

Understanding Donor Retention

Most organizations are constantly in search of new donors often putting too little effort into retaining the donors they already know. 57% of donors attained each year will not give again and only 19% of first time donors will ever give again.

Improved retention can bring fundraisers an increase of total donors, better relationships, more planned gifts, volunteer or board service, and larger gifts over time. There are also marketing implications to having a base of loyal donors. When your constituents are excited and feel valued, they're more motivated to spread the word. This paper will provide you with an overview of:

- Advanced personalization
- Cross-channel integration
- Data optimization techniques

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Advanced Personalization

A personalized campaign needs to mean more than “your name here”. Effective, relevant communications need to demonstrate that you know your donors. Advanced personalization shows your donors you are paying attention to them and want to build a relationship beyond the transaction.

If you want to communicate effectively with your donors, you have to know as much about them as possible. It's easy enough to pull a report of who gave last year and send a mass appeal, but your chances of getting a high return with increased gifts are slim to none. Why? Because the communication as a whole probably doesn't speak to them on a personal level and makes them feel unknown and unheard. Multiple data points allow organizations to target donors for greater relevancy and chances are that you have more information about your donors than you think.

Use as many data points as you have available to target donors:

1. INTEREST
2. DEMOGRAPHICS
3. GIVING HISTORY
4. ACQUISITION SOURCE
5. CONSTITUENCY

Using additional data points to enhance the donor experience on things like donation receipts, gift acknowledgements, and membership renewal statements can help make your donors feel special. Versioning these materials to emphasize the specific program that the donor has asked their gift to be directed will show that you are paying attention to what matters most to them and are using their gift accordingly.



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Loyal donors continue to give each year for several reasons:

- They see your work is effective
- You're demonstrating impact
- They're thanked on time
- Every interaction is familiar
- They're included in successes
- You're showing your appreciation
- They have lots of ways to engage

Cross Channel Integration

The proliferation of digital media in recent years along with shifts in donor behavior have presented fundraisers with unique challenges and opportunities alike. In order to optimize the efficacy of donor communications, nonprofits need to integrate messaging across multiple channels in order to keep their constituency engaged and feeling valued long after a gift is made.

All direct mail campaigns need a great message and creative. If you reinforce this message across multiple channels, such as following up with a personalized e-mail or SMS text, results will soar. The reality is how most nonprofits communicate isn't always how donors want to receive communication. Building out campaigns across multiple platforms (or channels) helps provide consistent reinforcement of your message every time you reach out.

Individual marketing efforts should reinforce one another—not compete—to accomplish a singular goal.



Data Optimization and Measurement

Measurements matter, especially when you're trying to figure out how to craft your messaging throughout all stages of the donor life cycle. How your donors are engaging with messages and tailoring subsequent touches based on those interactions can be the make or break when it comes to retaining their gifts and attention.

Donor behavior can be used to shape messaging specifically to their personal interests and passions, continually speaking to what originally motivated them to give and what will keep them wanting to do so.

Most campaigns have a lot of moving parts: several emails, direct mail pieces, follow-up components, social media appeals (like Giving Tuesday), and more. Understanding how various elements of your fundraising communications are performing will help you glean a better understanding of what areas of your marketing need improvements. Data can tell you a story that can often save time and money. With an integrated campaign that includes digital components like landing pages, emails or even social media will give you a solid foundation to begin measuring engagement.

Click Through and open Rates

Will tell you what stories work and which ones don't.

Losing Subscribers?

You might be sending too many emails.

PURLS & Landing Pages

Can help you gauge the effectiveness of direct Mail.

Donation Page Conversion Rates

Will help you determine if your page needs to be optimized.

The goal of being personal and more relevant in the way you communicate is important through every phase of the giving cycle. More than just an important relationship, what happens between donors and organizations is really the blossoming of a partnership. Just as you ask donors to make investments in your work, you've got to invest in them.

As a fundraiser, it's crucial to never underestimate the importance of a well-developed relationship and the ability to truly hear what donors are telling you through the data. Successful fundraising is about purposeful persistence and finding the right opportunities. What happens after the ask is almost if not more important than the ask itself, so more personal and relevant storytelling will keep donors engaged and meaningfully connected.



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