Marketing AdVents

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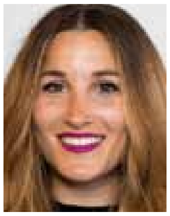
Dos and Don'ts of Collecting Donor Data

By Molly Trerotola



Collecting donor data is a critical part of the online fundraising process; however, it can be an overwhelming undertaking for nonprofits. What data should you collect, when and how should you use it? Most nonprofits want to collect as much information from their donors as possible. The more data, the better, right?

But this can be a trap, and, without a donor data collection strategy, you could face consequences like reduced online giving to your organization.

Studies from npENGAGE put the average donor "drop-off" or "abandonment" rate for online donations at somewhere between 50 percent and 70 percent. In other words, more than half of the donors who start the donation process online won't finish it. Much of that drop-off has to do with time-intensive, inefficient data collection during the giving experience.

All that said, here are some tips and best practices for collecting donor data in the donation checkout flow while reducing donor drop off and leveraging data to the best of your ability.

1. SHORTEN YOUR DONATION FORM

You've seen them before, the long-winded donation forms that stand between a donor and your nonprofit's money. They're a total drag. The long forms are a serious deterrent to donating because,

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> **Collecting donor data is absolutely critical to your online fundraising and donor engagement strategy. A data dump won't do your organization any favors if there isn't thought and strategy behind it. Plan out what information you need, ask for it in a thoughtful way, analyze it, then use it wisely to support how you engage with donors.**

In This Issue: Failures, Flops & Flubs

Content Strategy Basics: Nonprofits Must Start at the Beginning

By Sabrina Pfautz

Whether your organization is just coming to the conclusion that content creation is imperative for online success or if content has been something your team has been championing—and perhaps struggling with—for years, there is no doubt that generating content with consistency is a step in the right direction for nonprofits.

It's great that mission-driven organizations are ramping up their content marketing game, but before they start filling out a content calendar, it's important to step back to square one: content strategy. Content strategy can mean many things and is often an ambiguous and daunting term. But fear not! When put simply, content strategy is really a breakdown of the classic who, what, when, where, why and how statements. **Who** is reading your content currently? They could be donors, volunteers, prospective board members or even press. Do these people align with your target personas? **What** type of content format are these audiences looking for? **Why** do they need content and how can you best answer their search queries? **When** should you distribute or share content? **Where** is your audience looking for and ultimately finding your content? **How** do you plan to showcase your organization's personality, tackle content

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President's Perspective

Mistakes, Failures and Problems

By Mikaela King

Failure is one of my favorite topics lately. Partially because I gravitate toward the underdog, and nothing needs an advocate like failure. Partially because I'm a psychology junkie, and there's been a lot of psychology, philosophy, and mindfulness thinking about failure that's lately coming into the forefront of pop culture.

This morning I read a blog post from the (always profound) Seth Godin that hit this idea out of the park, I'm including it in full here: seths.blog/2018/09/mistakes-failures-and-problems.

- A mistake is something you learn from...you did it wrong, you'll do it better next time.
- A marketing failure is a mismatch between what you built and the market.
- And a problem is an invention waiting to be built, an invitation to find a solution.

One thing I learned early in my life was that I much prefer learning the "easy way" (from observing other's mistakes) than the "hard way" (by having to experience the failure myself). Not everyone feels this way. There is nothing that makes a lesson stick like going through the pain of learning it first-hand! But some of us don't have a choice about this—there may be no "easy way." The thing hasn't been learned yet, whether that's because we're on the forefront of innovation, because our situation is unique enough that no one's thought to ask this question yet, or, alas, the knowledge that once existed has been lost to turnover or the analytic sands of time.

And yet we marketers, especially in fundraising, face daunting expectations to always have the right answer, to never fail, to limit the risk of failure, to limit risk entirely, which is exactly the environment that produces only marginal, iterative improvements at best, and not the big leaps of growth that startups and more innovative businesses experience. Big bets promise big wins...or big failure. The reasons behind this are understandable, of course.

Nonprofits face charity watchdog ratings, public perception issues, media exposés that view overhead and fundraising—infrastructure and growth engines necessary to nonprofit program expansion—as the enemy. Any dollar "wasted" puts a nonprofit at further risk of being labeled a fraud. Businesses frequently face narrow profit margins, fierce competition (often prompting retrenching rather than innovation) and shareholders only concerned with current-quarter value.

This fear focuses us on the wrong thing: what we don't want (failure), rather than what we do want (growth). Fear also makes us bad decision-makers. Hopefully by now you're thinking of failure as a necessity on the path towards success. This idea is well articulated in our digital age in the currently-used advice to "fail smart and fast". But how do we carve out room for failure amidst all these risk-averse pressures? One solution that many businesses and some nonprofits use is to create an R&D budget, however small, to experiment with new, risky ideas—one that is insulated from revenue projections and, therefore, the fear of failure.

Onwards,

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Calendar of Events

THUR OCT 18

Lunch and Learn
Best of Bridge: "Perennial Favorites: Annual Fundraising Campaigns, FTW!"
12PM – 2PM
SEIU Washington DC

THUR OCT 25

Social Event
DMAW Fall Happy Hour
5:30PM – 7PM
Arlington Rooftop Bar & Grill
Arlington, VA

THURS NOV 15

Lunch and Learn
Best of Bridge Part 2
12PM – 2PM
SEIU Washington DC

TUES DEC 4

Best of Direct 2018!
Holiday Party and Awards Ceremony
6PM – 9PM
National Press Club
Washington DC

WED JAN 16

Webinar
Topic: Messaging Automation
1PM – 2PM

THUR JAN 24

DMAW Annual Meeting
6PM – 9PM
SEIU, Washington, DC

Deadline for registration is 24 hours before the event, space permitting.
Cancellations must be received 48 hours in advance. No-shows will be billed.
Register at dmaw.org or call 703-689-3629.

Quick Takes

Every month DMAW asks people in our industry for their 'quick take' on a topic

Please explain a lesson you learned when your organization had something 'scary' happen to it.

Having anxiously awaited the finished product, I was excited to open the box with our human services agency's annual appeal package!

To our dismay, it had been printed in the wrong color and looked more like packaging for a woman's feminine hygiene product than anything else.

Fearful folks would toss it without opening it, we bit the bullet, allocated money we didn't have and reprinted.

The appeal did well, and we never sent anything further to the printer without sending a staff member to oversee the print run in person. Lesson learned.

— Claire Axelrad, JD, CFRE
Principal
Clairification
claire@clairification.com

When we weren't renewed for a major grant that funded a crucial part of our work, we were stunned, and we wondered how we would possibly meet the need.

Our team stepped back to really look at HOW we were telling our story to the community and when. That conversation launched us into an exercise to craft and tell our essential story.

After hosting just three tours of our facility, we were offered a $50,000 matching gift and a $250,000 grant from a family foundation. It only got better from there.

If we hadn't had the crisis, we may never have improved our communications with our donors and community.

We certainly learned to have more diverse revenue streams and to never be so dependent on a single source in the future!

— Talena Barker
Founder and CEO
Mission Limelight
talena@missionlimelight.com

The unexpected, and even the scary, is a frequent thing in fundraising. End of year efforts never fell into that category, as we always had it down to a well-tested science. But, since Q4 2016, all bets have been off in terms of predictability.

That year, results for clients that were outside of the political fray were all over the map—good and bad. There were two things we became hyper-aware of at that time: First, no matter how tedious, keep great archival records of the campaigns you repeat year over year. Not just final results, but incremental results post-deployment for email and paid media. That helped us figure out if the "wonkiness" was a timing blip or a real trend that required a strategy pivot.

Second, even if news or events don't directly affect your "sector," they affect your donors, so it's critical to keep a pulse on overall consumer trends.

— Bethany Maki
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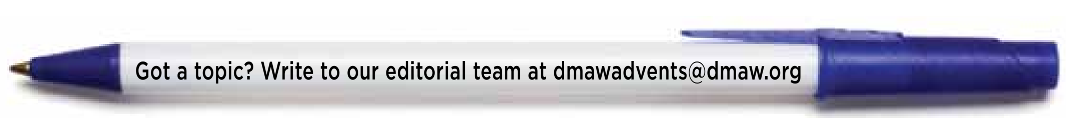

Collecting Donor Data

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quite simply, they take too long and frustrate donors. Shorten your donation form by ensuring you're asking all the critical questions on one page. More clicks equals more drop off.

2. DON'T ASK FOR DATA YOU DON'T NEED

Get rid of anything in your donation process that isn't absolutely necessary. For example, you don't need to know whether someone goes by Ms. or Mrs. Most times, you don't need mailing address either (gasp!). Think: Is this information crucial to getting the donation? If the answer is "maybe," scrap it. Your donors will thank you for making the donor experience easier for them.

3. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF POST-DONATION QUESTIONS

If you'd like to collect additional information for donor segmentation purposes, a great time to ask is in a post-donation form. The "Thank You" page can be a perfect data collection point for the additional questions you want donors to answer.

4. MAKE SURE YOUR DONOR DATA IS AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY

Your donor data is less valuable the more time passes from when the donation is made. Engage in a platform that gives you access to your donors' data immediately. Furthermore, make sure your data can be used to easily inputted into a CRM or directly flow to a database management system so you can segment your donors.

Photo: iStock/Getty Images

5. USE THE DATA WISELY

You've successfully collected valuable donor data—congratulations! Now what? Use it! Your donor data can be used to drive donor follow-up communication and re-engagement strategies. Not all donors should receive the same messaging at the same time.

One-time donors, monthly donors, donors from peer-to-peer campaigns—these unique supporters deserve customized communication that applies to their relationship with your organization. Segment your donor list based on the data you have and be strategic about it.

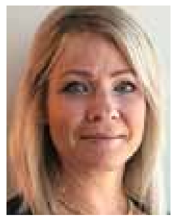
Collecting donor data is absolutely critical to your online fundraising and donor engagement strategy. A data dump won't do your organization any favors if there isn't thought and strategy behind it. Plan out what information you need, ask for it in a thoughtful way, analyze it, then use it wisely to support how you engage with donors.

> "YOUR DONOR DATA IS LESS VALUABLE THE MORE TIME PASSES FROM WHEN THE DONATION IS MADE. ENGAGE IN A PLATFORM THAT GIVES YOU ACCESS TO YOUR DONORS' DATA IMMEDIATELY. FURTHERMORE, MAKE SURE YOUR DATA CAN BE EASILY INPUTTED INTO A CRM OR DIRECTLY FLOW TO A DATABASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM SO YOU CAN SEGMENT YOUR DONORS."

Molly Trerotola is the media and communications manager at Give Lively, a startup that builds better fundraising tech. Much like a foundation, Give Lively was founded by philanthropists for the sole purpose of providing free and valuable technology resources to nonprofits. Give Lively's platform offers a full suite of fundraising features designed to improve the online giving experience for nonprofits and their donors. She can be reached at molly@givelively.org.

Oops! Well, That Didn't Turn Out as Expected!

By Erica O'Brien



You know that feeling. The one where you have the highest hopes for a new strategy…and you are just sure it is going to work. And then the results come in, and… not only does it not work, but it does so poorly, you think, "surely there is a mistake," because it just ***had to*** work! In fact, we have a running joke in our office that if you like a new initiative, that is an almost certain kiss of death!

The fact is that with any new innovation, there is a high probability of failure. And no matter how seasoned a direct marketer you are, innovation is not for the faint of heart. All too often in industry conferences and publications we hear about amazing successes, which are often fundamental to inspiring transformative change. However, we can often learn as much from failures, as we can from successes.

Photo: iStock/Getty Images

That said, my failure may be your success, so I hope you don't rely on the findings shared below to guide your future planning. Rather, I hope you will use these findings to inspire you to innovate and to push the envelope in your own organization and programs. Because it is with that spirit of innovation that true transformation may come.

Without further delay, here are our greatest flop hits from the recent past:

1. THE MULTI-CHANNEL INTEGRATION TEST THAT COULDN'T LOSE

How could combining proven strategies not produce winning results for an organization? That was the initial hypothesis behind an alternate media innovation pilot that a large national organization employed. We theorized that combining proven DRTV creative, integrating a visually similar PSA, digital banners and broadcasts on CNN via hundreds of national airports could only produce incrementally higher results. The results, however, were nothing short of lackluster. In fact, only one gift was generated through the campaign—despite several in-market tweaks.

2. WHO DOESN'T LOVE A NICE ADVENT CALENDAR

Well, this donor group did not! Or at least not as much as the control Christmas Holiday bounce-back. The advent calendar produced ~1/2 of the responses as compared to the control, and, unfortunately, while the average gift increased slightly for the test, the control still produced 69 percent more revenue than the test.

3. THE LAST SWAN SONG

A children's organization created a multichannel campaign featuring a patient story about a young boy who enjoyed visiting the swans that lived at the hospital where he was being treated. The package included many elements to bring the donor into this young boy's story, including small origami swans that were included in each package.

There was a digital component as well, which allowed for a truly integrated experience. Sadly, results for this strategy were not strong and revenue was half of the original projections.

4. THE HEAD SCRATCHER

We have all had campaigns like this. Tried and true control packages that are part of your core plan, and bam—one year, this same mailing generates 20 percent less than you project. This is just what happened to a large organization in February, whose pillar control appeal generated $2 million less in revenue than projected.

The creative used was their standard control creative. Mail delivery was confirmed. And audience segmentation was verified. The only anecdotal accomplice was that February was a soft month for many organizations. Not a huge consolation, but misery does love company!

5. THE NON-RENEWAL RENEWAL STRATEGY

Many organizations would agree that a robust multichannel renewal strategy is a core part of a developed fundraising program. One health organization that understood the importance of cross-channel integration decided to take their renewal strategy online and send donors a series of three renewal emails in order to generate response and increase renewal rates. Sadly, not only did this strategy not resonate—not one donor responded.

Once again, multiple verifications were executed, including making test gifts to ensure donate page functionality. The emails were even sent again two months later to see if poor timing of the original series was a factor and, unfortunately, once again, not one response was generated. The emails before and after this campaign, however, performed as expected and generated significant response and revenue.

So what, you may ask, is the moral of these morose accounts? Well, simply put, sometimes despite the best intentions and planning, occasionally response will not be what you want or expect. So here are five things you can do to help ensure damage from a failed innovation is minimized.

1. Frugality is a virtue. When planning for any new innovation, test only the level needed to get actionable results.

2. Agree on milestones. In your initial planning, develop specific milestones to review innovation performance and enable go/no decisions.

3. Confirm success measures. Before embarking on any new innovation, gather internal stakeholders and confirm what success "looks like" for any new innovation. Once that agreement is made, determine what data points will be needed and ensure those points are able to be captured in your current data tracking environment.

4. Data is your friend. Embrace the power of data in your planning and understand the potential impact of your new innovation's success or failure on your bottom line and plan accordingly.

5. Flexibility is key. A nimble approach to program management—audiences can be shifted and creative can be adjusted in order to offset, or at least minimize, shortfalls that innovations may yield.

And a final bonus take-away: Innovation is clearly not easy. But you can't fail if you aren't ever trying anything new. Just think about all the best practices we rely on daily in our direct response marketing world—someone, somewhere had to be the first to try these in order for us to be where we are today. And likely they failed at first, but they kept trying. Here's to joining that innovation crowd.

Erica O'Brien is a managing partner and co-owner at MINDset direct. She can be reached at eobrien@mindsetdirect.com.

> "INNOVATION IS CLEARLY NOT EASY. BUT YOU CAN'T FAIL IF YOU AREN'T EVER TRYING ANYTHING NEW. JUST THINK ABOUT ALL THE BEST PRACTICES WE RELY ON DAILY IN OUR DIRECT RESPONSE MARKETING WORLD—SOMEONE, SOMEWHERE HAD TO BE THE FIRST TO TRY THESE IN ORDER FOR US TO BE WHERE WE ARE TODAY."

Content Strategy Basics

Continued from page 1

creation or measure success? Giving adequate attention to the fundamentals will help you align with the best content approach. Whatever your audience segments are, they need to be addressed uniquely in your marketing communications.

Here are five key points to keep in mind when forming your content strategy approach.

1. ASSESS AND FOCUS

Take a good look at yourself (your organization, that is) in the mirror, and think about why you do what you do. What is your mission? It's undoubtedly centered around aiding and bringing awareness to a cause or group. Therein lies the story.

From here, take the time to understand what success means to your organization in regards to content.

Is success analytics driven? Do you care about the number of page views or the leads a piece of content generates? Are there certain organizational goals you are hoping to align with such as more volunteerism or an increase in online donations? Or do you want to simply create more brand awareness through your content? How can each of these be measured?

Once your team has aligned on what success means in regards to your content, it's time to review and audit your past marketing efforts to determine what was successful and what was not in conveying that story to your audience.

Use content that was deemed successful as a benchmark to understand why, specifically, other pieces of content fell short.

Was your message too broad to resonate with your audience? Refining your message so that it's not over-cluttered could provide a big boost in your content's effectiveness. Are users not spending much time on each blog?

Perhaps long-form blogs are not most ideal for your audience; perhaps a scannable and digestible infographic or video would work better for potential donors that are on the go.

Make a catalog of all pieces of content to-date with notes on each. Look for trends to follow and those to steer away from for future content pieces.

2. WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?: THE WHO

There are two lines of thought to consider when thinking through who you should be crafting content for:

- Who is **currently** consuming your content
- Who you **want** to be consuming your content

Your site and social media analytics will give you a good idea of the demographics of reading and watching your content, but may not necessarily tell you what segment of audience you are reaching.

Review all your audience types and analyze how each audience type is finding and interacting with your organization. Make note of whether these interactions align with your organization's goals and—and whether they are truly are authentic.

For example, an overarching goal of your organization could be to increase membership. However, after some analyzing, you may find that donors are the audience who are interacting with most of your content to date. This would be an interaction that doesn't align with your organization's goals.

However, perhaps your content is reaching members, but their engagements are weak—users are clicking through, but not reading the articles or exploring more of your site. This means that their interaction is not authentic and your organization could be doing more to create meaningful content.

3. COPY CAN BE PART OF CONTENT, BUT CONTENT IS NOT COPY: THE HOW

In planning your marketing outreach, you can have compelling content ideas, but the copy needs to convey those ideas in a way that strikes a chord with the reader; otherwise, it will fall flat and be dismissed.

Examine your voice and tone. Voice is to your personality as tone is to your mood.

- Voice is the personality of your organization and should remain consistent across all content produced. Your organization's voice could be cheerful and upbeat or more academic and professional.
- Your organization's tone is variable. Some pieces of content you produce could be lighthearted, funny and educational like volunteer or employee interviews, while others could be about more serious topics like a recently passed law that negatively affects your organization's overarching mission.

Be sure that whatever language you determine suits your organization also matches your audience at large. Is your audience young voters who respond to casual irreverence, or are they academics who are looking for data? Similarly, if you're addressing financial supporters, you may need to tailor your approach.

If the tone is aggressive or desperate, (ex: We need your donations today or else hundreds of people will go hungry!), it will undoubtedly turn donors off by overdoing the guilt and generating a negative emotion.

However, if it's empathetic in nature or if it highlights some success stories (ex: Providing 50 new schools with healthy lunches last year was made possible by members like you!), you might get more traction as the reader will want to be part of the positive movement.

If you go further to explain how easy it is to get involved in your cause—be it donating, volunteering or simply sharing an article—there will be less reason for a user not to participate.

4. MAKE IT RELEVANT, MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE: THE WHAT

It's important that you not only provide content that reflects an appropriate subject matter, but it also needs to be the right size and shape for your audience.

If you want to produce a piece of content that touts a particularly exciting bit of news—such as a new study, an award received or a grant created—think of the best way to deliver that news that will ensure its consumption. Escape from the common misconception that content equates written materials.

Does your audience enjoy reading long articles of text, or do they respond best to short, one-minute videos? Do you find that interview videos get more attention or do animated shorts with motion and infographics perform better? Would investing time into a thought-leadership podcast targeting a specific demographic make more sense than fluff pieces sent via email to a wide range of audience types?

If you know what type of content should be produced, you must also examine what type of content your audience is looking for and marry this with your own success metrics determined earlier in your content strategy phase. There are several ways to determine what your audience may be hoping to learn more about. Below are a few to consider:

- Conduct a survey of your different audience groups asking what type and what subject matter they're most interested in receiving.
- Conduct basic SEO reports on keyword searches to understand what users across the web are looking for in regards to your organization.
- Review your content audit and recognize trends in types of content that are performing well versus those that are not.
- Complete a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis and review your competition's content strategy.

5. CONSISTENCY ABOVE ALL: THE WHEN AND WHERE

Decide on when and how often you should be sharing content based on the following:

- Your team's capacity: Biting off more than you can chew will only land your team in hot water and result in sub-par content pieces. Determine a reasonable amount of quality pieces that you can produce within a given month and what those pieces will entail in regards to resources. Will you need to reach out to stakeholders? Will more research need to be conducted? Will you need to hire a videographer? On average, how many hours and what type of budget can you dedicate to content each month?

Pro Tip: Remain cognizant of each team member's expertise and comfort level with the subject matter to best determine who should produce each piece of content. This will allow for a more streamlined production process.

- Your analytics: Your analytics as well as your social media metrics provide the best snapshot of where and when spikes in traffic and engagement occur. Home in on those trends for when during the day, week and month you can expect the most success in publishing and posting.

Pro Tip: Posting at the same time on the same day each month may make it easier to create a content calendar, but is actually bad for SEO. Search engines like Google like to see consistent content. But content that begins to look automated rather than natural can be marked as lower quality or spam.

When deciding where makes the most sense to showcase your content, take a moment to consider your audiences again.

Are donors interacting with email blasts that are more personalized rather than through social media? Are volunteers active on Instagram rather than Twitter? Are members coming directly to your site and by-passing external channels? By coordinating where your content is being disseminated with the audiences you are hoping to reach, you optimize your chances of success.

Regardless of the above, there is only one overarching rule in regards to how often and where content should be shared: with consistency.

It's this information and the understanding that comes from it that should be the driving force behind your content plans. If you listen well, you'll find that your audience is telling you exactly how they prefer to be spoken to.

As partner & creative director at Push10 in Philadelphia, Sabrina leads the execution of branding & digital projects for clients of all shapes and sizes. A multi-disciplinary leader with a strong foundation in business and communication strategy, Sabrina is a passionate advocate for design as a driving force in business and culture. By applying the principles of design thinking to a broad array of organizational challenges, Sabrina consistently creates surprising & courageous brands for local startups and global companies alike—including notable mission-driven work for Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, Philabundance, Innovations for Poverty Action, Girls First Fund and John Templeton Foundation. She can be reached at sabrina@push10.com.

GREATER ENGAGEMENT: WORDS OF WISDOM ON EVERYTHING THAT DRAWS IN YOUR SUPPORTERS AND DEEPENS RELATIONSHIPS

Want to Grow Your Revenue—and Who Doesn't?

By Donna Richardson

In my role in business development, I get calls every day from fundraisers looking to raise more money. My role is to network, so I talk to a lot of fundraisers.

The conversations cover the waterfront and often find me speaking with professional fundraisers, many of whom already have a large, profitable program and are looking to achieve the next level of success. Others at the opposite end of the spectrum are start-ups or small-sized charities eager to achieve some measure of success, understanding only too well how profitable and valuable a scaled direct marketing program can be.

One hallmark of a profitable and cost-effective direct marketing program is, of course, the size of your sustainer program. So, often, my conversations with fundraisers quickly turn to sustainer giving. Arguably, it's the single best way of generating unrestricted annual revenue for your mission, and it has the added benefit of acting as a pool of prospects for major and planned gift donors.

Most fundraisers I speak with have programs that proactively convert single-gift donors to sustainers. Those with more robust budgets often carry out straight-to-sustainer recruitment programs using the traditional and proven channels of telemarketing, face-to-face or street canvass (door-to-door) and Direct Response Television (DRTV).

Photo: iStock/Getty Images

SO, WHAT DOES THE MODEL LOOK LIKE?

The campaign model starts by creating a custom response landing page to highlight a relevant topic related to your organization's mission, showcasing what your charity does. It calls on the public to sign a petition or for less-advocacy focused charities to "stand in support of" your mission or beneficiaries. Prospects sign, completing a form field which requires giving their email, name and phone number.

Individuals are driven to the landing page as a result of seeing ads on social media. Lead generation through social media has proven extremely effective as digital allows for wide reach, but you can also customize your audiences and target based on demographics and other key factors. Once someone has provided their information on the landing page, they have moved from a prospect to a lead.

The next step in the campaign is a well-timed telephone call, positioned as a thank you for signing the petition, an opportunity to learn more about the organization, and finally a request to further support the organization by becoming a sustainer. While other programs exist in the market that are similar, this model has proven success due to the immediate and timely turn-around from lead capture to receiving the follow-up phone call. In fact, many prospects reference the online ads during the call.

WHAT MAKES THIS MODEL APPEALING?

• Unlike some other channels to recruit sustainers, the cost of a pilot is relatively modest.

• It's easy to establish proof of concept which makes getting buy-in from managers painless.

• It's completely scalable.

• Measured against the KPIs that matter most in sustainer acquisition, such as retention and cost-to-acquire, this model is second to none.

> "ONE HALLMARK OF A PROFITABLE AND COST-EFFECTIVE DIRECT MARKETING PROGRAM IS, OF COURSE, THE SIZE OF YOUR SUSTAINER PROGRAM. SO, OFTEN, MY CONVERSATIONS WITH FUNDRAISERS QUICKLY TURN TO SUSTAINER GIVING."

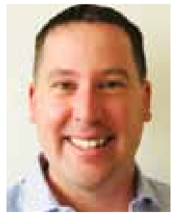
But the proof, as they say, is in the pudding—watching your revenue grow! Within just a few months your organization can generate several hundred new sustainers, and that's just in a pilot. Beyond that, there's an opportunity for real sustainer program growth. Perhaps what's most exciting is that this model is fast becoming a way for smaller charities (and others) to grow revenue and bring their mission to market.

Not long ago, it seemed that, unless a charity had a large budget for street canvass or DRTV, there wasn't much chance they could significantly grow their sustainer programs; or in the case of smaller charities, start one. Not so today. I'd say that's one good reason to be optimistic about the future of direct response marketing!

Donna Richardson, CFRE is director of fundraising solutions at Stephen Thomas Ltd., a full-service, integrated fundraising, marketing and brand agency. They're in the business of helping charities raise more money. Donna can be reached at (416) 690-8801 ext. 249 or donnar@stephenthomas.ca.

A Letter to All the Nonprofits Wondering Why They Cannot Get Ahead

By Pete Kimbis



Sometimes it is 100 percent perspective. When an organization identifies as a nonprofit, it is often a portal to a land of confusion. It is amazing how tax status has the potential to distract those involved in the operation of a business.

The bottom-line is that regardless of an organization's tax status, it is a business that delivers products and services in a market economy.

Many things make our charitable organizations unique and require unique tailored approaches. However, there is no reason to reinvent the wheel in areas of overlap.

The legal differences that govern the operations of tax-exempt organizations often create an illusion that the organization is separate from the market system and not responsible for creating a successful enterprise.

Whether you run 100 percent of your organization or you are in charge of one task, the tax status of your organization should not define your culture. These are four warning signs.

4 CLUES YOU ARE IN A HALL OF MIRRORS

1. You cannot quickly explain what your organization does. Regardless of your 501(c)(3) tax status, you are supplying products or services. They need to be excellent. If you cannot clearly say what you are selling, that is at best problematic. No different than opening a restaurant with a high probability of failure, the focus should be on producing quality products and services, not because we must meet deliverables, but because that is good business! People will find their way back to that hole in the wall lunch spot because the food was so good!

The most fundamental thing you can do is to realize very specifically what your product is. What is your core mission? Don't take it for granted that everyone knows. If you had to stop every single program except for one what would it be and would you buy it?

2. Your board needs to be reminded to donate or has not done a site visit. You know the often-discussed enigma of board engagement that people commiserate over. Why commiserate?

If you find yourself talking about apathy in your board of directors, this is a wake-up call that you are working in a confusing environment of mirrors.

Can you imagine running a company and the executives do not buy or invest in their product? Bill Gates does not set foot in the Microsoft Store, and Mark Cuban never wears a piece of Miami gear? Thinking the reality of board dynamics should be different does not change fact.

On the other hand, it is an opportunity for action and more leadership.

3. When someone asks you what you do for a living, you tell them you work for a nonprofit. When you introduce yourself, do you say you work for a nonprofit or in the nonprofit sector or do you talk about the real work you do? Do you tell stories of the impact your organization has?

If you typically answer the first way, think of it as a useful internal reminder bell to pay attention to your core function and not to default to the standard response. By answering with words that reflect your tax status, you conjure up all the preconceived convoluted notions people have already formed about your organization before you have even told them what you do.

People associate nonprofits with charity and free money. We all know this is the furthest thing from the truth. Do not set yourself up for a confusing conversation.

Each conversation is a new opportunity to sell your services.

You mentor autistic kids.

You feed the hungry.

You supply housing for veterans.

It is that simple.

4. You do not have a solid business plan that is worthy of review by a bank. We are conditioned to think we deserve funding because we work for social good. We forget that a solid business plan and efficient operations are essentials.

If you run a company as anything other than a business, expect struggles.

- Why does your organization exist?
- Does it still serve a legitimate purpose?
- Are you market worthy?
- Would you invest in your business?

Funders and community supporters have a right to know that you are worthy of donations because you have thoroughly planned, you have solid financials and a strong team.

We all know there is hunger, homelessness and suffering in our world.

Every business must prove worthy of credit, and so do you. Donations are equivalent to loans. There is an expected return on the investment.

We do not need to reinvent or solve problems that are readily available in standard business practice.

Can you produce a quality product/service efficiently with the right margins to meet an unmet need in a competitive market?

Pete provides broad consulting services for nonprofits. He specializes in funding scans, grant research, grant proposal writing, appeals and copywriting. He can be reached at peter@peterkimbis.com.

Marketing AdVents

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News Notes

Photo: iStock/Getty Images

- Kyle Martin, Dennis Ashcraft, Chad Hollins and Donald LeCarpentier have formed AMH Print Group. With a combined more than 100 years of experience, AMH is available to manage your direct-mail-related print components. Clients will be able to take advantage of the unmatched experience and the high level of customer service. Whether it's plain or printed envelopes, inserts, brochures and forms, your project will be taken care of with superior customer service by the AMH team.

- StraightLine Direct Marketing has been listed as No. 4683 on Inc. Magazine's 37th annual 5000. This is the most prestigious ranking of the nation's fastest growing private companies. According to a press release, the list represents a unique look at the most successful companies within the U.S. economy's independent small businesses—such as Microsoft, Dell, Domino's Pizza, Pandora, Timberland, LinkedIn, Yelp, Zillow and others. "We are very proud of what we have accomplished. Our full service direct mail production facility has so many moving parts. To make them all come together like a well-oiled machine and grow at the record pace we have in the last four years speaks to the quality of our team and the loyalty of our customers," Don Hill, president of StraightLine, said in the release.

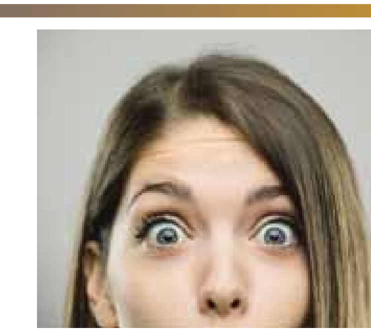
- The U.S. Postal Service has partnered with Bentley University to train the next generation of direct marketers. The marketing students at Bentley are learning about "the power of paper" through a new direct mail marketing class that was created with input and participation from the USPS, according to a press release from Bentley. Moving forward, the USPS plans to continue its unusual partnership with other universities to showcase the value of direct mail. "Direct mail remains a $47 billion industry. Modern marketers including our students need to know how to use direct mail just as much as they need to know about social media, digital and print advertising. They should all be part of an integrative marketing approach," Ian Cross, director of Bentley's Center For Marketing Technology, who worked with the Postal Service to develop the class, said in the release. In this class, students will learn about direct mail technologies and strategies, as well as participate in hands-on projects where they will create direct mail campaigns.

- iWave has upgraded for its Salesforce app on SalesForce AppExchange, according to a press release. For nonprofits using Salesforce, the updated system now offers additional visibility of iWave data in Salesforce, improved communication between the two systems and enhanced reporting capabilities. Additionally, users can develop "a 360 view of the best potential donors." "The latest version provides an improved integration experience between the two platforms. It also offers clients new ways to build reports and combine iWave data with Salesforce analytics to better identify new fundraising opportunities.," Trent Beattie, VP of Channel Partners for iWave, said in the release.

Is something exciting happening in your company or organization?

Tell us about it!

Email the editor, Nhu Te, at dmawadvents@dmaw.org



DMAW Educational Foundation

Fast Facts About Mentor for a Day

By Krista Sassaman

Since 2011, DMAW/EF's "Mentor for a Day" (MFAD) program has connected companies in direct response to marketing students who are curious about our industry. Every year, leading marketing companies throughout the Washington, D.C. area partner with DMAW/EF to introduce qualified students to a "day in the life of integrated marketing."

Think your company might be interested? Here are a few fast facts to help answer questions (and hopefully move your firm to sign up as an MFAD partner company).

• ***Who are the student participants?*** Have they even heard of what we do? MFAD students are well-qualified because they are nominated by marketing professors from a range of local universities and matched with companies based on shared interest.

• ***Will this be a lot of work for the company? We're all so busy!*** Companies are guided by DMAW/EF volunteers to help create a simple agenda for the day. Most students are in the office for the morning, have lunch with a few team members and wrap up in the afternoon.

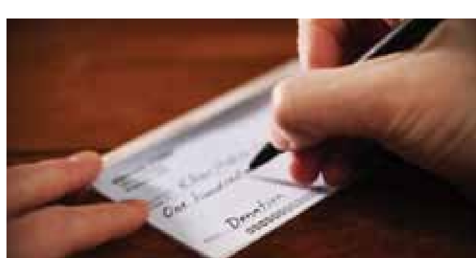
• ***What's in it for us?*** Finding strong candidates for internships and entry-level positions can be challenging. The MFAD program can help create a pipeline of potential staff.

• ***Who else is doing it?*** Many of the leading companies in direct response regularly participate in MFAD. Says Chip Heartfield, chief operating officer, PMG, "We almost never hire right out of school; the PMG philosophy is to hire very experienced direct marketing veterans. But this program gave us a chance to get to know these 'youngsters' before hiring them—kind of like a test drive—so it worked for us!"

For more information about "Mentor for a Day," contact DMAW/EF Board Member Krista Sassaman. Interested in signing up? Visit dmawef.org to access the "Mentor for a Day Employer Application."

> THE WORLD OF DIRECT MARKETING IS NOT ALWAYS FOR EVERYONE. IT REQUIRES ADAPTABILITY IN A FAST-PACED, CLIENT-DRIVEN ENVIRONMENT AND, ABOVE ALL, AN INTEREST AND PASSION FOR THE WORK THAT YOU'RE DOING. THE 'MENTOR FOR A DAY' PROGRAM HELPS IN IDENTIFYING A POOL OF STUDENTS WHO CAN BE PRIME FOR RECRUITMENT.
>
> — MARYANN CHAN, CHAPMAN CUBINE + HUSSEY

Krista Sassaman has over 20 years of experience in serving the nonprofit community as a fundraising consultant and a frontline fundraiser. As a consulting partner, she champions integrated fundraising across all media channels, donor engagement and stewardship, and client-centered service. Krista's clients represent all nonprofit sectors. She can be reached at kristasassaman@gmail.com.



Did You Know?

The DMAW/EF, a separate nonprofit organization from DMAW, relies heavily on contributions from DMAW members to fund its work.

Please donate today!

Member Spotlight

REBECCA JAMI
Chief Operating Officer
Access Marketing Services
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Rebecca's first job in the direct marketing world was as a customer service representative at a mail shop in Fairfax, Va. In a short period of time, she was able to learn so much. Because her degree was in visual communications/graphic design, she was thrilled to finally have a job in her field, so she stuck with it.

Over time, she became the print production manager at The Direct Impact Company and, while there, she launched her own freelance graphic design business that she managed after work and on weekends.

To this day, she still has several clients she works with on a regular basis because she likes to keep her hand in the design world as well. She began working at Access Marketing Services in 2013 as a production manager, then became the creative director and now she is very excited to be the chief operating officer.

Prior to working in the direct marketing world Rebecca worked in retail and then in administrative positions.

Location: Woodbridge, Va.

Education: B.S. in Graphic Design, The Art Institute of Pittsburgh

DMAW Member Since: 2017

Who do you consider your mentors?

I have never experienced a formal mentoring arrangement, but I do watch how others work and try to learn from others' experiences—my mentors are unaware participants. I would say if I had to name a specific mentor, it would be our CEO at Access Marketing Services—Greg Adams. He is probably one of the best managers I have ever worked with in my career, and I am often making small adjustments to how I handle situations based on how I have seen him work.

What is the most helpful step you took to advance your direct marketing career?

The most helpful step I took to advance my direct marketing career was to become more involved in conferences and seminars that allow me to meet others in our field, as well as joining with colleagues and attending career development events—basically, always learning and always meeting new people. My freelance business also gave me the opportunity to be directly responsible for the success of a business, and that ownership has translated directly into my position with Access Marketing Services.

Tell us about your volunteer experiences with DMAW.

This will be the first year that I am focusing on volunteering with DMAW. I have attended many events in the past, but my goal into 2019 is to get involved with this community.

Describe yourself in three words.

Driven, organized, positive.

Describe your life in six words.

Full, happy, busy, settled (for now), creative, focused.

Rebecca's Favorites

Restaurant Any restaurants—it means I am not doing the cooking. (I do like a good steak).

Films "To Kill a Mockingbird" and almost any flick with Doris Day or Cary Grant (TCM fan here).

Books "To Kill a Mockingbird," "The Goldfinch" and any book by Tara French or Jussi Adler-Olsen.

Music I love all music. I went to art school in the late 80s, so my go-to's are The Smiths, The Cure, etc.

Leisure Interests I am a mountain and beach girl. I walk, bike, read, draw, raise children and take road trips every chance I get (not often enough).

Quote "A life lived in fear is a life half lived." — From the film, "Strictly Ballroom"

MARKETING ADVENTS **SEPTEMBER 2018**