

FUNDRAISING FORUM™

What nonprofits should stop doing now: Advice from experts

In this outlook for 2014, *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* highlights six areas charities should consider focussing on in the second half of this year.

Ignoring people who make medium-size gifts: People who give R1 000 to R5 000 annually fall through the cracks at too many charities, says Alia McKee, a principal at Sea Change Strategies, a fundraising consulting company. In general, such donors aren't big enough to attract the attention of major gift fundraisers.

But because these people give generously, nonprofits often take them off direct mail and e-mail lists out of fear of offending them with too many solicitations.

To do a better job, organisations need to give at least one person in the fundraising department responsibility for concentrating on this category of donors, says Ms. McKee: "The key is to pair substantive mail and electronic appeals with personal interaction."

Says Ms. McKee: "Investing in this group with a mix of strategies that blend major-giving stewardship with direct marketing tactics can yield big results."

Hoarding information

A year is too long to wait to tell donors how their gifts made a difference, says Derrick Feldmann, chief executive of Achieve, a consulting company that helps nonprofits reach out to millennials.

Instead of saving up information about the group's activities for the annual report, he says, charities should communicate to donors one important point about the impact of their contributions each month.

Fearing mobile technology

Organisations need to do a better job of adapting their content for mobile technology, says Amy Sample Ward, chief executive of the Nonprofit Technology Network.

The best place for groups to get started, she says, is to make sure that website forms – pages people use to make donations, subscribe to advocacy alerts, or sign up to volunteer – are easy to navigate on a mobile phone's small screen. The same goes for

e-mail messages. Everyone has opened an e-mail that is three times bigger than a smartphone screen, says Ms. Ward. "It makes the whole e-mail unreadable. You're scrolling back and forth, up and down, trying to read what it is, so you just delete it. Well, it could have been an amazing call to action, but none of us are taking it."

Shying away from risks Charity leaders need to stop paying lip service to the mantra of "fail fast and move on," says Ms. McKee.

"Most nonprofits want their staff to take big risks and innovate," she says. "But then they balk whenever a project or a campaign fails."

Organisations, she says, need to be more thoughtful in the way they experiment with new ideas, defining how they will measure success and planning how they will pivot if the project doesn't work.

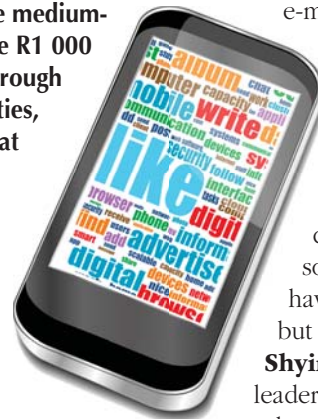
Using generic language

Too many nonprofits use fuzzy language, says Mr. Feldmann. As an example, he points to the generic phrases many groups use to explain their work: We help the community, we help educate, and we empower.

"They should stop using those big, broad words and just be specific," he says. "If you help fifth graders with financial literacy, just say it."

Using social media indiscriminately

Nonprofits that jump onto every new online platform that comes along are spreading themselves too thin, says Farra Trompeter, vice president of Big Duck, a communications-consulting company that works with charities. Figuring out where your donors, volunteers, and other supporters are and where they want to hear from you is a much smarter plan, she says: "I'd rather see organisations think about how they can go deeply in two or three channels than try to have a smattering (of posts) on 10 of them and never keep them updated. ■



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Direct mail copywriting doesn't follow the rules of grammar most of us learnt at school. That's because it's designed to sell, and by breaking the "rules", that's just what it does.

A subscriber sweetly wrote to ask: "Do you think the nonprofit world needs a grammar book all of its own?"

She wondered because she was discouraged. All across our massive and very verbal industry, she'd tripped over grammar crimes and misdemeanours. Were fundraisers a bit illiterate and in need of a remedy?

To make her point personal for me, she served up some sales copy written about one of my own workshops. "Cringe-worthy," she deemed it.

True, the sales copy had a couple of problems; a misplaced apostrophe or such. "Of course," she hastened to add, "I know you didn't write it."

Ah. Ummmmmm "In fact," I replied, "I did write it. Yet I'm not cringing.

"That particular workshop oversold, I'm relieved to say. Not only was every chair taken . . . all the leaning wall-space was taken . . . and the entire carpet was taken. We just prayed the fire marshal wouldn't wander in.

"Which means my nay-grammatical words did the job they were hired to do: sell."

Look, here's the financial bottom line, fundraisers (and grammar police): accurate, school-room-calibre, academy-approved writing will add almost, virtually, infinitesimally nothing to your sales. Perfect grammar contributes the least to making money for your mission. Odd behaviour, isn't it? For the one-thousandth time: Fundraising, that glorious profession you devote your energies to is . . . just . . . sales.

And . . . as in any other form of sales . . . your job, fundraiser, is to move me (your puzzled prospect) from my native, warm, pleasant, untroubled inertia into the bold, troubling act of making a gift of my hard-earned money on behalf of your mission.

Given the never-ending and savage competition for resources that Darwin described in the natural world, it is pretty bizarre behaviour to give away money to strangers.

And yet . . . we do so freely, repeatedly, bewitched by sadness and hope and love and wonder and a chance to do something for someone else. Donors are buying a story they can write themselves into, as Seth Godin points out.

Pleasure and power

They're experiencing first hand the pleasure and power of giving away their assets in an attempt to help others, as neuroscience points out.

They are sacrificing . . . and sacrificing feels wonderful!

Of course, admittedly it's more of an inconvenience than a real sacrifice. "Nobody gives away their lunch money," as a veteran Miami fundraiser once whispered in my ear.

What he meant was: if I give you R1 million,

it's because I can easily afford it. A R50 gift from a compassionate pensioner scraping by is far more sacrificial than my casual R250 gift to a new charity that has momentarily intrigued me.

To repeat: Fundraising is sales. Donors are customers. Embrace it. Get over it. Ditch your delusions. Whatever.

If a couple of lonely grammar hawks spot a split infinitive racing across the open ground of your prose, who cares? Grammar purity will NOT affect (not "effect") sales.

In conclusion: So . . . does the fundraising industry need a grammar book all of its own, dear subscriber? Heavens, no. In fact, stiff and learned grammar can be the enemy. All donor communications should sound like conversation, the late (and extraordinarily successful UK-based copywriter) George Smith advised. He rested his opinion on years of proof.

And you and me talking? Nothing grammatical about that. Know what I mean, jellybean?

Fast starts equals more readers

How long should the first paragraph be in a direct mail appeal? A single line long? Two-to-four lines long? Any length will do; it all depends on the appeal. Answer: A single line long.

Brains aren't warmed up when they first look at an appeal letter.

The fastest way to discourage the reader from going any deeper is to insist they bushwhack through a dense opening paragraph. Much preferred: a single vibrating sentence surrounded by white space. Something so simple and clean it enters the brain without any extra effort.

Consider these teensy openings from four successful appeals:

- This Memorial Day, you and I will share some thing special . . .
- Will you join this important celebration?
- You can hear the wicked glee in their voices.
- Welcome . . . I hope.

Expect resistance from the untrained

Simone Joyaux watched a fundraiser proudly hand her proposed new direct mail appeal to a board member, hoping for approval.

The appeal began with a pointed one-word paragraph: "Help . . ."

The board member hastily handed the letter back, her lips curled down. "Is this how we plan to represent our organisation," she said with disdain, "as the 'grammatically incorrect' organisation?"

Was this board member right to worry?

Absolutely not. She was applying rules from a world she knew well – the classroom – to a world she didn't know at all: fundraising through the mail.

Her objection was well-intentioned, of course. But it was based on utter ignorance. ■

On-target observations in brief

Love is not patronizing and charity isn't about pity, it is about love. Charity and love are the same – with charity you give love, so don't just give money but reach out your hand instead.

Mother Teresa

Your prospects might not share your obsessions. The typical prospect has a finite amount of money to contribute to all causes. The rule is simple: Compete or lose.

With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times

15 April 2012

Do not act as if you had ten thousand years to throw away. Death stands at your elbow. Be good for something while you live and it is in your power.

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

Is your organisation crawling, walking, or running when it comes to integrated marketing and donor communications?

And be honest, because knowing what level of complexity is realistic at the start will help build a stronger programme faster in the long run.

With acknowledgement to
www.malwarwick.com

The path to financial security in the not-for-profit sector lies in the building of closer relationships with donors and gathering around you the largest possible number of people who will remain loyal friends to your organisation for all the right reasons.

**Terry Murray in
The Art of Asking + 60 more
Fundraising Tips and Trends**

Leaders rely on others to fill in the blanks in their knowledge, but often leaders don't realise what they don't know. This can lead to a great deal of trouble.

With acknowledgement to
The NonProfit Times
www.nptimes.com

I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.

William Penn



World Vision – ensuring no child without

World Vision is based on Christian principles and aims to see every child – especially those growing up in dire poverty – experience life to the full.

For 45 years, they've been pushing the boundaries and fighting the causes – and symptoms – of human suffering as a result of poverty.

Globally, World Vision works in over 100 countries. Here in South Africa they work in 21 communities – in six of our nine provinces serving more than a million families through community empowerment programmes and campaigns.

Race, religion and ethnicity make no difference . . . where there's a need World Vision strives to ensure that no child goes without. They believe that the best way to change a child's life is to change the world that they live in . . . by investing in communities so they can grow and flourish.

This is achieved by partnering with churches and local leaders, helping them to meet the needs of their communities.

World Vision works to stand in the gap; to act boldly for children; to be the voice of children and communities against growing poverty, disease, abuse, and injustice.

For more information about World Vision and their work, visit their website at www.worldvision.org.za

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

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

The seven fundamental rules of amazing donor communications

A strong donor communication programme is the basis of great relationship-building for your nonprofit. The newsletters, e-mails, annual reports and updates you send out to your donors will become the foundation on which your donor relationships are based.

In creating hundreds, if not thousands, of donor communication pieces, I have found that there are seven fundamental rules for amazing donor communications:

Rule 1 – Look at donor communications as a system and a process

Donor communications aren't "one-off" items. Don't think in terms of "this newsletter" or "that e-mail". Think in terms of your entire donor communications system. In order to have an effective communications system, you need to have a donor communications plan in place that incorporates your overall development strategy.

Similarly, you should remember that donor communications is a process. Communicating with your donors takes time. One e-mail won't make or break your communications programme. Instead, think of the programme holistically . . . every time you communicate with your donors you are telling one small part of the big picture story of your non-profit.

Just as with any relationship, donor relationships strengthen over time. Realise this, and give your donor relationships the time they need to mature. As you communicate with your donors on a regular basis, the relationship between the prospect and your organisation will slowly strengthen.

Rule 2 – People like to feel like part of a team

Remember that people like to feel like part of a team. Everyone on Earth wants to feel like they are joined in a relationship with other people who are all marching towards a common goal.

Thus, one of the key strategies for your communications efforts should be to make people feel like part of your team. Talk to them as peers. Ask them for their suggestions. Keep them constantly in the loop. Make them feel like you're all one big team working towards a common vision (you are, aren't you?).

Rule 3 – Donors like to invest in causes bigger than themselves. Cast a big vision!

It is important to understand that people like to be caught up in a larger vision.

Most people, even the rich and famous, get "stuck" in their daily routines. They get up, go to work, eat meals, play with the kids, retire and do some travelling and grow old watching the grandkids play.

Because most people don't like the fact that they get stuck in

a "standard" routine, they like to break free by getting caught up in bigger stories and visions. Epic movies, great novels, and a night at the symphony are all ways to escape the humdrum and get caught up in a larger story.

You might not realise it yet, but your nonprofit is another great way for people to escape the routine and get caught up in a larger story and vision for the future. What work are you doing? Are you curing cancer? Feeding the hungry? Educating future generations? People want to get caught up in your vision . . . so let them! Cast a big vision, and paint a big picture.

Your communications process has to be focused on engaging people in your vision and allowing them to escape the routine by working with you to meet your common challenges and accomplish your common mission.

Rule 4 – Write for your readers, not your high school English teacher

Great donor communications needn't be perfect, they just need to "work". And communications pieces that work are written in a conversational tone that is easily understood by the vast majority of people who are reading them.

This means no high-brow language! No acronyms that people don't understand. No sentences that start, "Our multi-disciplinary team-based approach to forensic interviewing . . ."

Donor communications studies have shown that the best nonprofit newsletters, e-mails and updates are written on about a sixth-grade level. Great donor communications feel conversational . . . they sound like someone is talking to you. Pieces like this are easier to read.

If people feel like your newsletter or annual report is difficult to read or understand, guess what? They'll stop reading it! It's OK to use sentence fragments or extra punctuation, and to start sentences with prepositions if doing these things makes your communications easier to read.

Of course, your item still needs to look like it was written by a professional, so typos are out. You want your donor communications to be conversational, but not sloppy.

Rule 5 – Appeal to your readers' emotions

Nonprofit communications should be emotional . . . after all, you are doing life-saving, world-changing work! The best of them appeal to readers' deepest feelings and desires, things like their faith, their world view and beliefs about humanity, their hope for a better world for their children, their sense of justice and fairness, etc. People want to get involved (and donate) when you touch their soul. Sound over the top? It's not . . . it's what works. The best newsletters, e-mails and

With acknowledgement to
Joe Garecht from
The Fundraising Authority



Continued on page 6

Nonprofit sustainability is the responsibility of leadership

Money in the bank does not mean that your organisation will be sustainable. A

strong sense of being mission-driven, measuring impact and sharing results is what leaders of nonprofits should strive to embed into the consciousness of everyone in the organisation:

This is how an organisation can shift the status quo from fretting over money to creating future plans.

Using the seven dimensions for nonprofit sustainability as a guideline, leaders can embrace these characteristics for determining board competencies and delegation of duties for oversight, good governance and quality performance that will ensure continuity.

The seven dimensions encompass the following: Legal good standing and compliance; organisational capacity and expertise to do the work; financial viability of the organisation; advocacy for the work undertaken that will make a difference; quality and professionalism of service provision; stable infrastructure and building a positive image brand.

Nearly 122 000 entities are registered with the Nonprofit Organisations (NPO) Directorate. More than 80 000 NPOs are non-compliant with only 19% of NPOs yearly financial statements and narrative reports verified*.

Does this indicate that a majority of elected or appointed board members of NPOs are blissfully unaware of their fiduciary duties and other responsibilities? Few board members work closely with fundraisers yet financial sustainability is unquestionably the responsibility of the board.

Human resource policies need to be interrogated by the board to ensure recruitment of employees remains equitable, fair and open. So-called operational matters such as these are often left to the executive and put on auto-pilot.

It is often stated by board members that projects are driven by experts: "We leave that work to the professionals and don't interfere" – abdicating responsibilities and assuming everything is hunky-dory does not lead to sustainability.

What are the Seven Dimensions for NPO Sustainability?



1. Legal good standing and compliance

This includes not only signing off audited financial statements but making sure that all fiduciary reporting deadlines are met, that all taxes are paid to SARS, that issuance of Section 18A receipts to donors is done correctly, that amendments and changes to constitutions, trust deeds and memorandums of incorporations are done in accordance with statutory bodies.

2. Organisational capacity and expertise to do the work

This includes ensuring that a clearly defined vision, mission and set goals and targets have been defined in a medium to short-term strategy, and that the programmes and projects being undertaken by employees are professional and that adequate resources are in place. Dedicated staff and committed volunteers including board members have written 'contracts' with duties (job descriptions). Technological know-how and access to broadband is a must.

3. Financial viability of the organisation and its programmes

A revenue plan with financial projections for a least two to three years should be in place and approved by the board. Such a plan will include diverse income sources and avoid reliance on a single or few streams – the plan needs to be balanced using a variety of fundraising techniques appropriate to programmes and the mission. Philanthropic gifts should be sought from individuals, trusts, foundations as well as tapping into corporate social investment as well as efforts to work with government departments.

4. Advocacy for the work undertaken to change the world

It is vital to interact with national and local government on policy making and to become a part of issue-based coalitions. Nonprofits should participate energetically in advocacy campaigns in order to lobby and reform social justice, or influence legislation that might affect the sector – such as B-BBEE score cards, public benefit taxation laws that enable or disable the work of the non-profit and to encourage ethical dealings.

5. Quality and professionalism of service provision

Focus on the greatest needs in your community and don't proffer projects that are

There's much more to sustainability than a healthy bank balance, as Ann Bown explains.

With acknowledgement to
Ann Bown, Charisma
Consulting.
Visit
www.charisma.co.za or
email annbown@telkom.net

Continued on page 6

Nonprofit sustainability is the responsibility of leadership (*continued*)

Continued from page 5

not necessarily going to change the status quo – you need to measure the impact being achieved and the effectiveness of services to beneficiaries, which will not be cut-back if there's a funding crunch. Ideally other NPOs and government departments recognise your work and beneficiaries are even prepared to pay fees for your services. You confidently demonstrate a social return on investment.

6. Stable infrastructure and ownership of assets

Ensure that there's adequate space and facilities with long term investments such as endowment funds or a steady flow of membership fees to keep the organisation glued together. Form alliances; build strong relationships with local business and government, encourage co-optiveness and share lessons learned with other organisations and work with many to make a difference in communities or in the country. Make sure that your team members receive opportunities for

“For nonprofits, financial sustainability and programmatic sustainability cannot be separated. It's not enough to have a high-impact programme if there's no effective strategy for sustaining the organisation financially. And neither is it enough to be financially stable: we build our organisations for impact, not for financial stability.”

NonProfit Sustainability: Making Strategic Decisions for Financial Viability by Jeanne Bell, Jan Masaoka and Steve Zimmerman

upgrading their skills by attending training courses and can tap into new technology.

7. Building the brand and public image

Issue positive and regular media messages about your work, self-promote at forums, do public speaking stints and monitor public perceptions – if things don't look positive then jump into action. It is always a good idea to have a communication strategy in place for both internal and external communication. Create solid relationships with the public, local

newspapers, radio stations, social networks, schools, hospitals and the police and have a dynamic website that publishes news and uplifting results.

Leadership and the board have to pull this together if they want the organisation to really make a difference, change the world, eradicate poverty and demonstrate a social shift from good to great and sustainable whilst remaining true to their Mission.

*Source: DSD/NPO Directorate presentation at the NPO Collaboration and Dialogue Forum – 30 May 2014. ■

The seven fundamental rules (*continued*)

Continued from page 4

annual reports appeal to emotion without feeling sappy or contrived.

Show the concrete difference your organisation is making in the world. Make them feel what you are saying.

Connect people with your mission and your results. Does this mean you shouldn't clearly explain the need or use facts, figures and statistics? No, not at all – use them to make your case. What it does mean, though, is that your donor communications should lean more towards the emotional side and less towards the clinical side.

Rule 6 – Talk about YOU and WE, not I and ME

Your donor communications should be written from a first person perspective, meaning you talk about “I” and “we” instead of “the organisation,” or “the charity”. But – and this is super important for writing successful letters – mostly what you should be saying is “you,” meaning “you, the donor”. Your letters should focus on your work, yes, but really should focus on the donor you are writing to.

This means talking about “your past support,” “your concern for the poor,” “your assistance with this project,” “the difference you can make”.

“You” is one of the most important words in a nonprofit fundraiser's lexicon.

Rule 7 – Make your communications a two-way street

People like having conversations, but hate being “talked at”. In order to be really effective with your donor communications, you need to view the process as a conversation, not a lecture. Donor communications are a two-way street.

This is easy to say, but harder to actually do. I have found that some of the most effective ways to make your donors feel like they are having a conversation with you through your communications are to send out surveys on a regular basis, take online polls, solicit feedback from your donors / readers, hold online “office hours” or “roundtable discussions” for your donors on your website, and include contact information, including a phone number, in all of your donor communication items. ■

Online tools can help supporters raise funds from their networks

ONLINE

Three roller-derby players from Iowa barreled 640 kilometers across Texas on roller skates for 15 days in March to raise money and awareness for multiple sclerosis.

Dani Bock, Libby Claeys, and Melissa Dittberner started the unusual fundraiser in 2010 when they skated across South Dakota, and they've moved on to a new state every year.

Inspired by Ms. Claeys's aunt, who has the disease, the women of "Sk8 the State for MS" have skated 2 200 kilometers and raised more than R217 000 for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

"People are looking for a more creative and meaningful way to raise money," says Betty Ross, a vice president at the charity.

Nonprofits are starting to offer on-line tools that help supporters make the jump to becoming fundraisers. Seeing the potential in helping passionate supporters raise money for the cause, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society built a do-it-yourself fundraising platform in late 2012.

Last year, do-it-yourself fundraising events produced R43 million, about 2.5% of the R1.8 billion the organisation raised that year in all special events.

"It's a small percent over all, but it's one of our fastest-growing revenue channels," says Ms. Ross.

Attracting new money

November, one of the most famous efforts, asks men to grow mustaches every November and show them off to raise money for prostate cancer and other men's health issues.

More than 187 000 people have set up individualised web pages to raise money for Charity: Water, often asking for donations in lieu of birthday presents.

Peer-to-peer fundraising gets results, says Madeline Stanionis, creative director of M+R Strategic Services, a fundraising consulting company.

"These are typically people who are donating who might not have donated before, so it's not as if charities are cannibalising their own fundraising. They're typically bringing in new money and new donors."

Donors seek the charity

In do-it-yourself fundraising, a nonprofit can take its message to many more people than it can reach on its own, thanks to supporters' social-media networks.

After the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, David Allen, a tattoo artist in Toronto, organised 30 tattoo shops to create Japanese-style tattoos for customers, donating the proceeds to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) via iRescue, the charity's peer-to-peer platform.

"We had no connection to these folks, and somehow they found us and they raised R540 000," says Nancy Haitch, vice president for strategic development. "You never know how people find you, and I think that's also one of the beauties of a site like this – it's a great awareness builder."

Peer-to-peer fundraising typically brings in about R1.1 million a year for the IRC.

Staff training

While it may sound effortless to let others do the grunt work of bringing in new supporters with cash in hand, do-it-yourself fundraising still takes up staff time in the form of training and support.

Staff members who assist in these efforts are part tech support, part reality check, and part cheerleader. They need to be willing to train older people on the technology or step in to help set practical goals for starry-eyed supporters.

Many large organisations have at least one employee dedicated to these programmes and say they plan to have more. Because peer-to-peer fundraising is so personalised, it's relatively easy for small groups to get involved.

"If you're a small organisation and have 30 really strong supporters, you can actually make those 30 really strong supporters into fundraisers, which is much more useful and beneficial to the organisation than simply asking those 30 people to donate," says Ms. Stanionis.

Recognising the efforts of do-it-yourself fundraisers is vital, says Ms. Ross of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. The Wisconsin chapter of the charity was an early leader, she says, because it acknowledged fundraisers' hard work. The chapter's monthly newsletter identifies every person who organised an event "regardless of whether it was R100 or R10 000."

Ms. Stanionis agrees. She recommends that groups ask do-it-yourself fundraisers to train others who want to start their own efforts. It's another way they can strengthen ties with people who care enough about the cause to ask their friends to support it, too.

Small gifts can also be a great way to reward supporters who raise money, says Ms. Stanionis.

"People love to have things that say who they are as a person" she says. "So giving people tools that allow them to express their values visually through T-shirts and bumper stickers are great premiums."

Turning volunteers into fundraisers

- Make sure do-it-yourself fundraising sites and instructional materials are clear and easy to share through social media.
- Provide prompt and friendly support to people running fundraising efforts for your organisation.
- Acknowledge the volunteers' hard work. ■

Supporters are becoming more and more creative in the ways they want to support charity, with event and gifts-in-lieu fundraising efforts growing in popularity. This report from Cassie Moore.

With acknowledgement to
The Chronicle of Philanthropy
Visit
<http://philanthropy.com>
27 March 2014

When raising money with a mix of methods, tracking results is both vital and tough

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) tried out a new tool to boost donations during its end-year fundraising push: online advertisements that can be targeted at specific people.

Retailers have been using the technique for years. For example, customers who visit a clothing website without making a purchase will often then see the company's banner ads as they move around the Internet.

The animal-rights group set a test in which 500 000 supporters saw its banner advertisements as they browsed the Internet, while another group of 500 000 did not.

PETA officials thought the online ads might help nudge supporters to contribute in another way rather than by clicking ads.

That hypothesis turned out to be true. People in the group who saw online ads were 5% more likely to contribute, and their gifts were 12% larger than those made by people in the group who didn't see the ads.

Jogging memories

Nonprofits, like PETA, that coordinate their fundraising campaigns across multiple channels are betting that repeated communications make donors more likely to contribute and that a solicitation in one channel will spur supporters to give a gift in others.

To get the most out of coordinated fundraising, nonprofits have to track who receives which appeals and analyse how the different solicitations affect donations.

Charities can't make smart decisions about spending if they don't know which fundraising channels are having the biggest impact on giving.

"Without knowing which one is generating the bulk of the boost, it's really difficult to invest further in the one that's working", says Sarah DiJulio, a principal at M+R Strategic

Services, a fundraising consulting company.

Testing techniques

But figuring out how various forms of fundraising influence each other isn't easy. A large national nonprofit is conducting a test to find out.

The charity is running a three-month campaign during which supporters in six geographic regions will get different combinations of coordinated solicitations.

People in one region will get direct mail; supporters in another region will get mail and telemarketing calls; a third group will get direct mail, telemarketing calls, and online advertising.

At the end of the campaign, the charity will see which combinations bring in the most money, says Walter Lukens, president of the Lukens Company, the fundraising consulting company that is helping the group conduct the experiment.

"We'll be able to look in the rearview mirror about how this lifts the total response rate and where that growth happens," he says.

Not every organisation is willing to experiment this much, says Mr. Lukens.

In this case, he says, the charity has a base of older donors and is eager to determine the best way to reach out to younger people.

But some fundraisers say there are limits to how much nonprofits can learn.

An organisation might know that it sent a direct mail appeal to a donor, but there's no way to tell if that person opened it, says David Chalfant, director of development for Whitman-Walker Health.

"You have to go a little on faith". "And you have to look at the campaign as an investment and do your best to extrapolate the return on the different channels."

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- **The NonProfit Times**, 190 Tamarack Circle, Skillman, NJ08558, USA, (\$129 per annum) website: www.nptimes.com
- **The Chronicle of Philanthropy**, PO Box 1989, Marion, Ohio, 43306, USA, (24 issues – one annum at \$95) website: <http://philanthropy.com>
- **Ahern E-News**. Subscribe for free at www.AhernComm.com