



How To Enhance Your Donor Engagement

Table of Contents

Welcoming New Donors	4
Increase Midlevel Donor Engagement	6
Cultivating Major Donors	8
3 Ways to Boost Donor Engagement	9
4 Qualities of Memorable Thank Yous.....	12

ABOUT NETWORK FOR GOOD

Since 2001 Network for Good has been instrumental at helping tens of thousands of nonprofits raise more funds by engaging supporters and donors in a more meaningful and impactful way. Refreshingly easy to use Donor Management Software, Fundraising Pages, and Personal Fundraising Coaches provide nonprofits with a complete fundraising solution, reducing their need for disparate systems, saving them time and enabling them to raise more funds to support their mission.



A background image of a smiling man with short dark hair, wearing a light-colored jacket over a dark shirt, looking down at a smartphone in his hands. The image has a blue tint.

The Secret to Donor Engagement

When you consider the true cost to raise a dollar, and the financial and organizational value of donor retention, it's clear that nonprofits need to keep their donor relationships thriving.

In order to build strong relationships, nonprofits must optimize a donor's engagements, interactions, and activities with the organization. An effective strategy balances donor recruitment with donor retention. The outcome could equal thousands (to tens and even hundreds of thousands) of dollars in additional contributions.

Donor loyalty is driven by:

- **Satisfaction**—do donors believe they're making an impact?
- **Relationship**—do donors feel connected with your organization?
- **Trust**—are donors confident in your organization's leadership?

In this guide we'll explore the different approaches to engage donors of three primary giving levels: new, midlevel, and major donors. Plus, a few simple initiatives you can incorporate into your annual fundraising campaigns to boost donor engagement.

Welcoming New Donors

The basic principles of retention-focused donor communications are meaningful communication and gratitude. Use your donor management system to put these principles into action. By tracking your contacts and segmenting messages, you will build deeper donor relationships. This straightforward timeline from nonprofit expert Nancy Schwartz shows how and when to interact with first-time donors to ensure they stay engaged with your nonprofit.

Upon Receiving An Online Gift

- Show your gratitude. Share your appreciation via a follow-up page as soon as your first-time donor finishes the transaction.

The Same Day

- Make sure all donor and gift data is in your donor management system. Many data points, from the time of day the gift was made to your donor's zip code, can help you customize upcoming donor communications and increase the probability of future gifts. A donor management system like [Network for Good's](#) automatically syncs with online donations.

Within One Day

- Thank your donor in a brief, compelling email. Use your donor management system to automate this initial email.
- Mention the campaign or specific project your donor is supporting.
- Include a receipt.
- Send it from your executive director or star program staffer.

Within One Week

- Reinforce your thanks with a warm, heartfelt follow-up email. Welcome your new donor to the cause.
- Share a specific impact story that their donation helped make possible to show the importance of their gift. This person gave to your organization because they found something you said appealing, so reinforce that. Use photos or video to make your message stand out.
- Tell the donor how and when you'll be following up and that you're looking forward to getting to know them better.
- Invite the donor to get in touch with you or a colleague with any questions or requests.
- Send future messages from your executive director, development director, or program director. Relationships are built from person to person; not from organization to person. Your donors will appreciate the personal touch.

Within Two Weeks

- Share content with your donors suited to their interests. For example, note if the donor first gave on #GivingTuesday, lives near a program site, or donated at a specific event.
- Link your donor's gift to the impact your organization is making across programs and services. You'll strengthen the donor's connection to the cause and your organization.
- Surprise your top-prospect segment with a handwritten (or even just hand-signed) thank you note, or phone call.
- For donors who gave offline, mail a second thank you/welcome note (hand-signed if possible, at least to higher-level donors) with a short newsletter or impact story.
- For donors who gave online, kick off your welcome email series, featuring a brief impact story in each email and regularly sharing other info about your organization's unique impact and approach. Include calls to action such as sharing an event on Facebook or signing a petition.
- For new high-value donors, reinforce your relationship with a hand-signed, printed welcome note.

Within One Month

- Regularly assess your donor data to learn about new donors to your organization. We recommend every two weeks.
- Determine which of your new donors fits into your donor framework (target groups and segments within each).
- For new donors similar to your current groups and segments, determine how you can customize your messages to match the relevant segment while integrating your welcome and appreciation messages.
- Note any donors who are similar to one another but don't fit well into existing segments. Is a new segment needed?
- Articulate what's unique about their wants and preferences. These gifts may signal the potential for more donors like them, but you need to know what "like them" is so you can look for it.

Over The Next Three Months

- Stay in close touch with relevant content. As with any new relationship, the first few months are everything. If you don't engage your first-time donors within 90 days of their gift, you're not going to resonate with them.
- The proven way to keep these donors engaged—and turn new donors into renewing donors—is to deliver content that shows you "get" them.

Increase Midlevel Donor Engagement

Much like the middle child in any family, midlevel donors can fall through the cracks. While major donors get high-end benefits, and new donors get cultivated and groomed, midlevel donors—in many ways the backbone of your fundraising campaigns—have become so reliable that you risk overlooking them. Communicating specifically to this group is a great way to keep them engaged with your organization, show your gratitude for their continued loyalty, and even cultivate them to become major donors.

Upgrade Their Experience

Customize Their Identity

Give them a name as a group within your organization and always refer to them that way—they're not just donors to you; they're your "Inner Circle" or "All-Star Group." Have some fun with it for an even more unique experience. Lady Gaga has her "Little Monsters," the Seattle Seahawks fans are the "12th Man," and perhaps one of the most loyal followings in history, Star Trek's "Trekkies," have been going strong since 1967.

Brand Your Messaging

Create a style guide just for that group; including their own logo and colors. Designate a special point-of-contact in your organization who corresponds with these donors. Use this style guide when you contact them for that extra personal touch. Tailor content to their interests, reiterate their benefits, and offer ways to give.





Cultivate Reciprocal Relationships

What are some of the highlights of your major donor program and how can you incorporate that same spirit in your midlevel donor interaction? How can you create meaningful events at their level? Providing them with deeper engagement shows them you're invested in them as much as they're invested in you.

Tell Better Stories

Use the art of storytelling to show why your mission is important. Tell personal stories from the programs they donate to. Highlight what you do that they may not know about. How do you impact the community? What do you do that sets you apart?

Increase Their Access

Invite your long-term midlevel donors to some major donor events to show them behind the curtain and give them a glimpse at what they could aspire to.

Cultivating Major Donors

Major donors need to be cultivated one at a time. A major gifts program takes time and commitment. The reality is that a small number of donors have the potential to make up a large part of your overall giving total. Reaching out to this group of donors will pay off. Cultivating relationships with major donors and identifying opportunities for them to give will have a dramatic (and positive) impact on your organization's long-term stability, and more important, advance its mission.

Successful Outreach Activities

Individual Meetings

Face-to-face meetings are always the most valuable way to build meaningful relationships. Schedule lunch dates between major donors and your executive director for that extra-special touch.

Group Meetings

Invite donors and prospects to the home or club of a peer leader; ideally someone who is already a major donor. Use this time to have donors talk about their support of your nonprofit, take the temperature of potential donors, and note what programs they are most interested in.

Gift Anniversaries

Saying thank you is a comfortable reason to reach out, and it gives you an opportunity to request a face-to-face meeting.

Birthdays

Same as gift anniversaries, this event offers another opportunity to thank donors for their support.

Special Events

Be sure to invite those on your major gift prospect list to appropriate events where you can engage them in conversations that may organically lead to follow-up meetings.

Donor Stewardship Events

Take advantage of events built into your annual calendar. Invite your top prospects to mingle with your best donors and let them feel the enthusiasm in the room.

3 Ways to Boost Donor Engagement

Three unique ways to boost donor engagement with your organization and deepen your donor relationships are through cultivation events, recurring gifts, and peer-to-peer campaigns.

Cultivation Events

Cultivation events allow donors the opportunity to mingle with leadership in a casual, welcoming setting such as a board member's or major donor's home. Significantly, these intimate events immerse donors in your mission through a unique experience.

Speaker, trainer, and nationally-recognized nonprofit founder and thought leader, Rachel Muir, CFRE, offers the following methodology for throwing an event to remember.



Consider these two things:

- 1) What would appeal to your audience?
- 2) How can I make that appealing event as immersive as possible? Literally, an event that takes your donors to the action and gets them to experience your work.

Then, ask yourself these 5 questions:

- 1) What are you already doing with clients that would be meaningful for your donors to see?
- 2) What "VIP" volunteer opportunities can you host that will allow donors to feel a part of your mission in a fun, engaging way?
- 3) Who is your audience: major donors, mid-level donors, prospects, board members, media, stakeholders, etc.?
- 4) What would appeal the most to your audience?
- 5) What is your follow-up plan for everyone who attended?

Recurring Gifts

According to M+R's Benchmarks Study for 2018, monthly giving revenue increased by 40 percent. A monthly, or recurring, gifts program builds a community of loyal, engaged donors; while simultaneously providing regular income you can depend on. Recurring gifts are also the best prevention against lapsed donors. Someone who commits to a regular gift to your organization is with you for the long haul.

- Customize your online giving page to reflect your monthly recurring gifts program.
- Make the giving process obvious, easy, and transparent.
- Feature your donate button prominently on your website and include a link in all of your online outreach.
- Provide the option to choose monthly giving in every ask, appeal, and campaign in order to help donors realize giving more is possible.
- Add impact labels to monthly giving levels to illustrate what a gift can do.
- Create a special membership program to foster a sense of belonging.
- Design a special thank you and stewardship program for monthly donors.
- Include updates on your monthly giving program in your annual report, newsletters, and on your organization's website.
- Plan a dedicated monthly giving campaign to target donors who may be more likely to give on a monthly basis.
- Develop ways to upgrade monthly donors to new giving levels over time.
- Track your progress and measure which methods are most successful in creating new monthly donors.
- Share results, stories, and updates on the impact of your recurring donors.



Engage Your Donors with Network For Good



DONOR
MANAGEMENT



FUNDRAISING
PAGES



FUNDRAISING
COACH

[SCHEDULE A DEMO NOW](#)





Peer-to-Peer Campaigns

The power of social media combined with the ease of online giving has contributed to the rise in popularity of peer-to-peer giving in recent years. These initiatives help nonprofits raise more money by amplifying your message through peer-driven campaigns.

How often have your supporters asked what they can do to help your organization? A peer-to-peer campaign encourages them to spread the word among their friends and family. Remember the “Tell Two Friends” shampoo commercial from the 1970s and 1980s? Ask your supporters to tell two friends, and they’ll tell two friends, “and so on, and so on, and so on.”

Donating is a personal decision. As your fundraisers ask their networks to support your cause, encourage them to put their reason for supporting you in their own words.

- Start small. Reach out to 5-10 supporters who can fill the peer fundraiser role and raise money on your behalf.
- Provide your fundraisers with easy-to-share communications tools so they can quickly spread the word and raise funds without a lot of effort.
- Your peer-to-peer toolbox should include branded fundraising pages; suggested social media updates; email templates; and boilerplate language about your organization, mission, and information on how donations will be used.
- Actively engage your peer fundraisers during the campaign. Give them confidence and encouragement. Update them on campaign progress.
- Celebrate the success of the campaign. Thank all of your fundraisers, staff, and board.
- Engage your new donors. Donors acquired through peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns will need more education about your nonprofit. In addition to a thank you, send a welcome kit with organizational info and swag.
- Record and review your campaign results. What worked well and what didn’t?

4 Qualities of Memorable Thank Yous

Your thank you message is an important step in engaging your donors. It gives you an additional opportunity to communicate with them, shows them the impact of their donation, and gives them confidence that their gift was well placed. Memorable, engaging donor thank you messages have four key qualities:

Personal

Your donors are friends of your organization. Being personal, warm, and authentic with them is essential to the longevity of your relationship. Send updates of your work and how their support makes it possible. Take the time to customize your thank you letters. Utilize the segmentations you've created in your donor management system so you can message your donors appropriately. A good email tool should make this easy to do, so take advantage of this option. If you're doing direct mail outreach, consider writing a handwritten note to stand out from the crowd. Or, pick up the phone and tell donors just how important their support really is. Investing the time to be personal pays off by making a positive, memorable impression on your donors.

Tangible

Show your donors exactly how their donation is making a difference. Donors want to know that their dollars matter, so tell them what you did with their money. One of the best ways to do this is by sharing a story that highlights how a donor's gift is making a difference. Stories put names and faces to the facts and figures that nonprofits often share with their donors. If your donors are local, invite them to tour your facility or visit a program site. Show them the work you do. If possible, arrange for them to meet some of the people you serve. There's nothing like having an unforgettable experience to make a cause tangible.

Creative

Use your thank you letters as an opportunity to be creative and connect with your donors in unique ways. Sending photos or videos of your work is a great way to create a strong, emotional connection with your donors. Another way to get creative is to change who's telling the story. Instead of sending a thank you letter from an executive director, send notes from volunteers, community members, or someone who was directly affected by the gift.

Donor-Centric

Your donors make your work possible. Give them proper credit. List the accomplishments they've made possible and put them front and center in all of your outreach. As you write your thank you letters, make it about them and the difference you are making together.



MBER 16, 2016

Thank you!

you, we believe another
to waste in achieving it
hold ground that has be
issues and communities

now there are a lot of o
ort. We are honored tha
urces with FRIDA and its

are a part of this movement. Please keep in touch! One of our
urite things we like to do at FRIDA meetings is go around the room
ask people to share their first experience of 'activism'. Don't be shy
t sharing yours with us!

vi, Ruby, Jovana, Monika Boikanyo, Nevin, and Deepa – the FRIDA
n

Ready to go beyond the traditional thank you?

Here are nine unique ways to show your donors some love:

- 1) Send a birthday card to donors, reminding them how important they are to the work your organization accomplishes.
- 2) Have your board members personally call donors to say thank you.
- 3) Ask those who directly benefit from donations to write a handwritten note of thanks. For nonprofits helping animals, say thank you with photos (or a paw print).
- 4) Create a YouTube video to thank donors when you reach a campaign goal.
- 5) Have some exciting news to share? Send a special announcement to donors with images and a note to thank them for making the accomplishment possible.
- 6) Invite donors to a thank you reception. Show your appreciation and get face time with your donors; giving you the opportunity to learn more about why they support your organization.
- 7) Many organizations send thank you cards and year-end appeals during the November/December holiday season. Don't overlook other holidays as occasions to express your thanks.
- 8) Dedicate social media shout-outs to thank and recognize donors.
- 9) Send donors a Top 10 List of accomplishments for the year demonstrating how their donations made an impact. After all, without their support, you wouldn't have a Top 10 List to share!



Thank you for your support!



Your generosity is so appreciated.

There are now 8 children and their families seeking holistic healing services t

Without you, affording that care would be impossible.

Boom! Here you are. Out of nowhere.

How did you hear about this opportunity to invest in the whole healing of cl

re.

anks first.



U!

ng campaign secured fu
ve couldn't have done it

ities for hundreds of Ok

upport of our cause and t
d raised over \$18,000 ye

re our disabled veterans





Your donor engagement should make those who invest in your organization feel that they're a part of a movement, not just bystanders who contribute money to a cause. The best way to keep track of all your engagement activities—and how well donors respond to your efforts—is with a functional, user-friendly [donor management system](#) (DMS) that integrates your data and communications needs. Ultimately, by optimizing your donor engagement, you're building long-term relationships and expanding your vision for a better future. When that happens, donors become committed, ongoing and loyal supporters.