Fundraising Resources
Online Fundraising

In 2005, online donations, a major source of giving, went from $.5 billion to $4.5 billion in money raised. Whether you are sending an e-newsletter or an email, it's a great way to communicate with donors and to give your donors an extra option and an easy way to donate. Online fundraising sites such as DoJiggy * (www.dojiggy.com) can assist you in an online appeal or giving campaign or with event management. They have built in features to increase donations and participation that enable participants to solicit their friends and families by setting up their own unique Friends Asking Friends fundraising page and email campaigns. Of course, this is not a free service, so you need to make certain that your fundraising goal can accommodate such outside help.

Keys to creating a successful online fundraising campaign:

- **Online Marketing and Communication:** Create a specialized campaign for your online fundraising campaign to demonstrate urgency in raising funds. Create a unique compelling message to go on the site including the ask, acknowledgement letters, and Friends Asking Friends templates for the other participants. Through online communication, you can inform them of news, events, goals, and need for your organization. Timing is key and is an important element in online fundraising. **Of course it is important that you have a secure page on your website to accept online gifts!** If you don't, you can still <u>ask</u> online, but give clear instructions about where to mail checks or credit card information.

- **Offline Marketing and Communication pieces:** Maximize traffic to your online fundraising website by including your URL wherever you list phone numbers, mailing addresses, or other contact information. This includes brochures, ads, staff email, signatures, voice messages, business cards, and appeal cards. This also offers the donors more than one donation option.

- **Social Networking:** The advent of Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and easy cell phone donations, especially those brought on by international disasters such as the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, have made donating quick, easy, and efficient. They can, however, be very expensive to set up, particularly in the case of cell phone donations. Sending out messages using these mediums can gain you great visibility which is one of the necessary elements of fundraising, but the lure of immediate and often modest contributions is what makes them work. Do your homework to make certain you can afford to use these techniques before making commitments you cannot sustain. For more information on social networking, go to http://internet.blackbaud.com/ and click on White Paper – Nonprofit Social Media Primer, or www.frogloop.com and check out their most popular posts.

- **Building Your Donor Database:** The first step in executing a successful online fundraising campaign, no matter which approach you take, is to build your constituent list of email addresses. If you don't already have the email addresses of your existing donors, you can integrate email collection into your existing fundraising initiatives. Add an email option to annual appeals, volunteer signup forms, and e-newsletter signup sheets. Also add the email addresses of all friends, family, staff, members, and volunteers. Most online fundraising software comes with an unsubscribe feature so the donor has the ability to opt out of receiving future communications.

- **Getting staff on board:** After you have set up your online fundraising campaign through a site such as DoJiggy you can use prizes and incentives to encourage staff to set up their own personal Friends Asking Friends pages and send viral emails to their friends and family.

* This is NOT an endorsement of any specific company.

Four Goals, Ten Tips for Successful Online Fundraising

While everyone's approach to online fundraising varies based on mission, staff resources, and constituent base, every online fundraising program should have four basic goals. These goals apply whether you are doing a one-time fundraiser for a specific cause, or you are making online fundraising a regular function of your organization.

- Make people aware of your organization and/or cause
- Get people to care about your organization and/or cause
- Encourage people to support your organization
- Keep people connected to your organization

The following quick tips will help you reach those goals and get results from online fundraising:

1. Drive traffic. Gather email addresses wherever you can. Encourage people to register at your website so you can continue to cultivate them. Network with other similar organizations so you can place links and ads on their sites to capture donors. Highlight your website wherever possible.

2. Know your audience. Keep in mind the demographics of your group: age, technological comfort level, and Internet connection when creating your online fundraising presence.

3. Maintain your brand. You online presence should reflect your offline identity and message. Maintain consistency among all communication channels.

4. Stay fresh. Your web site is a high-impact marketing and communications tool. Keep it updated. Show that your organization has relevance and impact. A website last updated in 1999 won't inspire confidence. A vibrant, user-friendly website will engage first-time visitors who will return.

5. Make it easy. No one wants to wade through complex web pages to discover how to donate online. Bring it to the forefront. Post a "donate now" button clearly and prominently.

6. Be clear and brief.   Consider the average attention span. This gives you a small window to "sell" your organization or cause. Articulate your mission statement on your home page.

7. Get Personal. If you are interacting with constituents, personalize your message. This is an opportunity to learn more about his or her interests and build a relationship. Strive for the right tone in your message. Email is more casual than a direct mail letter, so make it lighter, more concise.

8. Make it interactive.   You are building an online community. Give people an opportunity to sign up to volunteer on your website. Provide a place to post messages and publicly share their reasons for supporting you. Ask you viewers/donors to tell others about you. Ask them to tell you what they would like to see on your website in the future.

9. Keep track. Measure your responses. Try splitting your list and testing it by sending the same message with two different subject lines, or even two different messages. Which gets the most responses?

10. Stay flexible. Adapt. Give your donors every easy-to-use option you can. Let them make an on-line gift with a credit card. Post your phone number so they can phone in a gift. Include a form they can print out and mail in with a check. Now you have met the needs of any potential donor.

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