundraising effort into the perspective of a year-long, well-run campaign.

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	1 New Year's Resolutions	exuality for all Ornanizations exokion on the Kick the year of right with an easy one that almost all organizations working for social about making changes in your file—but who's purpose? Environmental organizations can push stories about changing energy use habits. Public health organizations can pitch reporters on healthy eating in the New Year, and civic engogement organizations can												
	3 113th Congress, 1st Session convenes	This is a record-setting congress with 100 women and 7 LGBT members. If you're working on national policy issues, prime the conversation from the start. If you expect or												

Evaluate what truly worked in 2012 and adjust your fundraising strategies to match. Focus on what gave you tangible results and be willing to make bold decisions in what to add, modify or even cut out moving forward. Don't be surprised if you find something you think is very important didn't produce many tangible results, and don't be scared to cut that or scale it back in 2013.

#### -Greg Kihlström; Carousel30

# **CHURN HAPPENS. BUDGET FOR ACQUISITION.**

#### Grow, measure, and maximize

Collect email addresses wherever you can. Create analytical infrastructure to attribute revenue to the proper marketing channel, i.e. if a new donor first engaged online, but first gave in the mail, you need to know this and continue to engage with the donor online. Breakdown internal silos to truly embrace integrated, multi-channel marketing and fundraising.

#### -Mark Grayer; Avalon Consulting

#### Get them online, convert them everywhere

Online communities represent a huge untapped pool of potential donors. And, with the increasing cost of acquiring new donors through traditional channels, more and more nonprofits are looking at their online supporters as a means of acquiring new donors. But, there are some pitfalls to avoid, and key actions to be taken, that will increase the probability of success.

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Keys to success include identifying the target audience you want to reach online, and making it simple and easy for people to sign up. There are a number of ways to acquire online supporters, including petitions, pledges, surveys and registration for information, newsletters or events. You can create these opportunities internally or use 3rd party sources, such as Care2.

Be sure to capture the right information so you can cultivate and convert in as many channels as possible. Telemarketing is a great way to convert online leads to monthly donors. At a minimum, you need name, email, and postal code, and from there you can get full mailing address and often times phone number. Full street address and phone number is ideal!

-Corinne Berman; Stratcom

#### Make the most of free resources

Apply for Google for Nonprofit Program, but make sure you maximize its value. For many charities, this means getting help from people who really know how to run adwords campaigns. Make sure your landing pages are optimized to capture the traffic your grant generates. Finally, engage your new constituents throughout the year.

-Cody Damon; Media Cause



#### **Boost your traffic from search**

Invest in SEO and SEM across search engines AND make sure that all their links are sourced. We're also searching on our phones and most "transactions" cross multiple screens, whether we start the search on mobile and finish it on our desktop or vice versa. Not everyone is using Google, and it's a missed opportunity for nonprofits to only pay attention to that one search engine. IOS, Yahoo, Bing, and even AOL all have users that are potential supporters for your cause, and if your message isn't in front of them, I guarantee another nonprofit's is.



-Brenna Holmes; Chapman Cubine Adams + Hussey

# TO HAVE AND TO HOLD: ENGAGE AND RETAIN SUPPORTERS

#### **Treat your donors right**

Don't treat your donors like an ATM machine. Focus on a ladder of engagement. Not every appeal has to be a fundraising ask.

Thank your donors in multiple ways - via email, pick up the phone and thank them, send them hand written notes, tweet them, tag them on FB, etc. And show people the tangible impact of their donations.

-Allyson Kapin; Rad Campaign

#### Woo me!

Don't just go for the money ask all the time; go for the attention ask. Engage supporters before, during and even after your fundraising campaign.

Throw some of these cultivation/engagement tactics into your fundraising mix:



Video: A thank-you video that puts donors, and donor appreciation, front and center. BONUS: Make it funny and/or inspirational so that people want to share it.

Tell us your story: Ask supporters to share their experiences. It draws them closer to your mission, and produces content you can use across channels, for both advocacy and fundraising purposes. Gold standard: Consumers Union's DefendYourDollars.org.

Quiz: Fun, educational, not as hard as you think. Tools you can use: Wufoo, ProProfs QuizSchool.

Vote: Favorite toy, puppy name, photo? This tactic is great for attracting new supporters. Check out Canine Companions Puppy Name Challenge.

-Kerri Karvetski; Company K Media

## **Build long-term relationships**

Sadly, most nonprofits will only keep 1 in 5 of their donors next year. With the amount of money and time spent on acquiring new donors, this crisis in retention should make all nonprofit marketers stand at alert.

Make retention as much of a priority as - if not more than - acquisition:

- Listen to your donors and respond through surveys, social media and other feedback loops.
- Thank them a lot.
- Tell them what you are doing with their support on a quarterly basis.
- Call them to thank them.
- Make them feel like insiders.

Donors are not online ATMs. You must nurture and cultivate the relationship for long-term success.

-Alia McKee; Sea Change Strategies

### **Communication is key**

Communication is key! How, when, what and why you communicate with your donors is essential.



•How: If they were acquired through face to face, they made an initial personal connection so be sure to communicate with them personally! Telephone and email garner the best results from face to face acquired donors, especially if you can connect it back to what initially inspired them. And be sure to thank them! Every communication doesn't have to be an upgrade or update. A simple thank you, or reaffirming what their contribution means to your organization, can go a long way.

•When: Be sure to thank and reinforce why your donors

commitment is important – right away! Then find out how often they would like to be communicated to. Some donors want lots of communication others would only like to be updated a few times of year – find out their preference. But if you ask, be sure to adhere to that preference!

• What: Some of the best donors stewardship programs are an extension of what interested the donor initially. For example, if you are an animal charity and your donor gave to your organization because they have a dog name Fido and they are concerned about the welfare of dogs, sending communications to them about the plight of tigers in Africa may not result in them having the same connection to the cause. If you send them a communication focused on how their donor dollars are improving the welfare of dogs, and throw in a personalized Hello to Fido or tips on caring for your dog, your donor is going to be far more connected!



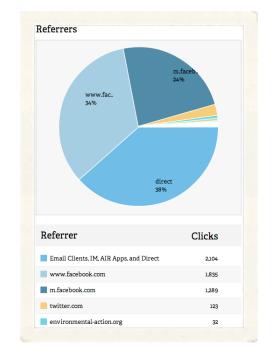
• Why: Don't just communicate with your donors because it's the 10th of the month and you usually send them something every 10 days. Communicate because you have something important to share, because you want to thank them or because you need their help, engaging your donors in your cause whether through volunteering, signing a petition or events, is a great way to further cement their commitment.

-Amy Kszyston; Fundraising Initiatives

#### **Find your super users**

Most important idea: Segment your list by campaign (save the wolves vs. Stop KeystoneXL) and by actions (donors vs. sign a petition vs. attend a rally) and then look for the people who show up in several or ALL of those segments and shower them with love and praise. You'll get 3 important results:

- 1. You'll never have to wonder "do people want to hear this update?" again. By sending people the kind of messages and actions they already like to take, you'll see open and click rates soar.
- Your members will think of you as "their group" instead of "another email". Donation emails that reference giving history perform 20-500% higher. Acknowledging past action on a campaign can double the open rate. These things aren't just nice, they're essential.
- Individuals click buttons, communities make change. Once you've built trust and reciprocity with members, they'll tell you give ideas and information. At Environmental Action, two of our leading campaigns were started because a member suggested we work on the issue, and in turn, those two campaigns accounted for 65% of sharing and 50% of all new members to our list last year.



-Drew Hudson; PowerThru Consulting

#### Get to know the supporters you already have

Nonprofits need to get to know the subscribers who are already on their lists. While list growth needs to be a top priority, now is also a great time to find out more about what champions already comprise your supporter base and what their expectations of your organization are. How did they interact with you last year? What channels did they respond to? What do they want to hear from you this year?



And, how can you learn that? A quick survey. A series of personal phone calls. A deep dive into your database (scary thought, I know). Whatever you can do to get to know the people behind those email addresses will help guide your engagement across channels and your fundraising efforts before the ball drops in Times Square again.

-Rebecca Higman; Merkle

# GET YOUR STORY STRAIGHT. AND TELL THEM OFTEN.

### **Content is king**

Acquisition is mostly a numbers game, but it's more than that. Copy that zings and photos that grab your donors' hearts not only sell better, but also builds a better foundation for a donor relationship down the line. So rule number one should always be: make sure the content doesn't suck.

-Mark Rovner; Sea Change Strategies

#### Tell your story, and know your audience

Make donors the heroes of your stories. Who's the hero in your stories? If it's you, then acquisition will be a tough game. If it's the donor, or possible donor, then you stand a chance. There are hundreds of organizations that people can support, and many of them are just as great, if not greater, than you, so don't make it about you. Make it about them. Focus on how they can do something great, be a part of something great, and how you are able to help them in that.

Close the loop. Tell donors what you'll do with their money, go and do it, and tell them how they specifically helped you do awesome things with their money. That's closing the loop, and is much more important than simply thanking donors for their support. Thanking donors is the bare minimum. It is mandatory, but it won't help you stand out or develop the trust you need for word of mouth marketing to spread. Showing the impact, tying it to specifics, making the donor feel close, empowered and essential to your cause, is how you keep them around and get them to spread your message to others.



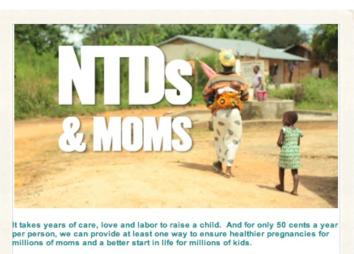
#### -Brady Josephson; Charity Express

#### You are in the happiness business

You should focus on that fact that you are above all in the happiness business. Your primary job is to find the emotional core of your initiative and connect it to the consumers you wish to reach. Then give them the opportunity to feel great by doing good.

Don't talk in numbers or statistics. A cerebral case for your cause is less effective than a heartfelt story.

Be inspiring. People don't act because things are bad – they act to make things better. If you only paint a vivid picture of how bad things are, then how can consumers imagine – much less sign up for – a journey toward a better place? Project a brilliant image of what is possible so people can imagine how it will feel to be a part of your efforts.



Please <u>share the video</u> to help raise awareness and inspire action so that mothers can give their children the best gift of all – health.

Thanks for joining the END7 campaign and for sharing the impact that NTD treatment has on countless lives.

#### -Katya Andresen; Network for Good

#### Give them what they want

Take the steps you need to be relevant to your constituents. Whether that's increased data mining, collaborating across the aisle between program, fundraising and marketing departments, etc. Do what you need to give your constituents what they want from you, in the channels that they need it. Do you have the devices in place to capture and measure your constituents' needs, then proactively serve them that content or engagement opportunity? Help, hope, support or information to share. Opportunities to advocate, donate, volunteer and connect. Nonprofits have a big menu of offerings for their constituents, and connecting them to what they want will pay huge dividends for both sides.

-Bethany Bauman; Merkle



# GIVE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS A MOBILE MAKEOVER

### **Embrace responsive web design**

Optimizing your website for fundraising is no longer simply about well-placed donation asks – you must also consider how your audience is getting there. Responsive web design provides a streamlined solution to presenting your message on smart phones, tablets, laptops and more.

Through new technology – mainly the growing library of html5 and CSS3 – developers and designers no longer have to play it safe. Responsive design is fluid and adaptive, ensuring that your website looks perfect no matter how or where your audience is viewing it. And if it's easy to use on every device, it's easy to donate, volunteer, and share, too.

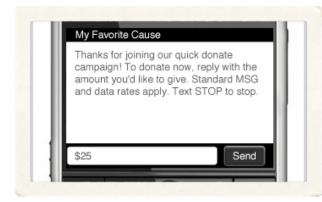


-Paul Habig; SankyNet

## It's all about mobile

Invest in a mobile strategy, regardless of your digital goals.

The rise of mobile email consumption – more than 30% of messages are now read on a smartphone or tablet – and mobile web usage has fundamentally altered what it takes to run a successful fundraising or engagement campaign. Action rates from mobile browsers are 50% lower than on desktops. And SMS text-to-give programs are difficult to grow without extraordinarily urgent circumstances or expensive, long-term promotion.



During the 2012 campaign, more than 1.5 million users opted-in to Obama for America's program, donating more than \$115 million. The campaign estimates that \$75 million of that \$115 million was money that wouldn't have been raised without our mobile tools. Conversion rates were four times higher than on traditional web forms and donors enrolled in it gave three times as much money as those solicited the traditional way. Best of all, this technology works for even the smallest campaign or nonprofit.

-Alex Stanton; Blue State Digital



### **Optimize for mobile**

Mobile optimize all of their emails and the landing pages they link to (ESPECIALLY advocacy and fundraising, but all content pages too) More and more, we're all reading email on our smart phones, but we are stymied in our experience because the email is either distorted by non-mobilized images or once we click through the page is basically useless on a small screen - only the MOST motivated will complete desired actions, and while some of us may have the best intentions to look back on our desktops, how often does that happen?

-Brenna Holmes; Chapman Cubine Adams + Hussey

# Make sure you look good (in every browser)

It is critical that you test your email messages and donation pages on all major browsers, including on iPhone and Android. Interesting: integrate digital fundraising with live, real-time events.

-Karen Graham; MAP for Nonprofits

# **OPTIMIZE EVERYTHING**

## **Optimize your emails**

Have an intuitive and user-friendly landing page that only asks for the information you absolutely need to process the donation.

Send out online fundraising appeals that have the fundraising asks hyperlinked and in bold and it should be within the first 3-4 short paragraphs of the appeal - not the 5th or 6th.

-Allyson Kapin; Rad Campaign

With summer just around the corner, I can't help but think of how much I loved that time of year as a child. Later in life, I watched my children make their own special summer memories. But this year, as summer approaches, I have to admit I'm concerned. I'm worried about the millions of kids in America who may spend their summer worrying about how to get enough to eat.

In a country of such abundance, it's a tragedy that we have so many children struggling with hunger, but you can help. <u>Make a gift to Feeding America and help us</u> get meals to children and families facing hunger families like Gerald's.

#### Making the ask

- Use a sustainer ask upsell light box on (almost) every donation form.
- Women respond to more emotional language than men so tone down the heart strings for males and ramp 'em up for females.
- Test and make sure that test results are statistically significant!
- Symbolic gift catalogs don't need to be complex or pricey just send an email to a simple e-card form where person selects a symbolic gift (gift level), sends e-card and makes gift, e.g., screen shot below:

#### -Jeff Regen; Merkle

National Multiple Sclerosis Society	Sign In   Create Profile About the Society   Find A Chapter   Government Affairs & Advocacy   News   Multimedia Library   Store   For Professionals About MS   Living with MS   Research   Get Involved   Online Community   Donate
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#### Guerilla test your website

Please make time to do regular guerilla user testing on your site. Set up a regular monthly Friday afternoon user testing session. Invite colleagues, friends, people from the street (!), and give them a specific task – for example, taking a particular action or making a donation. You only need 4-6 people to get insight into the process. Take the top 3 usability issues that you find and ensure that you make the changes by the next session. Costs? Nothing. Insight gained? Invaluable. No excuses – start now!

-Paul Gill; Torchbox

#### Liberate and integrate your data

Stop talking about how "silos" are preventing you getting the information/donors that you want. Instead, go out and share your data with the team or person you think you could most use it. If you look after major donors, it's not appropriate to ask them to give a small monthly gift, but why not let your events team ask them for their feedback on how to make your events fundraising better.

Appoint someone on your team who REALLY knows about data. That means someone who's worked in retail marketing, banking or any sector where data drives decision making (and isn't created to justify decisions already made). Give them the remit to solve the problems that are facing you, and the resources to get the job done. That doesn't mean a blank cheque/check, but a modest hardware/software budget, an analyst, and the seniority to work across all your fundraising departments and run trials across each. Then use the data and the systems that you have to directly drive decisions.



#### -Martin Campbell; Blackbaud Europe

#### Synchronized data is smart data

I think a critical foundational step is to sync all constituent data across organizational databases (preferably automated in real time) so you always know who gave, how much, and when, and then customize messages to donors accordingly. It's a headache and often requires spending some money to resolve data silos, but once organizations get past this technical hurdle, sophisticated, timely, customized messages are so much easier.

-Heather Williams; SwimWays

Thank you to all the fantastic consultants who contributed to this project. We encourage you to reach out to any of them if you want to learn more about their perspectives and services.

And a special thank you to Kerri Karvetski of Company K Media who helped make this a much more readable and useful document. Care2 accepts full responsibility and credit for any shortcomings on either front.

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