

A photograph of two young children, a boy in a blue shirt and a girl in a yellow shirt, playing under a water fountain. They are smiling and reaching out to touch the water. The background is a lush green garden.

{EBOOK}

# YOUR GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISING

How to Build a  
Bigger, Better Donor Base

**BLUEGRASS**  
INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS 



**70% of Americans support nonprofits; a typical donor supports 5 to 10 nonprofits each year.**



## **Fundraising.**

Your organization's supporters are its best friends. And if you know anything about friendships, you know communication is the key to maintaining them.

How do you relate to your friends? You call them, write them and send them messages on Facebook. You meet for coffee and for dinner. With time and effort, you nurture the relationship. It's the same with your organization's supporters.

If you look at donors and see only dollar signs, you'll have problems. Donor relationships that focus only on gifts are like shallow friendships; they won't last.



# BUILD YOUR BAND OF DONORS

**To build a relationship with donors, communicate with them.**

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**An acquisition mailing is not about raising money, it is about getting new donors.**

Before you start communicating, you need to build a donor list. It's an ongoing project, as new donors are added and inactive ones removed. Here are some ways to collect potential donors.

## **ACQUIRE DONORS WITH ACQUISITION MAILINGS**

Wouldn't it be great if you could clone your current supporters? Well, in a way you can by sending donor acquisition mailings each year. An acquisition mailing is a fundraising piece sent to people who are similar to your donors. Most nonprofits do at least one acquisition mailing a year. They buy lists of donors similar to their own and send each of them a fundraising letter.

Those who respond with a gift are added to the nonprofit's mailing list. A good response to an acquisition mailing is 1%.

An acquisition mailing is not about raising money, it is about getting new donors. Rarely do donations from an acquisition mailing cover the costs of the mailing. An acquisition mailing simply buys you new donors who, hopefully, will become loyal supporters of your organization.

### **PUT YOUR WEBSITE TO WORK**

Your website is a quick, easy and inexpensive way to collect names and information about potential donors and bring in new supporters. Those who visit it are interested in your organization, so make sure your home page includes a prominent call-to-action to sign up for your newsletter or other mailings. Make the sign-up form as simple and straightforward as possible.

### **MAKE THE MOST OF SPECIAL EVENTS**

Every organization has special events. The people who attend your annual fundraising walk or wine tasting and aren't donors could and should be. Collect information for your prospect list about everyone who attends your events.

### **SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION**

We are all connected in some way. Make connections work for you by asking your board members to share names and contact information of their like-minded friends. Ask the same of your active, avid volunteers.



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**It is essential that contact  
with new donors go beyond  
annual fundraising pleas.**

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# WHEN PEOPLE REACH OUT... GRAB THEM

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**Your nonprofit should have a personal thank-you ready for every gift it receives. It can secure thousands in future donations.**

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When people reach out to your organization – by phone, by email or in person – collect their contact information and add them to the prospective donor list. They have shown interest in your organization; capitalize on it.

## **ONCE YOU'VE GOT THEM, ENGAGE THEM**

Here is where many nonprofits fall down. They build a good list of potential donors, convince them to donate and then, they send supporters nothing more than an impersonal gift receipt for tax purposes. Your nonprofit should have a personal thank-you ready for every gift it receives. A thank-you—whether it's a nice card or a personal phone call—costs little and can secure thousands in future donations.

### SEND A MIX OF MESSAGES

A thank-you note is the first step. Throughout the year, keep in touch with your donors with a variety of messages. (Hint: They shouldn't always be about money!) Tell donors how your organization is doing, solicit their advice or assistance, invite them to events or tell them stories about the difference their gift has made.

### KEEP THOSE CARDS AND LETTERS COMING

Send your donors cards. Birthdays are good, but you can also send cards that are reminders of dates that are important to your cause. For example, organizational milestone anniversaries are a perfect time to remind supporters of the accomplishments they have achieved. Well-written letters about pertinent topics are great ways to connect. Keep letters on point and they will likely be read and remembered. When your organization has successes to share, a letter is a perfect way to do it.



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**Brainstorm some dates or holidays with significance to your organization. Design a card to mark the occasion and send it to your donors.**

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## EXTRA, EXTRA!

### NEWSLETTERS ARE GREAT COMMUNICATORS

Newsletters are great vehicles for describing what your organization is up to. Send them regularly, by email or direct mail. Keep stories short and pertinent and make them about people as much as possible. Educate recipients about ways they can give, beyond writing a check. Include photos that capture the impact your organization is making.

### LET THE INTERNET CONNECT

Make collecting email addresses a standard part of building your donor database. The internet offers many ways to keep in touch with donors: by email and on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, for starters. The Internet can be engaging and interactive when you offer surveys and polls.



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**Educate recipients  
about ways they can give,  
beyond writing a check.**

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# HOW ABOUT AN ANNUAL REPORT?

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**Your annual report can be one of your best fundraising tools.**

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Annual reports are more than an overview of your organization's finances. They recount how donations were used to do good. Nonprofits aren't required to send annual reports, but the smart ones do because they realize it is one of their best fundraising tools – a way to communicate transparency as well as the impact your organization has had in the last year. Keep the report simple and inexpensive. A glossy, obviously expensive annual report could make donors question whether you are making the best use of funding.

#### **MAKE FACE-TO-FACE CONNECTIONS**

To keep valued donors, create opportunities to connect beyond the written word. Call them, ask for their input and answer their questions. Invite them to your headquarters for a tour or to an event.

#### **KEEP YOUR LIST FIT AND TRIM**

You will need to do housekeeping regularly to keep your list tidy. Not only will you add names, you will also remove names from it. A professional mail service can quickly rid your list of duplicate mailings and other wasteful problems.



## ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Your donors are a varied lot. Many of your communications will be well received by everyone but there often are times when specialized messages are needed. Here are a few examples:

### LAPSED DONORS

When good donors stop giving, don't give up on them. It is much easier to bring back a former donor than it is to recruit a new one. Reach out with a letter that, in a friendly, genuine way, lets them know they are missed and that you are thinking about them. Acknowledge their past support. Tell them what is happening with your organization. If you do win the donor back, have a series of letters and surveys ready to welcome them. Asking them to complete a survey could provide valuable information about why they and other donors have lapsed.

### MAJOR DONORS

Donors who make large donations often require special communications. For your face-to-face meetings with this audience, you will need strong written materials, such as fact sheets, annual reports and success stories.



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**It is much easier to bring back a lapsed donor than it is to recruit a new one, yet fewer than a third of nonprofits have a lapsed donor program.**

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**Your end-to-end  
fundraising partner.**

**STRATEGY**

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**DATA**

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**CREATIVE**

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**EXECUTION**

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**ANALYSIS**

## **BLUEGRASS INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS**

In 1974, a family of entrepreneurs saw a need in the business community. They met that need with BlueGrass Mailing, Data & Fulfillment which provided secretarial services and processed various mailing projects for local businesses. As the needs of businesses evolved, BlueGrass adopted new technologies and developed sophisticated processes. We continued to meet our clients' growing needs by adding crucial services, from the physical processing of mail and packages to highly interactive campaigns. And now, 40 years later we have changed our name to Bluegrass Integrated Communications to better capture our breadth of services which now include our in-house creative and development team, Intersect Creative, in addition to our direct marketing, fulfillment, fundraising, and transactional service lines.



TO LEARN MORE, VISIT: **[WEAREBLUEGRASS.COM](http://WEAREBLUEGRASS.COM)**

OR CALL: **800.928.6245**