

Tips for Fundraising Under COVID

Fundraising Under COVID is stressful, requiring agility, imagination, and navigation into the unknown. We are living with a life-threatening crisis of indeterminant duration, with no idea of when things will get back to “normal.” But this is, in fact, the new normal, for the time being.

Cause Effective urges nonprofits to move to development and fundraising plans that rest on Plan “B” (and “C” and “D”) through 2021. Organizations that can hone their pivot skills, their adaptability, will be stronger positioned through the pandemic to maintain donor relationships and, indeed, gain new donors through digital platforms.

The Pillars of a Successful Strategy? Strengthening your case for support, motivating your ambassadors, and providing virtual touch points to stay top of mind with your donors.

Strengthen Clarity of Vision and Mission

- Determine whether your mission focus has shifted or pivoted to respond to COVID
- Make sure that staff and board are telling the same story about what’s happening in your work – and what the need is, both in the community and for your organization
- A cohesive, clear and motivating plan from leadership is essential now – to keep the team on track and to engender clarity of purpose in donors
- Tell your story in a unified way across various medium
- Be transparent – tell the truth

Stay Top of Mind with Your Donors

- Stay in touch with all supporters, and use this moment to deepen relationships with key donors, funders, sponsors
- Call your donors to find out how are they doing in this crisis – give them updates on your work and plan for the near future
- Listen to your donors’ stories and find common ground
- If you have older donors, do not assume senior donors are not technology savvy – many seniors are connected to their grandchildren now through ZOOM and FaceTime
- Social media and email communication are essential for staying “top of mind”

Ask for more than money

- Habitual patterns have broken down and so this is a good time to ask for advice, technical expertise, reach a new audience or new markets
- Tap pro bono corporate help – technology, social media, marketing/messaging, leadership support, strategic planning
- Connect with other nonprofit professionals in the field to see how they’re pivoting and moving forward
- Attend webinars and take advantage of free downloads/ documents/online counseling

Partner with the Board of Directors

- Board members need to be on the same page in being clear about priorities and their role
- Galvanize at least one board leader with clarity, optimism and enthusiasm to lead the charge with your board members
- Organize a Task Force to address issues caused by the pandemic if needed
- Make sure board members stay “out of the weeds” unless you really need them there (for example, because you’re short-staffed in a particular area)
- Encourage board members to engage with donors, sharing your story, asking questions – and asking for support as appropriate

Create Virtual Fundraising Events

- Pivot – go virtual
- Use digital platforms to raise awareness, educate and engage your audience
- Produce panels, tours and performances as opportunities to engage your donors and a wider audience
- Through digital platforms set the stage for future fundraising when the timing is better
- Virtual events have many moving parts – give yourself plenty of lead time and roll out in phases

While Fundraising Under COVID certainly isn’t where any of us wanted to be, we may just find that we come out the other side with a host of additional tools in our fundraising toolkits, and a new donor audience to boot. As the saying goes, here we are with lemons, so... let’s start squeezing.