eBook

10 Fundraising Mantras for 2013

A free eGuide
from your friends at
Network for Good

Network for Good®

www.networkforgood.org/npo

About Us

Network for Good was founded in 2001 by Cisco, Yahoo! and AOL in response to September 11th. When tech giants like that get together, you know they're going to create something great. We're a mission-minded organization, just like you, so we understand the challenges you face. We're here to help.

Network for Good powers more digital giving than any other platform. In our ten-year history, we've processed nearly $800 million for over 80,000 nonprofits. We are Level 1 Audited PCI Complaint and accredited by the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance, meeting all 20 of its standards for charity accountability. Plus, we're registered in every state for online fundraising.

We offer a suite of services that helps you raise money and engage supporters online – plus the training that will make you a fundraising superstar.

1. Easy, affordable fundraising solutions: Get donations on your website with **DonateNow**
2. Email campaign and newsletter tools: **EmailNow** powered by Emma for sending and tracking mass emails and telling you which messages work best
3. **Fundraising Fundamentals Premium Training:** Let us help you hit your fundraising goals. Our ultimate survival package offers you access to Network for Good's expert advice.
4. Online event management: **EventsNow** powered by givezooks! for accepting donations, registrations and ticket purchases online
5. Free weekly fundraising and marketing tips: **Sign up here** for great advice delivered to your inbox each week
6. **Fundraising123.org**: Our free online learning center is filled with ideas and best practices on what it takes to be an online fundraising superhero
7. **Nonprofit911.org**: Participate in our free webinar training series on nonprofit marketing and online fundraising, supported by Network for Good and our guest speakers.

We're biased, but we think there are many good reasons to work with us:

- ☑ **Kinship.** We understand you because we're a nonprofit, too
- ☑ **Value.** We handle the tough parts of online fundraising for you
- ☑ **ROI.** Our customers raise $29 for every dollar they spend
- ☑ **Support.** We provide lots of training and support via phone, email or in our online community

1. I will maximize online giving.

As more donors complete their donations online, it is critically important to encourage and support that giving preference. Whether you're not raising any money online at all right now, you're using a shopping cart service that has more of an ecommerce feel than a fundraising one, or you are simply not getting the online results you want, take control of your destiny to feel comfortable and competent when it comes fundraising online in 2013.

- **Use a reliable, flexible solution for online donation processing.** Your service should provide a seamless experience for your donors—full of your branding and language. It should allow you to customize your donation form to get the information you need for targeted follow-up later. And, it should allow your donors to feel like donors instead of shoppers, with basic fundraising options like dedications, designations, recurring gifts and e-newsletter signup.

- **Don't be ashamed to get active.** The impression an organization gives off when the site lacks a prominent donate button or fails to ask for donations is, "We don't need donations."

- **Leave the door open to donations everywhere.** Every email campaign you send. Every staff member's email signature. Every poster for your next community event. Always remind people that they can give.

- **Track your donations.** Learn what is working – and what isn't – when it comes to your online appeals. Take advantage of unique tracking URLs so you can track which donations came from which source. Set up Google Analytics on your website so you can monitor which pages are getting the most hits and which sources are sending the greatest number of visitors to your donation page.

- **Remember to make giving about the donor – not about your organization.** Anywhere you are requesting a gift, remind the prospective donor about what good she will be doing. Sharing the spotlight (or shining it entirely on your donors) isn't just good for business, it's good for repeat business!

- **Be transparent.** Show exactly how the funds will be used, who will be helped, and what tangible difference is being made. If you have been rated by organizations like the Better Business Bureau or Charity Navigator, share that information freely and proudly. And, when possible, include testimonials, quotes and stories of those who have made donations and those who have benefitted from them.

- **Set a goal.** Your goals should say exactly what you're hoping to achieve. "Raise more money" and "send email appeals" are pieces of strategy and tactics, but they're not measurable. The more specific you are, the easier it will be to track your progress and results.

2. I will get mobile.

2013 is the year you must make it easy for your supporters (and those you serve) to engage with you on their smartphones. There are now 1 BILLION smartphones on the planet. Mobile is a huge opportunity. It allows us to reach people at new moments, including dawn (66% wake up with their phone). Around 67% of people already shop on their phone. Just as giving has followed but lagged online shopping trends, it's fair to assume the same will prove true with mobile.

Most giving is still offline, much less on smartphones. But that doesn't mean you can afford to ignore mobile any more than you can ignore the Internet. This will be the year that more people are interacting with your cause on their smartphones than on their desktops. Are you ready?

The first step is to assess how you're doing given the number of people reading your emails, visiting your site and learning about your organization on their phones. Read your organization's emails and visit your site from your smartphone. Try to give. See what happens when you try to move across devices as most people do - from desktop to tablet to phone.

Ask yourself:

1. People come to you for information. Is your website mobile-friendly so that information is easy to find and use, on any device?
2. Are your emails easy to read on mobile devices? Do the calls to action on your emails lead to easy ways to respond on mobile?
3. Are your events mobile-friendly? Can people easily check the agenda online during the event - and share content via social media?
4. Are important articles or reference materials available in a format that can be read on a mobile device?
5. Is it easy to share your content on social media with a click or two on a mobile device?

No? Then you could be missing out on opportunities to serve your members in an era when they are more often than not on their smartphones.

Note: Mobile, like all technology, doesn't work on its own. You still need a compelling appeal that reaches people at the right time!

3. I will be the donor.

At Network for Good we are firm believers in the power of donor-centric fundraising. Creating an environment that caters to the donor's needs and expectations will help you raise more money and retain more donors over time. One foolproof way to understand (and improve) your donor's experience is to put yourself in your donor's shoes.

In 2013, pledge to "Be Your Donor." Try interacting with your organization as a donor to see if the experience lives up to your expectations. Ask others in your organization, as well as a few friends and family members, to do the same and report back to you. Use our checklist to assess how you're doing -- you may be surprised at what you learn.

Be Your Donor Checklist

Visit your nonprofit home page

- ☐ Can you easily find contact information on your nonprofit website?
- ☐ What happens when you reach out to your nonprofit:
    - Via phone? Do you reach a real person?
    - Via email?
    - Via contact form?
- ☐ What does your website look like on a mobile device?

Sign up for your nonprofit's email list or newsletter

- ☐ Is it easy to find a way to join your email list?
- ☐ Is it clear what benefits you'll receive by signing up?
- ☐ Once you submit your email address, what happens?
- ☐ Do you get an email confirmation? A welcome message?
- ☐ How do your emails look on a mobile device?

Make an online donation to your nonprofit

- ☐ How hard is it to find the Donate button on your home page? In your emails?
- ☐ How many clicks does it take to get to the actual form for making a gift?
- ☐ How long does it take to complete the donation? How many fields are required?
- ☐ Once you submit a donation, what happens?
- ☐ How long does it take for you to get a receipt? A thank-you note?
- ☐ When do you hear back on the impact of your gift?
- ☐ How often do you hear about the difference you made?
- ☐ Can you easily make a donation via a mobile device?

4. I will grow my email list.

Search, social and mobile are becoming more influential online, but email is still the key channel for communicating to most audiences and driving traffic to your organization's website. With this in mind, your primary focus for meeting supporters where they are should be their inbox. It's critical that you have a solid email marketing strategy in place and work to build your list in 2013:

- **Encourage email signups by showing value – not just another e-newsletter.** Just like you, your supporters are busy and their inboxes are likely full. To stand out, offer something of value that recipients will actually look forward to receiving like tips, reminders about upcoming events, opportunities to get involved, as well as updates and stories of people being helped by your cause.

- **Build your email list.** Every interaction is an opportunity to grow your email list. Here are a few places to get new signups:
  a. After your donate button, ensure your email sign-up form is prominently featured on your nonprofit website.
  b. At events, ask people face-to-face for their email address, and explain why you are doing it.
  c. At the end of a call, when a donor has either pledged or declined, say, "Please give me your email addresses so we can stay in contact."
  d. Encourage your followers on social media to sign up for your email updates.
  e. Via your acknowledgement letters and receipts. Explain to your donors that communicating via email will save you money and save trees!

- **Create a special offer**. Some organizations have had success in growing their email list by offering a special incentive to those who subscribe. A chance for early bird tickets to your next event, a prize raffle or an exclusive resource (think: highly relevant checklist or guide) could be an effective way to encourage new subscribers.

- **Find a reputable email service provider (ESP).** We've said it before, but it bears repeating: Outlook and your personal email accounts don't count when it comes to effective email marketing. You can't track recipients' results with person-to-person email tools. You have no way to know that your email is appearing correctly with regard to images, links and layout. You are stuck manually managing unsubscribe requests. Simply put, trying to run an email program out of your personal inbox is not only inefficient -- it's unprofessional.

5. I will tell a great story.

Want to really connect with your supporters this year? Tell them a story!

Storytelling is a powerful tool for fundraising and creating awareness. Research has shown that people are more likely to remember a story over other forms of information. Think about what you want to convey and build a story around it. Donors relate to stories about specific people or animals, instead of statistics. Use your emails, website and other outreach to paint a vivid picture that donors will remember when it's time to give.

Follow these guidelines to tell great stories about your impact, the people you help and your generous supporters.

1. **Everybody has a story to tell.** So go find them. If you feel stumped, turn to your volunteers, turn to your coworkers, or turn to the people you help.

2. **Avoid the "kitchen sink."** It's tempting to relay every single aspect and bit of minutia about your organization and programs in a story. Don't create information overload. Instead, find one small anecdote or facet of your work and show how it relates to everything else. Create a snapshot that people will remember.

3. **Nice is not enough.** You're a nonprofit and so you are doing good work—it comes with the territory. That is not enough to pique somebody's interest. Find a good backstory—something unique and something that can create emotion and interest.

4. **Don't be too close and don't be too far.** If you're too close to your cause you may be numb to some of the interesting and amazing things that happen as a result of your work. If you're too far removed from your cause, you may lose touch with the emotion of it. Find a happy medium and reconnect with the human stories of your work for inspiration.

5. **Share your senses.** All five of them. The more you can make the reader feel like he or she is there, the better.

6. **Always keep your audience in mind.** Perhaps you have an industry specific newsletter or are trying to reach legislators. In that case, you may want to include the technical details, but in most other cases, you should avoid it.

7. **Fit into a larger trend or story.** You don't have to try to match up with the biggest headline of the week, but try to find some sort of trend, whether local, regional or national. If there is no trend, then ask yourself if the story is important right now. Is there a policy decision to be made, other news stories about your cause at large, or any form of public polls taking place?

6. I will rethink my messenger.

Technology has enabled people's most trusted sources - those they perceive to be their peers - to become the most influential and amplified messengers in their lives. We are no longer the messengers in chief of our causes. Instead, we tend to trust people we perceive as like us—or at least those who seem not to have selfish motives for their opinions. That's why you trust that random hotel reviewer from San Francisco more than the Westin website.

This means that you can have the best message in the world, but if you're the only one saying it, that may not be enough. When you are planning your outreach and fundraising appeals -- whether via direct mail, email or on your nonprofit website -- think about changing the messenger for bigger impact -- and better results.

In 2013, strive to have these three kinds of messengers:

- People on the front lines of your work who can speak authentically about the change they see
- Influential supporters who will champion your work within their circles
- People with credibility and authority who can attest to the quality of you and your work

So who are messengers that wield more influence than you when it comes to your organization? Whom should you tap to talk about you?

10 Ideas for Compelling Nonprofit Messengers

1. People who have been helped by your organization
2. Donors
3. Volunteers
4. Fans
5. Caseworkers or support staff
6. People with first-hand experience living with your issue
7. Third-party rating agencies or charity watchdogs
8. Partners
9. Kids who care about your issue
10. Local leaders

The bottom line: **make sure you're not the only one saying your work is great!**

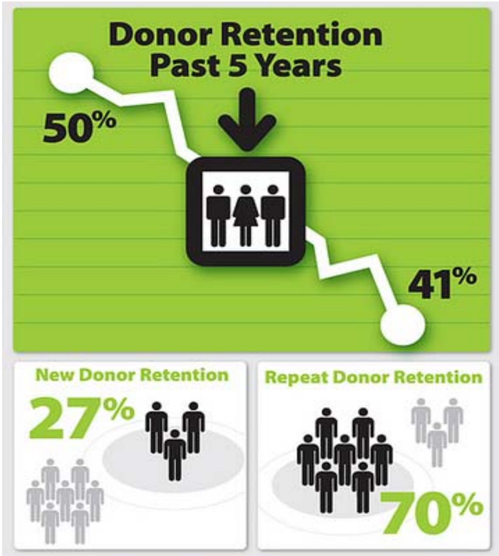
7. I will retain my donors.

One of our biggest problems as nonprofits is that we take our donors for granted. Instead of putting them front and center, we forget that the time and talent of our donors powers all of the work that we do.

According to Penelope Burk, author of *Donor Centered Fundraising*, one of the main reasons that people STOP giving to charity is that their gifts are not recognized. “46% of donors decide to stop giving for reasons that are tied to lack of meaningful information or to a feeling that their giving is not appreciated.” This is a dismal statistic and something that is easily fixed.

- Thank your donors three times for every one time you ask for more money.
- Experiment with handwritten notes, phone calls, drawings, and volunteer-written thank-you letters.
- Tie their gifts back to “the ask.” Tell them what you did/are doing with their donations and why it matters.
- Be fast. Send receipts and personalize thank-you immediately upon receiving a donation.

Still not convinced that you have time to invest in keeping your donors happy? Consider this: The state of donor retention is pretty grim. The typical nonprofit will keep only one in three to one in five of their supporters next year!



Source: *Bloomerang Donor Retention Primer*

4 Ways to Retain More Donors in 2013

1. **Focus on donor retention more than donor acquisition.** Instead of spending more time hunting for new donors, invest in fundraising success by working to keep the donors you have.
2. **Focus on donor lifetime value, not one-off campaigns.** Gauge success by the way your supporters behave over their entire time of supporting you. This requires a commitment to building donor relationships and to looking at your response rate over time.
3. **Focus on results, not effort**. It’s not how hard you are working. It’s what happens as a result of that work. Consider this when allocating time and resources to donor acquisition vs. donor retention.
4. **Focus on your most passionate supporters**. Understand who your most loyal donors currently are. Do you know how to identify those people? Create a special plan to analyze your donors and continually cultivate the most committed. It is extremely difficult to replace these star supporters if they stop giving.

If you are good at acknowledging your donors you will make them happy and keep them loyal. You will worry less about finding new donors and stand out in the crowded nonprofit marketplace.

8. I will use my website wisely.

Your website is a critical resource for engaging with three important audiences:

- All of your constituents, including volunteers, alumni, members and advocacy supporters
- All of your donors – both current and prospective
- People who have little to no previous knowledge about your nonprofit.

Whether you plan a total redesign or just a few tweaks, a few simple changes to your website can make a big difference in how people perceive and interact with your cause.

5 Principles for a More Effective Nonprofit Website

- **Ditch the text.** Familiar with the phrase "less is more"? People do not read websites—they scan them. Think in terms of headings, bullets, lists and images. When it comes to adding text to your site, be ruthless. Eliminate unnecessary words or phrases and make the ones you do include count by making them clear and compelling.

- **Use more photos and video to showcase your work.** The quickest way to make an emotional connection with your website visitors is to, in a sense, make eye contact with them. This is why a photo of one person or animal you are helping works much better than an image of an inanimate object. Don't let your perceived level of quality hold you back – whether you caught a clip of a child saying thank you at your last event with your iPhone or took candid photos of volunteers helping in a soup kitchen – the authenticity will shine through.

- **Determine what you want visitors do and offer a clear call to action.** Think about the most important things you want a visitor to do and make the pages of your website clearly guide visitors toward those actions. Note: You may want to alter your calls to actions at different times of the year.

- **When it comes to your donate button, think big, bold and above the fold.** Make it easier for people to give online by helping supporters find your button in the first place. Put it on every page of your website. Stay away from vague words like "support" or "help." If you want people to donate, say "donate now."

- **Make it easy for people to share your site with their family and friends.** Finally, make it easy for people to share your site with their friends by including buttons and links to Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

9. I will be smart about social media.

Along with email, your website and direct mail, social media is another channel for communicating with your donors and telling the story of your work. Being smart about social media can increase your nonprofit's visibility and reputation while fostering a positive feeling that helps create more loyal donors.

When it comes to social media, your nonprofit doesn't need to be everywhere – but you should be where your supporters are and should use the platform that furthers your overall strategy. Decide how you can tie the right social components together to best achieve your goals and grow your relationship with your supporters.

Just as you would plan your organization's email outreach, do the same with your social media strategy. Create an editorial calendar to help schedule updates, topics and themes, and decide who on your team will be responsible for posting updates and interacting with your fans.

Keep these tips in mind as you plan your social media outreach in 2013:

- There's no one-size-fits-all approach in social media, your outreach should reflect your culture and needs.
- Talk less about your organization and statistics and more about your impact, the people your serve and those who make it possible.
- Don't be afraid to show your personality by being creative, unique or using humor. People want to interact with other real people on social media, not faceless organizations.
- Learn by listening to your supporters and others in the conversation; observe what type of updates work best for your nonprofit so you can build on your success.

10 Simple Ideas for Social Media Sharing

1. Offer a sneak peek of an upcoming newsletter, event or program.
2. Show what goes on behind the scenes at your office.
3. Introduce a member of your staff.
4. Report from the scene of your work or event.
5. Share photos of your volunteers in action.
6. Connect your work to a news story, trend or meme.
7. Ask a trivia question related to your cause.
8. Share a testimonial from a beneficiary or supporter.
9. Choose a "fan of the day" and give them a shout out.
10. Celebrate a success story.

10. I will measure and test.

This year don't just trust your gut when it comes to what works in fundraising appeals and donor engagement; track your results and run experiments. We're doing our causes a disservice each time we don't test — potentially leaving donations, actions, and opportunities on the table.

A Quick Primer on Effective Testing

1. **Be clear on your goals.** What are your objectives with this campaign or effort? If you are unclear on your goals, you won't know how to measure success.

2. **Outline a testable hypothesis.** The key word here is ***testable***. You will perform a test of how two variables might be related. This is when you are doing a real experiment.

   Example: Integrated online/offline messages will yield higher results in regard to money raised, average gift, and response rate (both online and offline) than will unrelated online and offline messages.

3. **Outline your testing methodology.** Define your test groups and what variables you will use.

4. **Outline the metrics you will measure.** Be clear about what you will measure, and when and how you will measure it. You need be able to retrieve the data to know how your experiment worked.

Beware: Common Testing Pitfalls

A poorly run test isn't worth the effort you and your staff will invest in it. Here are some testing pitfalls to avoid:

1. **When looking for breakthrough results, skip the small things.**
   Testing small items such as subject lines and the color of your call-to-action button may uncover low-hanging fruit. When looking for a big breakthrough, however, think big with your tests:
   - Test content.
   - Test treatments across segments.
   - Test a long-term cultivation program on a test cell.
   - Test messengers.
   - Test channels.

   Get creative and bold — but make sure your creativity and boldness can be tested.

2. **Avoid samples sizes that are too small to produce statistically significant results.** It's not how many people you solicit; it's how many responses you receive. A statistically valid test requires 100 responses for each test cell. This means you'll need 200 responses for a simple A/B test. For a donor renewal effort with a projected 5% response rate, this means soliciting 4,000 names (2,000 per cell) for a valid test. In a new donor acquisition effort with a 1% response rate, you'd need to solicit 20,000 names (10,000 per cell).

   If you don't have a large list size, here are some suggestions:

   - Test fewer elements. Ditch the four-way test and try a 50/50 split test.
   - Carry the test across multiple efforts until a statistically significant number is reached.
   - Don't extrapolate. When you don't test a statistically valid quantity, you can't assume a larger group will behave the same way.
   - Retest. Always retest to see if you replicate your results.

3. **Don't ignore past test results.** Your test results are the voice of your donors and activists. Listen to what they are saying even if it's not what you expected to hear. Keep a "testing bible" to record what your organization has learned over time.

4. **Don't think that what worked for a competitor or another campaign will work for you.** You must test it with your audience. Enough said.

5. **The data you generate is only as good as your analysis of it.** Set up systems to accurately measure your test and incorporate that learning into future campaigns.

Finally, don't be afraid to fumble. You can learn a lot about testing through failed tests. Being data-driven is a daily practice that you must exercise to excel.

Sources

- Network for Good Learning Center: http://www.fundraising123.org
- Date Your Donors: Woo and Wow with Social Media http://learn.networkforgood.org/WooandWowYourDonorsviaSocialMedia_Content.html
- Be Your Donor Checklist http://www1.networkforgood.org/beyourdonor
- Katya's Nonprofit Marketing Blog http://www.nonprofitmarketingblog.com/
- Bloomerang Nonprofit Donor Retention Primer http://bloomerang.co/blog/