

2009 EDITION

What's Hot, What's Not IN FUNDRAISING

By Sarah Hoddinott

The fundraising landscape is always changing and forcing nonprofits to work even harder to keep up with what's hot in the market. Keeping track of new trends can be a full-time job in its own right, and knowing how to change development plans can be a daunting task. Achieving success in this ever-changing landscape can seem impossible, but it's not.

WHAT'S HOT

Despite the Internet bursting onto the scene more than 15 years ago, organizations still are learning how to use Web strategies to meet their overall goals, especially for improving donor retention and loyalty. The following hot, new concepts have begun to enter fundraisers' repertoires over the past few years.

Major-event fundraising



Nonprofits always have included events in their development strategies. They're a great way to bring the most loyal donors together and make giving a fun, community function. The introduction of the Internet and peer-to-peer event-management tools has made it easier to host larger, broader-based events, such as countrywide walk-a-thons. Technology not only has made it easier to host these events, but it also allows nonprofits to be more effective with outreach efforts. By taking your major event

online, you can achieve greater reach and ultimately raise more money and awareness for your organization.

To be successful with a major event, make sure you plan in advance. Coordinate different locations and host multiple events on a single day, while promoting these efforts under a single brand. Build your online registration and peer-to-peer fundraising tool early, and put it in the hands of your most loyal donors. Offer incentives for fundraising in lieu of charging a registration fee. And don't forget the value of strong Web site content and the power of the Internet; build a microsite for your event, and promote it on social-networking sites like Facebook.

Peer-to-peer fundraising



Your most loyal donors and the people you serve are your best ambassadors. Peer-to-peer fundraising makes it easy for people to reach out to their friends and family members, especially when the time is right for them. But it requires your guidance to ensure success.

Nonprofits can start to build a culture for peer-to-peer fundraising by integrating simple features into their Web sites. Remember that your organization's core messages need to be included with every personal appeal sent to donors. Also, build your brand when you introduce peer-

to-peer tools; you then can begin to build a new donor pool.

Social networking



Social-networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace bring together supporters in new ways and offer new tools for nonprofits. You can lead the way in making the most of social networking by using these sites' group pages to recruit new supporters and publicize the needs and services of your organization.

Some key steps fundraisers should take include building groups and promoting their organizations' donation pages on those groups. Encourage donors and members to join; people will find you on their own, as well. Once you've done that, it all comes down to communication. Highlight your organization's appeals, initiatives and needs, and use social networking to maximize volunteer recruitment.

Microcampaigning



Nonprofits' main Web sites always should focus on maintaining a clean image. Use simple graphics that highlight who you are and what you do. Over time, organizations' Web sites often become cluttered and try to fill too many needs at one time. Microcampaign pages are a good solution when this happens; they can help keep your main Web site

focused and allow you to develop sub-brands or new programs for target audiences.

Today, content-management systems offer more features to enable nonprofits to build such sites. As with all fundraising initiatives, a micro-campaign site should be carefully planned. Know your audience and goals. Also be sure to think about ways of promoting the Web page's existence and role on your main site.

WHAT'S NOT

The recession

 The recession is the biggest challenge we're all facing. Rising unemployment is causing everyone to re-evaluate his or her spending, including philanthropic contributions. Organizations are coming to grips with the impact that the economy is having and looking for less expensive ways to raise funds and keep donors engaged.

To grow in spite of the challenges the economy is creating, look to some of the less expensive online tools that are available. Now is the time to develop a social-networking strategy and stay focused on building your community; your loyal donors will continue to support you.

Ignoring key indicators

 It's important to never forget the basics. Know what your key performance indicators are, monitor them closely and adjust your development plan to protect what's important. It's never wrong to focus on donor retention, but during hard economic times, it's probably the biggest goal we all need to work to protect.

Static Web site content

Think about the Web sites you enjoy and visit regularly. Are any of these pages filled with static content, or do they have dynamic graphics and

 messaging that make you want to look for what's coming next? Web site content is easy to build and personalize. Get creative, and think about your audience. If you serve children, find a way to use your content to appeal to them; perhaps you can add online games and puzzles. Remember to keep changing such content so visitors will want to come back again.

Manual process management

 In this day and age, nonprofits shouldn't have to use pen and paper and spend a lot of time managing communication and other processes. An organization should be able to look to its fundraising database system to support all of its activities, especially those that are unique to it and its donors. Find out what your software offers to give you the time to focus on building new Web sites and social-networking strategies. **FS**



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