

UTILIZE YOUR YEAR-END MOMENTUM

Kick-Start 2013 Fundraising

Turn your year-end fundraising into sustained growth in the new year.

Did you know that most organizations receive half of their annual online donations during November and December? What you are doing now to build enthusiasm with your loyal supporters and engage new supporters will make a big difference in meeting or exceeding your year-end goals.

2013 is here. Do you have a strategy for galvanizing holiday donors and keeping the passion alive with your loyal supporters in the new year? While the holiday rush can be overwhelming, it's important to maintain strong communications and continue list-building activities into January and beyond. Here is a list of ten common sense steps — think of them as resolutions — to help you ensure the growth of your constituent base in 2013. Choose your favorites and start planning today.

1 Capture email addresses for your offline donors

More and more supporters are open to engaging with you online, even if they choose to donate offline. Capturing email addresses for your offline donors will allow you to implement a multi-channel approach. Use any opportunity you can to capture email addresses from your supporters such as at events, through direct mail response cards, and via telemarketing. You can do this by offering specific calls-to-action that are only available online, such as register on your website to receive a premium or to receive an “early-bird” registration for an event. You can also promote the reasons to visit your website in your offline communications, such as user-contributed photos and stories or the ability to easily update a mailing address.



► Email Marketing

Email marketing can help your organization build a loyal, involved support base and drive higher response rates in fundraising, advocacy, marketing, special events, and other functions.

2 Use a multi-channel approach (if you aren't already)

Savvy organizations are adopting a multi-channel approach to convert online acquired prospects, using email first, followed up by mail, then telemarketing to maximize conversion rates. In your direct mail, incentivize supporters to give online with benefits like getting an email tax receipt, a matching gift from a major donor, or a drawing or giveaway. Our research shows that direct mail donors who also receive email give two times as much and renew at 10% higher rates than those just receiving email. According to a joint study by Convio, a Blackbaud Company, and StrategicOne, “the increased value of adding an online donation and solicitation channel for donors acquired offline is \$44.71 (a 39% increase) per donor over 12 months.”

3 Get to know your supporters better

Due to the diverse needs of your supporter base, segmenting constituents into appropriate groups will allow your organization to more effectively communicate relevant information to each group. Segmenting your list and then targeting groups with communications and appeals based on their interests, donation history, gender, age, length of membership or any other defining characteristic will result in higher response rates. Know who your supporters are and what they care about. Understand which donors, activists, and volunteers are most active, and devise special programs to keep them engaged. Regularly ask supporters to provide information about themselves to help you improve your segmentation and targeted messaging. Include questions in your online surveys, direct mail response cards and in sign-up sheets or surveys at events.

4 Segment your welcome messages

It's great if you have a general welcome series, but we recommend you create specific welcome series for your key supporter types. Creating "pathways" for each supporter type is key to maximizing the supporter experience on your website and for beginning to build relationships. For all of your first-time donors, you can create a welcome series to thank them for the support, communicate how their funds are being put to good use, and eventually build up to asking for their continued support year-round. After new supporters have 'graduated' from the welcome series, their names can be added to your other communications so you can further cultivate these relationships.



► Welcome Series

A solid, professional welcome series sets the tone for the relationship, creates an identifiable voice for your organization, and educates new constituents about your mission and the scope of your impact before they start getting appeals.

5 Be transparent with your communications

To keep supporters engaged, it's important to be open and transparent in providing regular updates on how the funds you raise are being used. You can include these updates in your existing email communications and on your website. You'll make your email and website messaging much more effective and engaging by highlighting specific goals, recent successes and/or inspirational stories. If you equip your supporters with this type of information, it will give them even more reason (and confidence) to "spread the word" with others.

6 Promote a sustainer or pledge giving program

The donors who supported you last year likely had to be selective about their charities. It's likely these donors may be even more inclined to be loyal to you and would be open to recurring donations or paying their annual donation amount throughout the year. Sustaining and pledge donors typically renew at rates 10 – 20% higher than single-gift donors. It's important to offer reasons for people to give on a recurring basis or to pledge a larger commitment that can be paid out over time.

7 Optimize your home page

The beginning of the new year is a great time to make improvements to your home page that don't necessarily require a redesign.

- **Have a strong message.** Your mission should be clearly stated on your home page in 15 words or less. Surprisingly, many organizations don't clearly state what they do. Make your calls to action clear and compelling.
- **Decrease the clutter and length on your home page to promote engagement opportunities.** Move your engagement opportunities "above the fold." After you tell website visitors who you are and what you do, be clear about the actions you want them to take.
- **Improve your registration opportunities.** Your online relationship begins with capturing an email address. Only with a growing email list can any organization thrive online. You should use any opportunity you can to gather email addresses and then immediately communicate with these new supporters. Aim to have one or more sign-up opportunities above the fold. Make sure you have a web form on the page, not just a link or button, and have compelling reasons for your top three audiences to register with you. There are many effective tactics you can use to motivate online registrations, such as

► The 5-Second Test

Display your home page for five seconds — then close it and ask a friend to write down what he or she remembers. Effective websites tell visitors within seconds of their arrival:



1. Where they are
2. What they can do
3. Why they should act

downloadable content, contests, drawings, eCards, polls, pledges, and premiums. In addition, you'll get a higher registration rate if you make your online registration simple. We recommend you capture email address, first name, last name and ZIP at most. You can ask for additional information as a second page — such as interests and chances to opt into other email communications.

8 Create targeted website content

Your website is the primary way many supporters stay informed about what your organization is doing. So make sure it speaks to them — offer content based on the needs and interests of your various audiences. It's important to understand your various audiences and have content based on their needs. Presenting a compelling story, delivering useful content, and creating opportunities for engagement should be organized in a fashion that is easy for website visitors to navigate and understand. Making your website experience better will drive higher conversion rates, and keep your constituents coming back to stay in touch with your organization.

9 Make your email newsletter more engaging

For most organizations, an email newsletter is a prospecting tool, so sending the same newsletter to everyone is not appropriate. We recommend at a minimum, having two versions — one for prospects/non-donors and one for current donors. Does your newsletter reflect that you know the recipient? Consider adding conditionalized content based on their relationship with you. Have they donated this year? Do they volunteer? Have they attended events? Have they done team event fundraising? Does your newsletter engage the reader? Have clear calls to action such as, "Update Your Address" or, "Learn More" or, "Share Your Story." Make sure you have the Donate and Tell-a-Friend links above the fold.

10 Tap into the power of Social Media marketing

Social media isn't a silver bullet, but it does provide you with the ability to extend the reach of your communications to a broader audience and leverage existing support to help spread the word about your organization. There is a seemingly endless number of technologies at your disposal that your supporters are using every day. Before diving in, start using the tools yourself, listening to what your constituents are saying, and following thought leaders to gain insight into trends and topics of interest to your audiences. Once you've spent some time ascertaining which social media tools will help your organization communications strategy the most, you can teach your stakeholders how to use them and enable your most passionate supporters to distribute content and raise awareness on your behalf.

About Blackbaud

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