



How to Make Social-Media Fundraising Work for You

Use people-to-people tools to create deep, deep bonds with donors, old and new.

By Frank Days

The Internet has changed the way nonprofits raise funds. And this revolution is far from over. Web-based technologies keep growing and changing – almost daily – and their impact is multiplying.

Social media and idea sharing on the Internet are taking off and enabling thousands of people to come together to support a cause. Much like e-commerce, social networking will continue to grow as people become more comfortable with it.

You needn't be an expert in the Internet or social networking to access their benefits. You just need to put tools in your supporters' hands. The secure online transactions help people feel safe that donations are going directly to the organization.

In the end, the ease and simplicity of online fundraising allows you to create a deeper sense of community and commitment among your supporters. At the same time, you'll expand your pool of donors.

How Does It Work?

The best way to make online fundraising available to your supporters is to put a "Create a fundraising page" link in your site's "How to help" section. Doing so makes it easy for your supporters to get donations for you for a variety of reasons, including a walk or marathon, an occasion such as a wedding or birthday, or in memory of a loved one.

You can also build your own branded fundraising page linked to your Web site. From there, those participating in one of your events can create their own personalized online fundraising pages on your behalf.

Another way to approach person-to-person fundraising is to engage multiple supporters in individual fundraising campaigns for a common goal. For instance, Lisa Maturo frequently raises funds for Lucky Dog Rescue for animals needing surgery. She posts regular updates on the animals' health and adoption proceedings. During one appeal, she raised \$2,500 in just six days (www.firstgiving.com/picosurgery).

How Do You Make It a Success?

First, personalize it. Given that people are coming together through shared interests, the more personal the fundraiser's page the better. Here are ways your supporters can personalize their fundraising pages:

- **Post** personal pictures, images, and links to videos.
- **Write** messages about what they're doing to support your organization, why they're doing it, and why they need the help of their family, friends, and colleagues.
- **State** their fundraising target.
- **Recognize** and thank others who are involved.
- **Display** a list of donors and their supportive comments.

A moving example is the page created in memory of a young woman who was murdered while walking her dog. So many people were moved by her story that in just a

few weeks over \$30,000 was raised for the local animal shelter (www.firstgiving.com/meredithemerson).

Second, encourage your supporters to ask, then ask again. Remind them to use all the e-mail addresses in their files. Tapping into this extended network can have a viral aspect, because those people will pass the e-mail message along to their own e-mail list.

We all know that asking for money is hard to do in person. With e-mail and online tools there's absolutely no pressure on either side. That's among the reasons why a greater percentage of online asks – about 25-30% – actually turn into donations. The perceived anonymity allows people to give if they want and give whatever amount they want.

Remind your supporters to send out several e-mails with updates on their efforts. Some people may have missed the first appeal, while others may want to give again or contact more of their friends.

Third, tell them to tap into those social networks. The most successful fundraisers make their efforts known via their Web site, blogs, and online social network pages. Pim, who writes a food blog "Chez Pim," clearly demonstrates the power of tapping into these communities. Each December for the past four years she has raised funds for Menu for Hope using an online fundraising page. By reaching out to her readers and their networks she has raised unbelievable amounts of money. In one month alone, she raised over \$91,000 (www.firstiving.com/menuforhope4).

Fuel It with Passion

While traditional appeals will continue, they'll be enhanced by online strategies. Online fundraising requires little time, money, or management. The point is to keep things simple and to harness the passion that already exists among your community. Your supporters will appreciate having a range of opportunities through which they can get actively involved in helping you. ■

Resources

Austin, Gene, "Online Fundraising Success Factors," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 26, No. 2.

Bhagat, Vinay, "Online Advocacy: Mobilize Supporters to Take Action," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 21, No. 6.

Cramer, Bob, "Using Social Media to Advance Your Goals," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 27, No. 1.

Strand, Mike, "Is It Time to Consider New Ways to Communicate?," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 25, No. 4.

These resources are available at www.snpo.org/members.

Frank Days is COO of Firstgiving (www.firstgiving.com), a Web-based company that enables individuals to raise money for any 501(c)(3) nonprofit with person-to-person online fundraising pages or widgets. Through the company, tens of thousands of individuals have raised more than \$60 million online for 5,000 nonprofit clients.