Five Things We're Forgetting When We Take Our Fundraising Online

By Rebecca Ruby Higman: Mar 25, 2009

Remember the days before the Internet? No websites. No email marketing. No Facebook. No "donate now" buttons (oh, the horror!). We're not sure if that world is more or less scary than the one we're working in now: Twitter, CAN-SPAM, Web design and all sorts of other new tools, rules and jargon we need to learn.

But for all its differences and idiosyncrasies, development, marketing, executive and volunteer staff should feel encouraged about the Internet: *the same basic principles of fundraising apply.*

Navigate to your organization's website; read the last email you sent to your enewsletter list; and, think about that Facebook page you started a couple of months ago. Now use these five principles as a checklist to ensure that you're getting the most effective bang for your Internet bucks and applying your offline-fundraising skills to your online initiatives:

1. **People like to give to people-not organizations or statistics.** No doubt about it: Many of the causes we support have staggering statistics behind them: how many people do not have clean water to drink, how many local residents will go to bed hungry today, etc. While these numbers may be powerful, they are not necessarily relatable. Tell a story instead of or in addition to those elevator-pitch stats. Highlight one person affected by the situation you're working on. Show how one person (potential donor) can affect someone or something real (constituent, animal, volunteer, etc.).

2. **People need to be asked to give.** We all know how difficult it is to "make the ask" for a donation. It's awkward. You don't know whether the person will say yes or not. But, that doesn't make the ask any less necessary! Be sure to include a definite call to action in your communications and Web copy. The process should be easy and clear to follow through with -- if you're appealing for donations for your new campaign, *ask* for donations! Lovely messaging is only as effective as its end results.

3. **Fundraisers need to be coaxed.** One beautiful thing about the Internet is the presence of champions to do the fundraising for you. That doesn't mean your Facebook fans are telling everyone they meet about your organization just out of the goodness of their hearts. Rather, you need to empower them and compel them to champion your cause. Maybe you're supplying regular facts or tidbits to spread or sending an advocacy alert. The best way to get action is to make that action easy. ([See our tips about "freebies" for your online champions here](#).)

4. **Fundraisers will perform better if part of a fundraising team.** This principle does not necessarily apply to all nonprofits, but it's certainly something to consider even if you're not in a position where walk-athons, bike-athons, et cetera-athons are a good fit. People are more likely to take action and encourage others to take action if they feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves. (See Katya and Mark's list of "Seven Things Everyone Wants" for other tips about appealing to supporters' motivations.)

5. **Fundraisers need to be recognized and feel valued.** When someone volunteers at your event or mails a donation, you (hopefully) thank that person. Make sure you're treating your digital supporters with the same respect and gratitude: Just because a donor clicked or button or asked a friend via Twitter for support doesn't mean any less effort or support than if he or she stamped an envelope with a check enclosed.

How did your Web resources stack up against this checklist? Are you noticing any holes or spots where you've gotten off the "you, you, you" path and turned it to "me, me, me (the organization)"? Use these tips to shape your next marketing messages and see how the response and results change.

** We would also like to give a big hat tip to Philip King whose writing in *Fundraising Success* paved the way for us to create this online-fundraising checklist. See his originial article here: http://www.fundraisingsuccessmag.com/article/online-giving-vs-online-fundraising-404544_1.html

Related Articles
Create an Online Fundraising Plan - Step 3: Match Up Your Online and Offline Marketing
How to Build Relationships and Achieve Fundraising Success in a Web 2.0 World
The economy may be down, but online giving is up
The Ups and Downs of Online Giving in a Down Economy

Source URL: http://www.fundraising123.org/article/five-things-we%E2%80%99re-forgetting-when-we-take-our-fundraising-online