

FUNDRAISING FORUM™

Five predictions for 2015

Rich Dietz shares his top predictions for the coming year.

Conversion optimisation, or improving donation flow to raise more money; the ability to engage with Millennials; donor retention and treating all donors as if they are major donors; online and mobile fundraising; and, the ability to share stories in a very visual way will be the top fundraising trends for 2015.

That's what Rich Dietz, senior product manager for digital fundraising for Abila Software in Austin, Texas predicts.

'2015 will be a big year and a transitional year for the nonprofit sector as business-minded tactics slowly gain ground and organisations think about increased growth versus simply being sustainable,' said Dietz.

'Engagement strategies will reach new levels as Millennials continue to emerge in importance and nonprofits think about the best way to interact with their supporters.'

His predictions for 2015 fundraising include:

Conversion optimisation

Organisations will begin to think about how to better convert existing website visitors versus simply attracting new visitors.

This is a business practice that many small businesses have adopted recently and will work well for nonprofits. Conversion optimisation revolves around measuring, testing and optimising the donation flow to raise more money.

Millennial engagement

According to The Brookings Institute, Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce by 2025.

As Millennials enter the workforce and have money to spend, organisations will need to put strategies in place to best engage this demographic.

Many follow a different path to becoming a donor than is traditionally done and nonprofits will need to adapt to these differences.

Donor loyalty and lifetime value

Tracking donor engagement will be crucial. Organisations will spend more time analysing characteristics and behaviours of all of their

constituents – not just major donors – to better understand what drives their giving behaviour.

By tracking donor engagement, organisations will be able to further segment their appeals, personalise

their outreach to donors, significantly increase donor loyalty, improve lifetime value, and treat all donors like major donors.

Online and mobile

Online and mobile have played an increasingly key role for organisations over the past few years, and that will continue in 2015. Social media will play a key role in the 'attention economy', and responsive design will be necessary to allow supporters to access an organisation's website at any time from any device.

2014 was the tipping point for more web traffic coming from mobile devices than desktop computers. According to Pew Research Center, more than 90% of all Americans own a cell phone.

Storytelling becomes visual

Creating a narrative and sharing a story has always been important for nonprofits to successfully engage donors, but doing so in a visual way is becoming essential. Organisations will have to find creative and innovative ways to engage supporters in a world full of distractions, and visual components are key.

Web posts with visuals drive up to 180% more engagement and research indicates people process visuals 60 000 times faster than text.

'The nonprofit sector must continue to evolve and keep pace with behavioural changes we see in society,' said Dietz. 'Organisations that embrace new ways of thinking, streamline their databases, create visual stories and adjust their engagement approaches will be successful.'

<http://www.thenonprofitimes.com> ■



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Visit our new website at www.dmi.co.za

Top 2015 predictions?

Baby boomers bulldoze all-time fundraising record

Welcome to the object of your affections, for the rest of your fundraising career . . . the charitable bequest. Tom Ahern reports.

Baby boomers (humans born between 1946 and 1964) have reached late middle age and the great unknown of 'retirement'.

The oldest are 69. The youngest are 51; they'll only reach the 'retirement-ripe' age of 65 in 2029 or so. You won't see the last of them in bulk until 2064 or so.

What symphony manager hasn't swept eyes across an audience and observed, 'It's not just grey . . . it's mostly white hair out there. By Zeus' beard, my board chair was right: we DO need younger donors.'

Wrong conclusion. Seems obvious. But it's wrong.

Charitable giving is just a small piece of household economics.

People 'age into' giving around age 55. Americans. Australians. South Africans. Brits.

Most aren't ready to contribute much in their younger years (tech millionaires excepted). Too many other demands compete for an income: house, food, clothing, family, education, status, privilege. Maslow's whole hierarchy of needs, basically.

Charity is always optional. Charity comes last.

Obligated

That's why religion does so well with giving, says Marc Pitman, compared to other categories of charity such as the environment or the arts. In church, they pass the plate once a week in public. And out in public, people feel obliged to give. In the privacy of their homes, they don't.

Americans age into charitable giving as a common activity around 55. They continue giving until there's an interruption like illness or death or destitution.

Another stupid thing in 2015 (as in 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007 and forever): A lousy (e.g. inane) bequest marketing programme.

The number of boomers now entering or in their prime giving years is going to be massive and unprecedented. Baby boomers, by the way, control over 80% of personal financial assets in the U.S..

Therefore, fellow logic freaks, inexorably, baby boomers will assume . . . with superhuman strength and grace . . . their predestined place as the greatest philanthropic generation ever born.

Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that we don't collectively turn our home planet into something uninhabitable; and, therefore, your charity's mission remains relevant 100 years from now . . .

. . . as Boys & Girls Clubs of America

(founded 1860 by three women) remains; as Girl Scouts (founded 1912) remains; as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (chartered 1861) remains; as the Sierra Club (founded in 1892) remains . . .

Will your organisation still be scrambling for funds each and every year?

Or are you going to do something about the problem now, as your fundraising predecessors likely did not?

Is there a single charity in America that can boast about its bequest marketing programme? Yes: I've met a few. I haven't met dozens, though.

Charities have one amazing thing to sell: A sense of purpose.

A massive generation of potential donors stands before you looking for meaning.

I hope to quote psychiatrist and death-camp survivor, Dr. Viktor Frankl, a million times before I die: 'Humans are driven by a will to establish meaning in their lives. They need purpose.'

Putting that exciting thought inside a million other minds would, I believe, qualify one as a 'millionaire'.

People aren't remembered for their money. They're remembered for their ideas.

So, please be remembered at your going-away party as 'the fundraiser who shook us by our tired shoulders and shouted loudly in our faces, "There's big money in bequests!"

"And, because of her, our charity has grown exponentially. Today, because of her insistence on charitable bequests, this worthy charity can do 10 times more good than we could just a decade earlier. I speak to all of you here tonight who've joined our Visionary's Society. I want to say . . . from children and families . . . thanks from their future! Your generosity will be the 'tiny privilege' that tips the balance for one child and then for many other children. A few hundred dollars of charity apiece does the trick. Easy enough to do in a small charitable bequest. You made that possible. The future loves you!"

Purpose

All we really know is that the number of boomers leaving the workforce has been – is – and will be massive.

And they're ready for other things to do. They need new purpose! 'There's no one more contorted and angst-ridden than a former CEO in the first 12 months of retirement. I pity their spouses.' That's the gist from one expert on ageing.

Cue your cause. ■

With acknowledgement to
Tom Ahern
www.aherncomm.com

On-target observations in brief

Letting opinions affect income is an unacceptable arrogance that damages the cause.

Denise Murray

The only genuine elite is the elite of those men and women who gave their lives to justice and charity.

Sargent Shriver

How often has a board member asked how the planned giving programme is progressing? Or, if you're that board member, how many times have you asked the question? Planned giving is still one of the great fundraising opportunities – just over the horizon but within reach – that many nonprofit leaders struggle to seize.

www.thenonproffitimes.com

If you want people to lay their eyes and ears on the stories you produce, you must dedicate substantial time and energy to disseminating them.

philanthropy.com

To improve performance, nonprofits should pick out key pieces of data from each of their departments and review them regularly at staff meetings.

Looking at important data regularly helps organisations stop making decisions based on hunches and identify potential problems early.

The Chronicle of Philanthropy
16 January 2014

It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.

Mother Teresa

Streetsmart nonprofit managers should treat their brand names like the assets they are. They may not be bought and sold, but they manage consumer demand and are a critical part of a nonprofit's effectiveness.

The NonProfit Times
1 May 2012

Ask for money, not for 'support'. The purpose of a direct-mail fundraising letter is to ask for financial help. Be sure you do so – clearly, explicitly and repeatedly.

malwarwick.com

Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.

Martin Luther King Jr.



Saint Giles – a 'hand-up' for the disabled

Based in Durban, Saint Giles is a nonprofit organisation dedicated to supporting persons with physical disabilities.

The organisation first launched in 1952, when founder Kerry Malt a journalist, who himself was physically challenged, began visiting the sick in hospitals and private homes. The concern he had for the disabled grew, and in 1962 Saint Giles took up offices at 4 Prince Street, South Beach, Durban – where you'll find them to this day . . . 53 years later.

A large part of their work takes place in a one-of-a-kind remedial gym, where disabled people are encouraged, motivated and given

special physical therapy to help them overcome their obstacles – free of charge.

Saint Giles also endeavours to provide employment at their work centre where 70 disabled, full-time employees sort, pack and assemble various goods for a list of corporate organisations. Student bursaries for needy, disabled youth are also available.

The organisation, currently steered by Managing Director, Terry Rennie, is constantly exploring new ways to make life a little easier for those living with disabilities.

To find out more about Saint Giles visit www.saintgiles.org.za.

FUNDRAISING FORUM™

Fundraising Forum is a regular newsletter dedicated to the enhancement of management, fundraising techniques and the promotion of community service, welfare and not-for-profit organisations of all kinds.

It is published by Downes Murray International and circulated, free of charge, to anyone with an interest in the growth and improvement of the nonprofit sector and those served by it. In addition to regular features written by Downes Murray International staff, there are extracts from international fundraising publications which are reprinted with acknowledgement to the publishers.

We welcome submissions for publication from all writers involved in not-for-profit work. Visit www.dmi.co.za for more information.

From billboards to bus shelters to email, charities try one message

More and more charities are realising the importance of presenting a unified message across all fundraising communications.

Oxfam America raised more than \$1.1-million in the last two months of 2013 by trying just about everything.

To encourage supporters to buy holiday presents from its gift catalogue, which offers livestock, training for a midwife, construction tools, and more to benefit people in the charity's development programmes, the group unleashed a co-ordinated fundraising drive that sought donors through a variety of techniques at once.

Pictures of goats and chickens beckoned from billboards, bus shelters and online ads. An insert promoting the catalogue was slipped into 330 000 year-end fundraising letters, and more than 400 000 people received a series of five emails promoting the alternative gifts.

The campaign paid off, accounting for roughly 10% of the more than \$10-million the charity raised from small dollar donors in November and December.

'We try to think about meeting supporters where they are,' says Megan Weintraub, the organisation's new-media manager. 'If we can tell a longer story in a direct-mail piece but engage them day-to-day on social media, we find value in talking to them in different ways.'

Consistent messages

Like Oxfam, many charities are now connecting their separate strands of fundraising into unified campaigns.

The ways in which various fundraising channels interact can be complicated and sometimes counterintuitive, say experts. Well-timed emails or online advertisements can boost gifts from a direct-mail appeal. Postal solicitations can encourage online donors to make second gifts, and telemarketing can push both mail and online donors to become monthly supporters.

A consistent message, hammered home again and again, gets donors' attention, says David Chalfant, director of development at Whitman-Walker Health, a medical center in Washington.

'Everyone is so inundated with information,' he says. 'They may glance through a direct-mail piece, but then if we pop up in their email with a reminder, their response is, "Oh, that's right."'

The number of people who give to a charity through more than one channel is usually small, but they're often some of the best donors, says Peter Schoewe, a vice president at Mal Warwick Donor-digital, a fundraising consulting company. He says they are more likely than those who give through only one channel to make subsequent donations, to become monthly donors, and to give more from one year to the next.

At a time when the cost of attracting new donors is increasing and charities have a hard time holding on to their supporters, that makes a

big difference, says Mr Schoewe.

He says he recently calculated the bottom-line impact of a modest increase in the number of multichannel donors for one of his clients: 'For them, it meant hundreds of thousands each year.'

But integrating different forms of fundraising in a sophisticated way is tough. Planning co-ordinated campaigns is time-consuming and often requires the co-operation of two or more departments. Nonprofits struggle to track results and analyse how different types of fundraising work together so they can make smart choices about where to invest their resources.

And technology can pose challenges: data about people who give in traditional ways often live in a different database than those of supporters who make gifts online, and the records may not merge easily.

Things that seem like simple tasks can be tricky, says Mr Schoewe.

For instance, he says, before a charity can send an email that refers to a telemarketing call, the telemarketing company usually has to transmit information about the call to the organisation's central fundraising database, which in turn has to send it to the group's email database.

Says Mr Schoewe: 'It should happen automatically, but it's been very hard.'

Sometimes the effort it takes to co-ordinate various fundraising channels is worth it, but sometimes it's not, says Sarah DiJulio, principal at M+R Strategic Services, a fundraising consulting company.

Don't assume that co-ordination is always better, she cautions. Instead, measure how much integration lifts fundraising, and weigh that increase against the extra work involved: 'Sometimes it can be a big sink of energy and time.'

'Painful' first effort

Gundersen Medical Foundation learned first-hand just how challenging running a co-ordinated campaign can be.

The organisation, which is the fundraising arm of a nonprofit health system in Wisconsin, employed the approach for the first time during its 2013 year-end fundraising drive, co-ordinating a slew of appeals: direct mail, a full-page advertisement in the foundation's magazine, video testimonials from current donors, and social-media posts.

The drive brought in more than \$271 000, up 12% from roughly \$242 000 the previous year.

The integrated campaign was a big reason behind the jump, fundraisers say, but success didn't come easily.

The organisation's new email system is more

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complicated than fundraisers had hoped, and the first campaign message, which told donors to keep an eye out for the direct-mail letter, went out with a broken link to the group’s donation page and had to be re-sent.

Then the foundation realised that its mail appeal which had been redesigned to share the look of the rest of the campaign, needed new envelopes, because adding art at the top of the letter misaligned the donor’s address with the old envelope’s window.

The group decided to have staff members, rather than its direct-mail company, stuff all 6 300 appeals to guard against mismatches between the name printed on the letter and the name on the envelope.

But Gundersen isn’t deterred by the glitches. It plans to take an integrated approach to future campaigns, co-ordinating its fundraising channels closely during important campaigns and taking a more relaxed approach during run-of-the-mill drives, says Mandy Nogle, associate director of development at the foundation: ‘It’s just always painful anytime you’re doing something for the first time.’

Integrating efforts

For charities whose traditional fundraising and online efforts have developed in isolation from each other, bridging the gap can be difficult.

The Humane Society of the United States has long appealed to online donors about its advocacy work, such as pushing for more humane treatment of farm animals and protesting the Canadian seal hunt. In 2013 it started sending those donors direct mail too.

The letters that group got were different from its traditional direct mail, which focuses on its work helping local shelters and features cats and dogs.

Eventually, it wants to send a more unified message to both groups to show the group’s work with local shelters as well as advocacy.

‘If you were to get our direct-mail and be an online member, you’re kind of seeing two different organisations,’ says Kelly Townsend, online fundraising manager at the Humane Society. ‘We want to have people who are loyal to us and really understand our entire mission.’

At large organisations, the people needed to make a co-ordinated fundraising campaign work can be scattered across several departments, which makes planning tricky.

‘Everybody has their own calendars, their own goals, their own projects that they’re working on,’ says Sarah Alexander, deputy organising director at Food & Water Watch.

To make co-operation a priority, the

environmental group now holds a weekly meeting for representatives of the development, communications, and education and outreach departments to co-ordinate fundraising activities and decide on timelines.

Because of the regular communication, the group’s advocacy and programmes are playing a more important role in shaping the group’s fundraising messages, says Ms. Alexander.

‘That should always be the case, but it’s happening in a more real-time way with whatever’s going on in field, because we’re having those meetings,’ she says. ‘We’re sitting at the same table and talking about it.’

Planning a co-ordinated fundraising drive is even tougher for national nonprofits that have chapters across the country.

Last year the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society started a new marketing campaign, *Someday Is Today*, which is designed to build awareness of the organisation’s work. The campaign also includes its fundraising events, like the *Light the Night Walk* and the *Team in Training* programme for runners, cyclists, and triathletes. The organisation set up a marketing council, a group of roughly a dozen chapter executives who provide feedback about the campaign and advice on how to carry it out at the local level.

‘We want to make sure there’s complete integration between what’s happening at the national level and what’s happening at the chapter level,’ says Lisa Stockmon, chief marketing officer.

In time, nonprofits may have no choice but to co-ordinate the facets of their fundraising, says Mr Chalfant, of Whitman-Walker Health.

He says donors who have become accustomed to integrated marketing from for-profit companies will demand it: ‘With all the data out there, people expect to be communicated with in a sophisticated way.’

With acknowledgement to **The Chronicle of Philanthropy** Volume XXVI, No. 9, 27 March 2014

The power of curiosity in fundraising communications

Have you ever seen an ad on a website that started, 'Use this one weird trick?' Or, have you ever seen a link or an e-mail subject line that said something like, '8 Ways to Do (Something) – #5 is really great!' Do you know why marketers use ads like those? You can bet those ads and subject lines were heavily tested by the companies sending them out, before they shelled out lots of money on the ads. So you know those ads are working. Do you know why? Joe Garecht reports.

Millions of people click on ads because they just can't resist the urge to find out what's behind them. People need to know . . .

Curiosity is such a powerful motivator that many people who know that the ads are just marketing ploys still click on them, hoping to have that curiosity satisfied.

As nonprofit fundraisers, there's a lot we can learn from our for-profit marketing counterparts. One of those things is how to harness the power of curiosity to get people's attention.

Typical, boring nonprofit communications

Most nonprofits send out boring communications. When donors see our letters, e-mails and ads, they're not filled with a sense of wonder, excitement, or curiosity. They know you are sending them one of three things: a thank you, a fundraising solicitation, or a news update.

That's why so many of them throw your letters and newsletters out before opening them. And why so many people, even those who support you financially, click 'delete' on the vast majority of your e-mails, prior to even looking inside.

In my experience, many of your donors who do read your e-newsletters and annual reports do so as a favour to your organisation. They read them because they support you and your work, not because they actually want to.

Building curiosity and excitement for donors

Have you ever seen someone who buys a scratch-off lottery ticket? What's the first thing they want to do? Scratch it off to see if they won!

Even if they stick the ticket in their pocket, you can bet that as soon as they get wherever they are going, they are going to get out a coin and scratch it. Why? Because winning money is a powerful motivator for human curiosity. They're anxious (curious!) to see if they won, and there's only one way to find out . . . by scratching off the ticket.

Imagine if your donors were that excited to rip open your letters and click open your e-mails to see what was inside! How powerful would that be for your organisation? How much would your fundraising increase as a result? What if people couldn't wait to read your fundraising letters, because they were so curious about what your organisation was up to?

You may think it is impossible to make donors that curious about your communications – but have you ever tried? Chances are you haven't. Chances are you have resigned yourself to sending out letters that won't get read and e-mails that won't get clicked. As a result, you're probably making much less of a connection with your donors than you should be, and raising less from them than you could be.

Your goal, as a nonprofit fundraiser, is to build 'honest curiosity' into your donor

communications. I say 'honest curiosity' because we have all seen far too many examples of dishonest curiosity-building. Those 'one weird trick' ads border on the dishonest. I guarantee you can get close to 100% of your donors to open your next fundraising letter if you print envelopes that say 'Keep this letter out! There's a real R100 note inside.' But of course, that would be dishonest, because there's no way you could put R100 notes inside the letter and still turn a profit.

So, how can you build honest curiosity for your donors? First, you need to build a relationship with your donors that includes an element of excitement and adventure. You need to wrap your donors up into a story that is bigger than themselves, with an inkling of danger and intrigue.

Does your organisation run homeless shelters? No you don't! You fight to save the poor and downtrodden from life on the streets, bolstered by your team of donors and friends.

Does your nonprofit build water pumps in Africa? No you don't! You send out emissaries to a far-away land to save children from disease and thirst. And your donors help you do that.

Second, you need to make sure your donors feel like part of your team. In fact, they should think of your organisation as 'our organisation' and 'our team'. When a donor gets a letter from some organisation they donate to, they throw the letter out. When a donor gets a letter from their team, a team that they think about every day, they read it.

Third, you need to set big goals – goals that are so big, you're not sure that you can accomplish them.

When your donors hear that you want to raise the same amount this year as last year, to serve the exact same amount of people, they don't care about your newsletters or updates.

When your donors hear that your team (their team!), which is fighting to save a village in Africa from a drought, is trying to raise R10 000 to save that village this month, you can be sure that those donors will eagerly click on your e-mail update when it comes out, because they donated R100 to the cause and they want to see if the team was successful in raising the money and saving the village.

Building honest curiosity is not only possible for nonprofits; it's essential if you want to get your donors excited and engaged with your communications efforts.

Once you do all three of these things, then you can work on writing better subject lines, better envelope teasers, and better newsletter headlines that make donors curious about what's inside, and eager to open your communications to see what your nonprofit is up to.

www.thefundraisingauthority.com ■

Measuring your donors' true mood

If you're not trying to raise money with your newsletter you need to think again: because it's a 'donor happiness meter'.

But how do you know if your donor newsletter is really any good?

Well, you need a metric.

You need some objective measure that tells you when your donors like what you're doing.

Without that objective measure, the newsletter's impact on donors is anyone's guess. We all hope our newsletter 'cultivates' good donor relations. But without an objective measure, how will we ever know?

Say you're a good-sized hospital. You mail 50 000 copies of your newsletter to donors, big and small. That puts a lot of money at risk, when you look at staff cost, production and mailing.

Let's not forget 'opportunity cost' either.

When you're spending so much money on one communication item, then you don't have money to spend on something else.

Maybe the money could be better spent? Maybe you could spend it, for instance, on the world's best 'thank you' programme?

Tests, after all, repeatedly show that putting more attention on thanking can have huge financial payoffs for charities.

Case in point: Angel Aloma, ED of Food for the Poor, a charity raising \$1 billion annually, found that he could raise an extra half million in gifts from a test group of 25 000 higher-value donors who received one – just one – extra thank you a year.

Why you cannot kill the newsletter

You might reasonably ask at this point: then maybe we shouldn't even do a newsletter?

That's not an option.

You have to report to your donors, if you hope to keep them. Remember the number one donor complaint: 'I have no idea what they did with my money!'

Donor newsletters (assuming they're properly done and based on the well-tested Domain Formula) improve retention.

And, wow, do we need better retention. Right now, 70 to 80% of first-time donors in America do NOT make a second gift to the same charity, 'big data' sadly shows.

Acquiring new donors is an expensive activity. And charities lose most of their new supporters inside a year.

The truth is: the easiest money you'll ever

make will come from improvements on the donor retention side.

A small improvement in retention – keep 10% more first-timers than you did last year – will yield 50% more income from that very same batch of incoming donors over their lifetime, Dr. Adrian Sargeant's research found.

In short: better retention is how you make LOTS more money from the very same people.

And donor newsletters play a key role.

Reporting is the *primary* function of a donor newsletter: you show and tell your donors how their generosity has made a difference in advancing the mission.

A second important function of a donor newsletter is unabashed, uninhibited flattery of your supporters. You bring your donors the gift of joy. You tell them all they are wonderful people. Effective donor communication

programmes have just three activities:

1. You ASK for my help (acquisition, renewals, bequest promotion);
2. You THANK me for my help (this includes 'welcome' materials for new donors) and
3. You REPORT to me what my help did (and, of course, you remind me of what a wonderful, generous, good, and special person I am; because that's the correct 'donor-centered' way to talk).

Ask, thank, report. Repeat.

That's all of it. Every communication activity fits under those three things: appeals, invitations, newsletters, annual reports, websites, social media and mobile.

Are your donors happy with you?

That's all that matters. All good things flow from that.

Happy (or at least 'happy enough') donors continue giving.

Unhappy? Annoyed? Uninterested? They'll give somewhere else or give you less than they could.

So, how do you measure donor happiness exactly?

Back to my very first point: you need metrics.

The simplest way I know is to track gift revenue generated by the newsletter. From that, you will know accurately whether or not your donors like you.

Why? Because money is a feedback mechanism.

Income will tell you whether your principal means of contacting donors on a regular basis – your newsletter – is doing you much good as a relationship builder. ■



If you – or a board member – has ever suggested 'canning' your newsletter, think again, writes Tom Ahern.

With acknowledgement to
Tom Ahern
www.aherncomm.com

How often should I mail my donors?

If you have a direct mail fundraising programme then somewhere along the line – you – or someone within your organisation, has asked this question.

For the most part it is prompted by a concern that mailing too often will cause ‘donor burn-out’ or create a negative reaction. And it’s a perfectly acceptable question to raise – because no-one wants to upset their donors.

So let’s look at what might constitute a typical annual direct mail programme aimed at existing donors:

- Four renewal mailings to the entire file.
- Two newsletters also to the whole file.
- A major donor mailing to a small number of donors who have joined your major supporter group by giving an additional large gift each year.
- A major donor newsletter to this group.
- A ‘thank you’ mailing to your monthly donors mailed mid year.
- A Christmas/Season’s Greeting card to your monthly donors at year-end.
- To this you might add a special mailing to donors of 65 years and older inviting them to enquire about your bequest booklet, and another special mailing to lapsed donors with a strong incentive for them to renew their support.

So your typical donor mailing programme might have no fewer than 12 mailings each year. But, of course, not all going to the same segments of our donor file and not all would contain a direct ‘ask’.

Only your four renewal mailings, and your major donor mailing would have direct ‘asks’ plus a donation form and a reply envelope. Each of these mailings would also be ‘themed’ with a specific project or seasonal reason for the donor to support. So they wouldn’t just be ‘yet another letter asking for money’. Each would recognise the donor’s past support and would add a compelling reason for why you’re approaching them again.

The two newsletters (and the major donor newsletter) would, as their main purpose, provide feedback to donors. However, they

would contain a response device with a low key ‘ask’.

And the addition of just that response piece with what we term a ‘soft ask’, will ensure that you receive sufficient income from the mailing to cover the entire cost of the newsletter.

In fact, income from a well produced newsletter will often produce donations equivalent to double the total production and mailing cost.

The major donor newsletter is the only one that might not contain this reply envelope as these folk are already giving very generously and, as the list is likely to be a small one, the cost of sending them a newsletter is not great.

If you’re still a bit skeptical about the number of mailings that I am recommending, then think about these three fundraising truths:

1. Never attempt to think for your donors. They’ll let you know if you’re annoying them by mailing too often (and you should quickly and courteously respond to all complaints). But beware the tendency to react to a small handful of complaints when the majority have voted positively by sending you additional donations.
2. Every additional mailing to existing donors will produce an increase in net income for your direct mail programme – even if you mail each and every month.
3. With the large number of other organisations who are communicating with people who are often your donors, you should ensure that your organisation isn’t forgotten because you aren’t communicating as regularly as some of your competitors.

In summary, you probably could, and certainly should be mailing your donors more often than you are at present.

But you should be doing so with an intelligently planned and well-constructed programme that incorporates plenty of feedback and acknowledgement of their support. And, finally, don’t forget to show them how their money’s being put to excellent use.

With acknowledgement to the late Terry Murray in *The Ask of Asking + 60 More Fundraising Tips and Trends*. ■

FUNDRAISING FORUM™ is edited by Richard Solomon and published by Downes Murray International. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the publisher.

DOWNES MURRAY
INTERNATIONAL

Downes Murray International (DMI) are fundraising specialists, working with nonprofit and non-government organisations of all kinds, to increase their fundraising effectiveness.

DMI offer feasibility studies, strategic planning workshops, direct mail fundraising, mail/phone, corporate and capital fundraising campaigns, Internet fundraising and website design, church fundraising and bequest promotion programmes.

In addition, Downes Murray International has close links with a number of fundraising consultancies across the globe, and represents DVA Navion International Consultancy in Africa, enabling DMI to keep a finger on the pulse of international trends and techniques. For more information, contact us:

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- **The Chronicle of Philanthropy**, PO Box 1989, Marion, Ohio, 43306, USA, (24 issues – per annum at \$95) website: <http://philanthropy.com>
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