

## Haiti: Disaster boosts online fundraising – again

*Once again, a human disaster is a showcase for the compassion and generosity of the American people – and the power of online to make it happen. Nick Allen reports.*

As Tom Belford pointed out in *The Agitator*, raising money when Americans are watching death and desperation 24/7 is more like ‘holding out the bucket for the donations to drop’ than real fundraising.

However, disasters like Haiti showcase the strength of new media fundraising and its ability to make it easier and faster for people to donate – or organise to deliver assistance in person or help locate lost people – when they are so motivated.

### Mobile phone donations

Americans have donated more than \$774 million for Haiti, with most of the small donations coming via the Internet. For the first time, three million Americans donated \$10 by mobile phone, generating over \$30 million for the American Red Cross. The previous high point for mobile fundraising was Alicia Keys’ appeal on *American Idol* that raised \$500 000 for her *Keep a Child Alive* charity.

The Obama campaign had a big mobile programme, but they used it for mobilisation, not fundraising, assuming they could get much higher average gifts – and full donor information – using the Web instead.

Single emails generated hundreds of thousands of dollars each for several of my company’s clients, with response rates many times higher than normal and average gifts over \$100.

Search marketing showed its stuff, too. For example, one of our clients raised almost \$300 000 for Haiti work from *Google* and *Yahoo!* on an expenditure of \$70 000 – a 4:1 ROI. Even a month after the earthquake, the organisation raised \$12 450 over a four-day period at a cost of \$1 533!

*Facebook* and *Twitter* played a greater role than ever in the Haiti disaster, letting Haitians abroad communicate among themselves and with family and friends in Haiti.

The social networks also provided a communications and fundraising platform

that enabled many of the 300 million worldwide users to express their sympathy and create their own fundraising programmes benefiting their chosen NGOs.

According to *Facebook*’s Randi Zuckerberg, two days after the earthquake, ‘Every minute, people have been posting more than 1 500 status updates on *Facebook* that contained the word “Haiti”.’

Of course, fundraising was not limited to online. Across the country, kids organised bake sales and car washes to raise money. My daughter and her 8th grade class raised over \$1 000 in our little rural town – four or five times more than a cake sale usually raises there – and then donated the money online to *Partners in Health*.

So what can we learn – to use in normal times – from the outpouring of donations online to help the people of Haiti? I think there are several lessons:

(1) Urge your mail-acquired donors (and new Haiti online donors if you raised money for Haiti) to give online, because multi-channel donors are worth more.

The Haiti disaster, like Katrina and the tsunami and the Obama campaign, drove millions of donors and non-donors to give online for the first time.

While many of the new online donors are ‘disaster donors’ who probably won’t give again to the organisation, perhaps until there’s another disaster, many of them are also ‘regular’ donors who gave by mail (or online) before.

### Higher gifts

Now is the time to urge them to continue giving online, where you’ll get average gifts usually twice as high as by mail. We already saw this migration at the year’s end, when many mail-acquired donors went online in the last week of the year to make a donation and qualify for the tax deduction in 2009. As the *Target Analytics* Internet benchmarking reports prove, multi-channel donors are worth more.

*Adapted from  
Mal Warwick’s  
E-newsletter  
March 2010*

*Visit [www.malwarwick.com](http://www.malwarwick.com)*

## INSIDE INFORMATION

Special report .....	2
Philanthropy in focus .....	3
What’s all the chirping about? ..	4
A ‘Friends & Family’ approach to fundraising .....	6

*Continued on page eight*

# Before you jump on the Social Media Bandwagon ...



Online marketing and fundraising specialist, Lianne Byrne-Hammacott, offers 10 pointers to ensure your charity's success online.

The world's becoming more social online and technology changes so rapidly that we often feel we can't keep up. The Internet let's us have a dialogue with supporters instead of bombarding them with a one-way monologue. But remember, people inherently stay the same – they have a need to connect and social media fulfils that need and facilitates conversations online around brands, ideas and causes.

Social media has become much hyped because of the relative ease with which you can set up a profile online and start talking to your audience. It's very tempting to dive straight into *Facebook* or *Twitter* because everybody else is doing it and because these tools are 'free'. But as they say in classics ... there's no such thing as a free lunch.

You might already be doing some fantastic stuff (if so, I'd like to hear from you!) – but if you don't know where to start, keep these 10 points in mind:

## 1. Share your content

As a first step into the social media universe allow site visitors to share your content via *Facebook* and the other social sites (e.g. *Digg*, *StumbleUpon*, *Reddit* etc). Once your audience sees that your site is connected to the greater web, they'll use the tools. And 'social bookmarking' tools are easy and free to implement.

## 2. Fish where the fish are

Are your supporters using these tools? Find out by surveying them using a poll or survey on your site or send your donors an email survey. This will always help you substantiate your time and investment in the channel.

## 3. Supporters talk back

Supporters will have things to say about your charity and in my experience, mainly good things. But be prepared for the not so good comments too. What's the tolerance level internally to feedback, especially feedback made public? How will you moderate comments, if at all? Will you let your audience moderate for you?

Remember that the old model of controlling information about your organisation can no longer exist. If supporters are not saying things about your brand on your site they'll definitely be saying it on other sites. Why not keep them close and respond to them on your own site or *Facebook* page?

## 4. Always start with a plan

If you start something online, make sure you know where it's going to end up. Countless organisations start *Facebook* pages or *Twitter* feeds only to see by week three they've nothing to say or they no longer have the time to interact with their new audience.

Ask yourself why you're doing this? What are the benefits? What are the risks? Do you have the resources? What are you going to say? How often? Why?

If you can answer these questions you'll be well on your way to success in the social media space.

## 5. The good, the bad and the plain ugly...

Many charities have used social media beautifully to engage with their audiences and supporters – and raise money too. There are countless UK, US and SA case studies to choose from. The one thing they have in common is that they approached this new channel with a plan. And knew what they wanted to get out of it.

SPCA Cape of Good Hope and SPCA Durban and Coast are using *Facebook* groups to show supporters the work they do, the ugly stuff on the front line and allowing supporters to interact with them.

There are countless casualties in the social media space. There may have been a PR blunder or supporter service hasn't gone well. Just look at the recent BP oil crisis.

Messages on the web spread dangerously fast so have a plan that when things do go bad, you can deal with it in an open, effective and timely way. Get your supporters on side, talk to them, be yourself.

## 6. Nothing's for free

Although the online *Facebook/Twitter/Flickr/YouTube* profile is free to set up online, time and money is needed to create your social media strategy, create the content and keep things updated.

It's a reality that charities are cash strapped. But just because it costs money doesn't mean you shouldn't do it. Use your pilot project or create a business case that substantiates the time and investment needed. It's also a lower cost channel to invest in and I would advise that you don't ignore it, because it's not going away.

## 7. Get a personality

There's nothing worse than a stuffy, corporate response to a conversation online. Your audience needs to feel they're connecting with a real organisation, real people with real things to say. Especially if you're using the channel as a supporter service tool, there's no need to be formal. Your audience won't like you for it.

## 8. For goodness sake, do something!

So you've spoken to them online, you've spread the message about your latest campaign or initiative. What now?

*Continued on page six*

Follow Lianne on  
Twitter at  
[www.twitter/byrmine](http://www.twitter/byrmine)

# Milestone Thinking

*On-target observations in brief*

Blessed is the person who sees the need, recognises the responsibility, and actively becomes the answer.

*William A. Ward*

Charities will need to adapt their mailings and focus on the many ways that younger people want to connect in order to appeal to the next generation of donors.

*Caroline Preston in*

*The Chronicle of Philanthropy  
Volume XXII, No. 9, 25 March 2010*

Far too many non-profit communicators pitch everything they have access to and the emphasis is on quantity and not quality.

*Carrie A. Martin in*

*The NonProfit Times*

*15 March 2010*

Before you can inspire with emotion, you must be swamped with it yourself. Before you can move their tears, your own must flow. To convince them, you must yourself believe.

*Winston Churchill*

Your donors are middle-class, middle-aged, nice adults who want to be helpful.

When you show-and-tell them how they are making a real difference via their gifts, you entertain them. They feel joy. They feel pleasure. They beam. They stay interested.

*Tom Abern*

*Ahern News 8.5*

*aberncomm.com*

Look at every path closely and deliberately, then ask yourself this crucial question: Does this path have a heart? If it does, then the path is good. If it doesn't, it is of no use.

*Carlos Castaneda*

Each drop in retention represents a failure to ask your donor when he or she had the means and inclination to make a gift. You can't break through the clutter of requests

by not making a request. You need to make your Ask more compelling—and your donor more receptive to hearing it.

*Peter Schoewe in*

*Mal Warwick's newsletter October 2009*

*www.malwarwick.com*



## St Mary's – a hospital with heart

**S**t. Mary's Hospital – built in 1927 to provide health care to the 'poorest of the poor' – initially centred treatments around tuberculosis (TB), malnutrition and typhoid and focused on mothers and children. By the 1960s, an effective treatment plan was in place – especially for TB.

But by the 1990s, HIV and its effects were devastating communities.

TB and malnutrition became a major focus area, while infant mortality and the number of Aids orphans increased – along with demands on the hospital's services. Currently, around 150 patients are helped in the hospital's outpatients' department every day.

Today, poverty still contributes to the tragedy of patients dying because they can't afford transport costs to get to clinics for treatment – or can't afford to buy nutritious food.

St. Mary's has seen HIV 'flourish' in this way and has devoted much of its resources and expertise to fighting Aids on every level.

St. Mary's – along with government and treatment centres – continues to take treatment to the people.

This strategy is proving successful and – thanks to the support of St. Mary's loyal donors – the hospital continues to offer caring medical services to underprivileged people.

Visit [www.stmarys.co.za](http://www.stmarys.co.za)

**(Readers are invited to submit photographs, together with a brief overview of their organisation's work, for inclusion in this regular feature.)**

*St. Mary's Hospital has been a beacon of hope and healing to the 'poorest of the poor' for decades and continues to provide excellent services to thousands of underprivileged patients.*

## 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 non-profit 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](http://www.dmi.co.za)

# What's all the chirping about?

*To Tweet or not to Tweet? – that's the question many organisations are asking. Michele Donohue has some answers.*

**K**ristiana Kocis, major gifts officer at American Red Cross Santa Barbara county Chapter, met resistance when she pitched that the 117-year-old organisation should delve into the social micro-blog *Twitter*.

Some people in the organisation doubted its usefulness, but the organisation gave Kocis two months to test the technology.

Then, on May 5, the Jesusita fire broke out in Santa Barbara County. Before news of the fire, the Santa Barbara ARC had 166 *Twitter* followers for its account, @SBRedCross.

Kocis said after the organisation first Tweeted about the fire, the number of followers started 'growing exponentially'. She started sending out minute-to-minute updates about the fire – from directions to shelters to what to grab during the emergency evacuation.

## Information

'This was something I envisioned when I initially pitched the idea of doing the social media programme. People are going to be turning to us for the information and looking to the Red Cross immediately to know where the shelters are going to be and how to get there and what's going on,' said Kocis.

The *Twitter* community grew to more than 600 followers, with many people retweeting the information Santa Barbara ARC provided. Many local and national news outlets, such as CNN, started following the Santa Barbara ARCTwitter for updates.

Even a board member started following the organisation's *Twitter* the day the fire started, and contacted upper management about how useful *Twitter* was to the community.

That impact now has the organisation 'totally converted,' according to Kocis. Now the organisation has more than 700 followers.

'It shows it is valuable and people are listening to us. It's not just us blasting to open space and no one is listening. People are paying attention and it really caught on,' said Kocis. 'It's not your grandma's Red Cross anymore.'

*Twitter* is a social media site where information is sent out in 140 characters or less. For example, the previous sentence was 91 characters. Information is sent in real time to those who opt-in to your communications and can be searched by anyone.

And this tool has exploded in recent months. Unique visitors to *Twitter* grew from nearly 1 million unique visitors in June 2008 compared to 21 million unique visitors in June 2009 – a 1 928% increase in a year, according to latest statistics from The Nielsen Company. And the largest *Twitter* growth demographic is ages

25 to 54, comprising 64% of the site's audience as of June. Those 55 or older compromise 20% of the growth and those under the age of 24 come in at 16%, according to Nielsen.

Some non-profits are getting behind this social marketing trend. Even though *Twitter* publicly launched only three years ago, in July 2006, it's become the third most popular commercial site for non-profits to create a presence, according to a recent survey.

More than 43% of survey respondents said their organisation had a *Twitter* presence, dwarfed only by *Facebook* (74%) and *YouTube* (46.5%), according to The Nonprofit Social Network Survey Report, completed by Nonprofit Technology Network (NTEN), Common Knowledge and ThePort.

And it's a new channel for most – 93.9% of the organisations using *Twitter* reported using it for one year or less, according to the survey. That means most organisations are just out of the gate and that more organisations have plenty of opportunities to join the race.

'I would say if you're a small or a large organisation you have an equal voice on *Twitter*, so it's a good place to start,' said Danielle Brigida, social media outreach co-ordinator at National Wildlife Federation (NWF) in Washington, D.C.

Brigida signed the organisation up for *Twitter*, @NWF; two years ago. NWF's *Twitter* account has nearly 16 000 followers, but Brigida said most of that growth happened recently – skyrocketing by more than 10 000 followers since late last September.

## Touch-point

The @NWF serves as an immediate touch-point with followers and those interested in wildlife. The updates range from a video of baby raccoons saved from a vending machine to signups for the Great American Backyard Campout. The updates are meant to inform and entertain, and ultimately draw people into NWF and the mission.

Brigida also Tweets from her personal account, @starfocus, as another way to communicate with supporters and tie in her love of wildlife. 'It just gives me more freedom with what I can say and I use a lot of smiley faces. It may annoy them if I do that from NWF,' she said.

Rachel Weidinger, marketing director and senior consultant at San Francisco-based Common Knowledge, explained that *Twitter* messages should have some personality if you want to gather and keep followers.

*Continued on page 5*

## What's all the chirping about? (cont.)

'I think part of it is being able to show the human-side of the organisation,' she said. 'I wouldn't recommend Tweeting out links to addresses that you like. But when you show a more personal side, or your personal attachment to the mission, it has big wins on *Twitter*.'

And, don't think like an organisation.

*Twitter* isn't a channel to just repost your press releases. 'If you are on *Twitter*, I would say don't just broadcast,' said Brigida. She said the 'give and take' *Twitter* community doesn't work if your organisation is just putting information out, without interacting with any followers.

'I think being a part of the conversation is really the key to *Twitter*, and for that matter is important in all forms of social media.'

### Megaphone

'*Twitter* as a tool is about conversation so just sending out links is not going to help you be a part of the conversation. That's the megaphone style of social media – and it doesn't work,' said Jon Dunn, social media manager at Best Friends Animal Society in Kanab, Utah, and @bfas on *Twitter*.

Dunn explained that sending out links to your followers is fine sometimes – but *Twitter* is more about conversation than self-promotion. 'For example, the largest response we ever had on *Twitter* was when I asked whether or not you let your dogs sleep in the bed with you. Dozens of @replies and new followers later were part of the conversation.

'Then people were more likely to see us as a friend and then follow and retweet links we sent out,' he said.

Jeff Patrick, president and founder of Common Knowledge, said *Twitter* is a 'great way to build a relationship with someone,' especially if the organisation's *Twitter* has some personality.

'It's not so much the organisation as it is someone in the organisation and that personification of that organisation through that person on *Twitter*,' he said. He said that *Twitter* is just another tool to help followers climb the ladder of engagement. The difference is that instead of an eight-page direct mail piece, the relationship grows over shorter, more frequent communication.

The first step would be to decide if you even want a *Twitter* presence. 'You want to be forward thinking but you also don't want to invest in tools that don't have a future or won't evolve long-term tools,' said Juliana Minsky, partner of SurfMedia Communications in Santa Barbara, California.

SurfMedia helped Santa Barbara ARC set up its *Twitter*, as well as the organisation's blog and *Facebook* presence.

Dunn explained that *Twitter*, like any other social media, isn't the be all, end all. 'You never want to do anything in life half way, social media is no different,' he said. Figure out which person in the organisation would be responsible for *Twitter* and ask yourself if that person has

enough time to take on this new responsibility.

'The tricky part becomes thinking about how you break messaging up into 140 characters and do that over time and apply the manpower that makes it cost effective,' Patrick said.

The time and energy put into *Twitter* varies by organisation. Santa Barbara ARC's Kocis said organisations could always find a spare 30 seconds to send out a Tweet. Minsky explained, 'I think the quality of the communication and the quality of the Tweets will be key in the growth' and non-profits shouldn't bombard followers with hundreds of messages a day.

Brigida said most days she Tweets around five times a day and more on special days honouring wildlife, such as Endangered Species Day. Dunn said he spends around 10 hours a week on *Twitter*, but that includes the weekends.

And sometimes it's not what you send out that's the most important. 'The listening alone and tracking your name is really valuable,' said Brigida. She said, for example, a man was determining on *Twitter* from which organisation he should make a symbolic adoption, which is actually a donation. Brigida was able to send him a Tweet about NWF's adoptions and that personal connection led to his donation.

Brigida said she sometimes searches for people Tweeting about NWF and its programmes, such as Ranger Rick, and general Tweets regarding wildlife.

She tries to make a connection with people by responding to their Tweets or signing up to follow them. In turn, she hopes the people she elects to follow from @NWF decide to follow the organisation.

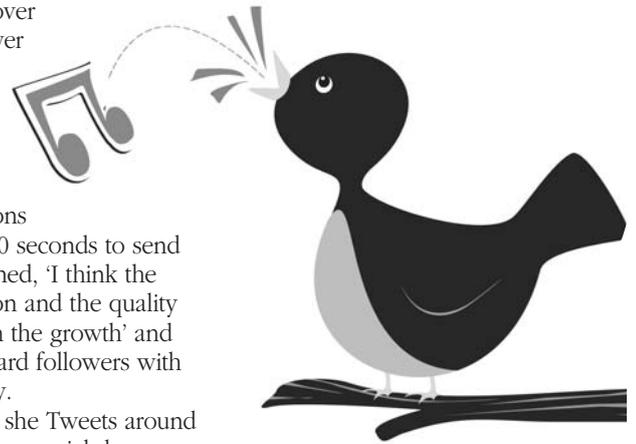
### Search tool

Dunn recommended nonprofit use the tool <http://search.twitter.com> to see if there are Tweets about the organisation or affiliate programmes, as he does for DogTown, a Best Friends Animal Sanctuary department featured in a National Geographic Channel show with the same name. That way, fans of the show can make the connection to the organisation's programme.

'There are major fans out there of every organisation, and finding them and connecting is a real key to success. They are likely to be the ones to retweet your stuff and respond to your requests,' he said.

'I also think growing the followers organically is the right way to do it. I have never once run a contest to get more followers. The followers we have I want them to want to be there to hear what we have to say, otherwise what's the point?' Dunn asked rhetorically.

'At a certain point when you become a good citizen within the community, your need to search for new followers will slow down as people begin to recommend you,' he said. ■



Adapted from  
The Non-Profit Times  
15 September, 2009  
Visit [www.nptimes.com](http://www.nptimes.com)

## Before you jump on the Social Media Bandwagon ... (cont.)

*Continued on page two*

Your website (remember that?) needs to take over and finish the job. Make your audience work – but not too hard! Do they need to donate, sign a pledge, download a file? Draw them to your site (not your home page!) and let them do something.

### 9. Get a little help from friends

It's been proven that people are more likely to respond favourably to something if they see their friends or family have responded the same way. *Facebook* recently introduced 'like' buttons for content on websites other than *Facebook*. They're revolutionising the way people shop, consume information and donate online.

Install the new *Facebook* social plugins on your site (again within the context of your bigger digital strategy). Start small and pilot the response. You may be pleasantly surprised.

### 10. Show me the money!

Where's the Return On Investment (ROI)? This is the million-Rand question. How do you measure all this? How do you make money from it? Well your website should start showing you visits from *Facebook* or *Twitter* or *LinkedIn* (whatever your tool of choice). If you've set up *Google Analytics* properly, it might even show you who's converting (i.e. doing something like donating or signing up to your newsletter).

Look at the bigger picture – measuring how people got to hear about your charity, as well as how this has affected your retention rate. You might see some surprising results offline.

There are also great free tools to measure how strong your voice is online, what people are saying about you, how many followers and 'likes' you've picked up. Start with a benchmark



and build from there.

Again, within the context of a bigger digital strategy, measure the things that make sense to your charity. But make sure you do measure or else all this activity is in vain.

If all of this is overwhelming, take a step back and go back to point four. Ask yourself 'so what?'. So what if you don't have a *Facebook* profile, so what if you don't speak to your supporters in the online spaces they occupy? What will happen?

Remember your current donor base will not be around forever so you need to start engaging now with younger audiences in their spaces so that you can start to be taken seriously and become relevant in their lives.

But above all, ignore the hype, know what you want to achieve, get some help and in the words of the famous World War 2 poster 'keep calm and carry on!'

*Lianne is an online marketing/fundraising specialist, with more than 10 years experience (offline and online), working client side for large corporates, running her own consultancy and working agency side.*

*Passionate about the Not for Profit/NGO sector and utilising the web to deliver results, Lianne's also keen to see more done on the web accessibility front. Follow her on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/byrmine](http://www.twitter.com/byrmine)* ■

## Great (free!) newsletters and websites

There are many free online newsletters you might want to subscribe to. Here is just a small selection of what's available online:

The Showcase of Fundraising Innovation and Inspiration (SOFII) – [www.sofii.org](http://www.sofii.org)

Fundraising & Advocacy Strategies, Trends, Tips ... with an Edge – [www.theagitator.net](http://www.theagitator.net)

Social Citizens – a website dedicated to social causes [www.socialcitizens.org/blog](http://www.socialcitizens.org/blog)

Third Sector, keeping you updated on non-profit news from the UK – [www.thirdsector.co.uk](http://www.thirdsector.co.uk)

Sangonet – A Development Information Portal for NGOs in South Africa – [www.ngopulse.org](http://www.ngopulse.org)

Fundraising Success – The Fundraiser's Complete Source for Multichannel Strategy and Integration Techniques – [www.fundraisingsuccessmag.com](http://www.fundraisingsuccessmag.com)

The Case Foundation – Investing in People and Ideas that Can Change the World – [www.casefoundation.org](http://www.casefoundation.org)

Bizcommunity.com – Daily Media, Marketing and Advertising News. ■

# A 'Friends & Family' approach to fundraising

**M**ary's one of your loyal supporters. She really cares about your cause. So Mary goes to a party one evening where she mingles with friends and neighbours.

You come along with her. Between sips of wine and nibbles of cheese, she starts talking about things that matter to her. And, of course, your cause comes up! She says how happy she is that your organisation is really making a difference.

Mary's friends concur that it's good to know something's being done about this issue, and they congratulate you on your work.

So Mary invites them to join her in supporting your cause by making a first-time donation. The next day she sends you the cheques she's collected.

In a month or so, you contact the new friends Mary introduced to you and you say, 'Remember me? I met you at the party with Mary. I'd like to talk to you some more.' And off you go cultivating your own relationships.

Now what if you had thousands of 'Marys' doing the same thing all over the place?

We fundraisers can sometimes overlook the obvious and make things too complicated. The fact is: Every charity has its own 'missionaries' – those folks who love what you do and are ready to help beyond just writing you a cheque – if you simply ask and equip them properly.

In recent months, we've had great success with an integrated direct marketing programme that harnesses the power and passion of our clients' missionaries to acquire new donors.

This is a 'Friends & Family' programme a little like the marketing campaigns that commercial companies use to gain new subscribers.

## Unique approach

However, in our case, we put together both offline and online tactics and tools (phone, online, and variable data print) to recruit, equip, and motivate missionaries to acquire new donors. This is a unique approach, we believe.

Now, you probably want to know whether our approach works or is just an intriguing idea – and the answer to that question is simple: Yes.

A national humane organisation, a public issue advocacy charity, a children's hospital, a primary disease charity – all of these and more have found success using this programme. While we wouldn't suggest you drop your current acquisition efforts in favour of this one – even if it worked terrifically for you – we do think it's worth a closer look as a possible way to augment your acquisition efforts.

Using the commitment of your own supporters to reach out to their personal networks brings you a whole new audience –

an audience you'll never reach using direct mail, for example.

## Loyalty

Plus, you'll engage your current donors for greater loyalty – making them feel good about doing something other than giving money. In fact, a recent survey of UK donors found that 60% would be willing to do something for a charity they support other than simply giving money.

Here's how the programme works:

- We conduct data analysis upfront to identify donors most likely to volunteer.
- We set a provocative campaign theme and ambitious but achievable goals.
- We phone selected current and recently lapsed donors using an early script disclaimer that the purpose of the call is not to ask them to 'make a donation'.

The pitch is simple: The organisation needs their help to reach more people to do more great things, such as protect animals, find a cure for diabetes, or fulfil some other mission that evokes passion.

We ask donors to become 'volunteers' by sending pre-printed, first-person letters in the mail to 10 friends or family members, and we assign each volunteer a modest goal that's related to her or his own giving level.

We send each volunteer a simple, highly personalised kit – that's not too expensive – and includes letters, envelopes, and a personalised Appreciation Certificate. (The kit can even be customised based on more personal information, if you have it on your file.)

We also create a personalised Web site for each volunteer, so his or her 'family and friends' can make their gifts online by credit card instead of sending cheques to the volunteer. Volunteers can use their personal Web sites to check on their progress and send follow-up letters by email.

Whether online or by postal mail, new donors send their gifts to the volunteers, who bundle them and return the gifts in larger envelopes to the charity. Online donor information is captured and sent electronically to the charity as well.

To make sure as many kits are returned as possible, we send a gentle reminder letter to volunteers a few weeks after they've received their kits.

Our more sophisticated clients continue to use the volunteers' names on follow-up mailings and in phone calls – a crucial element, we believe, because you can't treat these new donors the way you might treat new direct mail donors.

*It's every fundraiser's dream – to have loyal supporters who are brand ambassadors and help you to recruit more supporters. This report by Joe White and Steve Hubley.*

*Adapted from  
Mal Warwick's  
E-newsletter  
November 2009*

*Visit  
[www.aberncomm.com](http://www.aberncomm.com)*

*Continued on page eight*

## A 'Friends & Family' approach ... (cont.)

*Continued from page seven*

It's important to keep the connection alive with the volunteer – it's the reason they gave in the first place!

The bottom line is that this integrated strategy is bringing on new donors at break-even or even realising a modest profit per donor. We're not certain every organisation will realise new donors and net revenue, but the personal touch and offline/online strategies make this programme worth a closer look.

An extra plus is that often the volunteers subsequently respond better to direct mail appeals, which makes perfect sense since now they're really committed.

Let's say in your traditional direct mail acquisition programme you spend R500 000 to drop 50 000 pieces.

If you're like many mailers these days and get a 1% response and R200 average gift, you're losing about R800 per new donor – a R400 000 investment. If your second gift conversion is, say, 50%, you've recouped another R50 000, but you still need another 1 750 gifts to break even.

If you spend the same amount of money with an integrated 'Friends & Family' programme of the sort we've described, you'll likely end up having recruited more than 27 000 missionaries, about 21 000 donations at an average of R200, almost 16 000 brand-new donors – and, possibly, a profit per new donor.

Truth be told, the second gift conversion via direct mail to these newly acquired donors is likely to be lower than it is with traditionally acquired direct mail donors – but you've got more new donors that you would have never acquired via direct mail.

The challenge you'll face is figuring out how to cultivate these new donors.

Some will give via direct mail, some will never give again, and some small percentage might become major gift or bequest prospects. So far, it looks as though the whole effort is well worth confronting this challenge!

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## Haiti: Disaster boosts online fundraising – again (cont.)

*Continued from page one*

(2) Understand that mobile fundraising may have a big future, but it's not yet going to make a difference for most organisations.

First, you have to be able to reach millions of people – the White House promoted the Red Cross short code – or you have to have *American Idol* or Bono on a 50-city tour. Second, the average gift (so far) is capped at \$10 and you don't get any donor data except the mobile number and a very limited ability to use it for cultivation and fundraising. In addition, the carriers and service providers take a cut. What's worse – at least by our usual thinking – is that it may be the cutting

edge of a donor viewpoint that says, 'I'll choose when to give and I won't give you my information so you won't bother me,' as *Target Software* founder Chuck Longfield suggests.

(3) *Facebook*, *Twitter*, iPhones, and whatever comes next are going to play an ever larger role in fundraising, even if you can't easily measure the ROI from social communications. Dedicate more staff time to building relationships with donors and other supporters who use the networks, and try to figure out the revenue stream as well.

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**F**undraising Forum prides itself on keeping South African fundraisers right up-to-date with developing attitudes, trends and techniques, both here and overseas. We are grateful to the following international publications, which are regularly quoted and highly recommended:

- *Successful Fund Raising*, PO Box 4528, Sioux City, Iowa, 51104, USA, (12 issues per annum \$159) website: [www.stevensoninc.com](http://www.stevensoninc.com)
- *The Non-Profit Times*, 190 Tamarack Circle, Skillman, NJ08558, USA, (\$129 per annum) website: [www.nptimes.com](http://www.nptimes.com)
- *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, PO Box 1989, Marion, Ohio, 43306, USA, (24 issues – one annum at \$95) website: <http://philanthropy.com>
- *Successful Direct Mail, Telephone and Online Fundraising*.™ Subscribe for free at [www.malwarwick.com/newsletter](http://www.malwarwick.com/newsletter)
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