

Using the Internet to Raise Funds and Build Donor Relationships:

Tools, Tips and Techniques for Boosting Donations

Includes:

Ten Tips for Successful Online Fundraising
by Brian Walsh, associate director,
Fundraising Division, Changing Our World, Inc.

Plus:

- Key benchmarking metrics for measuring your organization's online success
- Real examples of effective fundraising campaigns from leading nonprofit organizations
- Best practices for effective online fundraising campaigns

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Most organizations today understand the importance of the Internet for increasing fundraising dollars and improving donor loyalty. The Internet is an efficient channel for nonprofits to reach even more people and increase support.

This guide was created specifically for nonprofit professionals as a handbook about the fundamentals of online fundraising. It describes how to build a file of email addresses, develop strong online relationships with constituents and execute effective online fundraising campaigns that turn those constituents into loyal donors.

Note that this guide covers some of the basics of email marketing — the cornerstone of any online program. However, for more detailed best practices information about topics including spam, email communications schedules and message testing, refer to the Convio guide, *The Basics of Email Marketing for Nonprofits: Using Email Communications to Build and Strengthen Constituent Relationships Online*. You can download this guide for free at: www.convio.com/emailbasics.

Throughout this guide, you will notice words or phrases that appear in **bold** type. These terms are defined in the glossary on page 26. You also will notice tips throughout this guide to make your online fundraising programs run more smoothly. These tips come from a team of experts with the experience of working on Internet projects with 1400+ nonprofit organizations throughout the United States.



Introduction to Online Fundraising

A growing number of nonprofit organizations are successfully incorporating the Internet into their fundraising strategies. According to the June 10, 2004 issue of *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, online fundraising — measured by dollars contributed online — surged in 2003, increasing by 48 percent at the 146 organizations that provided figures for 2002 and 2003.

Several factors have helped nonprofits to understand the importance of the Internet for fundraising and begin taking their fundraising efforts online: More people are going online. Internet software in general, and for nonprofits specifically, is more readily available and more affordable than ever. And, an increasing number of online success stories proves the power of the Internet for boosting donations.

Here are some of the advantages of online fundraising that nonprofits are recognizing:

COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Traditionally, development professionals have relied heavily on direct mail and telemarketing for their fundraising campaigns. The relatively high cost of these methods, however, makes them impractical for the frequent communications with potential and existing donors necessary to grow relationships. Supplementing traditional fundraising methods with cost-effective email communications allows you to communicate more frequently and maintain an ongoing relationship with constituents — key for improving both online *and* offline fundraising results.

TIMELINESS

Many times, organizations have an urgent need for funds, or have a small window to raise funds in the wake of a current event. In these cases, there's no time to write, design, print *and* send a direct mail piece. The immediate nature of email communications allows you to execute fundraising campaigns and respond to timely issues in a matter of hours.

QUICK RESULTS

With direct mail appeals, there can be a response lag time of several weeks, or even months. Email appeals, however, typically return 80 percent of total responses within 48 hours of a mailing. This allows you to evaluate the results of your fundraising campaign and quickly adjust your strategy as needed. In addition, providing donors with the option to give online allows you to receive the funds immediately and automatically, versus waiting on the mail for a check that must be manually processed.

INSIGHTS INTO DONOR BEHAVIOR AND GIVING TRENDS

You can track how many people click through on both emails and links within emails to your Web site, allowing you to quickly analyze the effectiveness of your fundraising campaigns. This also allows you to determine what motivates each of your donors as well as evaluate donor behavior and giving trends, so you can improve future campaigns.

LIST SEGMENTATION AND TARGETED APPEALS

Internet communications allow you to develop a complete view of constituents by encouraging them to volunteer information about their interests through online surveys. You can then segment your list and target groups for communications and appeals based on their interests and history with the organization. This ensures that each communication is relevant and valuable to each constituent and, therefore, more likely to inspire him or her to respond.

This guide covers basic concepts for taking advantage of the Internet for your fundraising programs. From building a list of email addresses and developing donor relationships online to creating effective online fundraising campaigns and measuring online success, it will help you to develop online fundraising programs that get results.

Getting Started

Building an Email Address File

The first step in executing any effective online program is to build a list of constituent email addresses. Adding new constituents to your list is key for growing your donor base. In addition, organizations typically have email addresses for just 10-40 percent of their donors. Getting email addresses for these existing supporters also is important because email can and should play a key role in stewardship and donor renewal.

Consider this: By gathering constituents' email addresses you can send email newsletters and other online communications to constituents to develop an online relationship with them, and also use online surveys to learn more about their interests and opinions so you can make an "educated" first appeal. This type of online relationship-building would be cost- and time-prohibitive through traditional means, such as direct mail or telemarketing.

Of course, only a small percentage of an email file will respond to each fundraising appeal. So, you should try to collect as many email addresses as budget and time allow to ensure maximum campaign response over time. While this may seem challenging at first, using the following proven tactics can easily get your online program off the ground.

GATHER EMAIL ADDRESSES OFFLINE

Even if you're just starting out online, you can easily develop your email file by integrating email address collection into your existing fundraising initiatives. Every time you communicate with supporters or prospects, you have the opportunity to collect email addresses.

Gather addresses through every interaction

Planned interactions such as renewal appeals, membership drives and event invitations are perfect times to ask for email addresses. Simply add a field for email collection to all response forms. At events where you will interact with a large number of constituents, consider setting out a newsletter sign-up sheet, or offer a giveaway for attendees who drop in a card with their name and email address.

Promote the benefits of email communication

When asking for email addresses offline, emphasize the benefits your constituents will receive by providing this information. Remind supporters that by communicating with them online, your organization can save money and administrative work, allowing you to more effectively serve your mission. Also emphasize the benefit of timely communication: With email communications, you are better equipped to respond to compelling events and inform them quickly of important news, developments, events and programs.

GATHER EMAIL ADDRESSES ONLINE

Your Web site is the best source for reaching new prospects and existing constituents and collecting their email addresses. Visitors to your Web site have sought you out because they are interested in your organization. This existing affinity is a powerful incentive for online visitors to provide you with the information you need to build longer-lasting relationships with them online.

Drive traffic to your Web site with every communication

Maximize traffic to your Web site by including your **URL** wherever you list phone numbers, mailing addresses or other contact information. This includes brochures, ads, staff email

signatures, voice messages, phone hold or intro message and business cards. Tell prospects and supporters about the resources available to them on your Web site and keep the Web site content current and informative, so visitors will return.

→ TIP

When collecting email addresses, be sure to let people know that the organization is collecting this information and how it will be used. Always give people a chance to opt out of receiving email by providing a check box that says something like, "I'd like to receive future mailings," which they can uncheck.

PROVIDE AN ONLINE REGISTRATION MECHANISM

Use a Web-based form that allows site visitors to register, and that automatically captures the information. The registration form should be easy to read and fast to complete. Remember that the more information you request, the less likely people will be to complete the entire form. So, think carefully about the information you want to capture, and minimize the number of required fields to ensure a quick, easy process for online registrants.

PROMOTE THE BENEFITS OF ONLINE REGISTRATION

Make registration compelling for your site visitors. Create special benefits for registered members, and link to a separate page explaining the perks, such as free email newsletters, or advance notification of upcoming events. Then, invite site visitors to register by using an action phrase such as "Register to receive updates" or "Sign up for our educational newsletter."

→ TIP

For more information about building an email address file, download *The Basics of Email Marketing for Nonprofits: Using Email to Build and Strengthen Constituent Relationships Online* at www.convio.com/emailbasics

The screenshot shows the Easter Seals website layout. At the top, there are navigation links for Home, Site Map, Contact Us, Login, and Register. The main header features the Easter Seals logo and the tagline "Creating solutions, changing lives." Below this, there are several sections: a left sidebar with navigation links (Services, Support Us, About Us, Legislative Action, Job Opportunities, Resources, Partners & Friends), a central "Easter Seals Online Newsletter" section with a sign-up form, and a right sidebar with a search bar, "Find Easter Seals Near You!" section, and "Subscribe to Easter Seals' Monthly Email Newsletter" section. The newsletter sign-up form includes a "Why subscribe to Easter Seals online?" section, "Additional Registration Benefits", a list of benefits, and a "Sign up" button.

Easter Seals clearly promotes the benefits of registering on its Web site.

USE "QUICK REGISTRATION"

Instead of requiring site visitors to complete a lengthy form, consider requiring only basic information (such as name and email address) for a supporter to sign up for more information, updates or an email newsletter. Once you have captured this information, send follow-up communications to gather more profile information about that constituent.

GIVE SITE REGISTRATION PROMINENT AND CLEAR PLACEMENT

Dedicate a consistent area of your home page to promoting online registration. Place it in an eye-catching spot **above the fold** to reflect its importance. You might also use an image or graphic to draw attention to this message. Don't forget to promote registration throughout the rest of your Web site — you may consider including a registration link in your **page wrapper** so the message will be promoted on every page of your site.

CALCULATE CONVERSION OF SITE VISITORS TO REGISTERED CONSTITUENTS

To determine whether you are effectively gathering email addresses online, you must first understand how well your Web site is motivating visitors to register. To measure effectiveness at converting Web site visitors to registered constituents, track the conversion rate.

Here is the calculation:

$\frac{\text{Number of registrations per month}}{\text{Total number of unique site visitors per month}} = \text{Conversion Rate (\%)}$
--

→ TIP

Look for online fundraising software, like Convio's, that include tools for automatically measuring Web site traffic. This will reduce, and possibly eliminate the need to manually calculate Web statistics.

For example, if 30 of every 1,000 visitors to your site register each month, the conversion rate is three percent. Typically, nonprofit organizations register two to three percent of all site visitors. During promotions, fundraising drives and other events, this rate may increase.

If your registration rate is low, consider these tactics:

- Ask someone unfamiliar with your organization's Web site to go to the home page. He or she should find the registration option within five seconds. If the registration box or link is not prominent, valuable prospects may fail to register. Consider varying the position of the registration option on the page to gauge the effect. Often, top right-hand placement yields a good conversion rate.
- Ask constituents if the incentive to register — which, for many groups, is a newsletter — would make them provide their email address.
- Include a link to the organization's privacy policy near the registration box that explains how the information will be used to allay fears about potential misuse of email addresses.

BUILD YOUR LIST THROUGH VIRAL MARKETING

"Tell-a-friend" email campaigns, also known as **viral marketing**, can help you to reach new supporters and grow your email file efficiently. In a viral campaign, your organization sends an email with a call-to-action (such as a solicitation for donations) to your existing email file, or to selected groups of constituents in the file. The email also asks recipients to forward the message to friends, relatives and co-workers so they, too, can get involved. When a new supporter from this previously untapped network of friends clicks through to your Web site to register and take action, you can ask for their permission to include them in future communications.

Email greeting cards, or "eCards" are another way to build your email address list. With eCards, constituents can create their own emails — using your eCard template, with your organization's branding — to send to their networks of friends and family. (See **page 21** for more on eCards.)

CONSIDER USING AN EMAIL APPENDING SERVICE

If you have an extensive donor or supporter database, but few current email addresses, consider using an **email appending** service to quickly connect with supporters via email. This service adds a constituent's email address to that constituent's existing record in your database. The email address is obtained by matching those records from your database against a third-party database to produce a corresponding email address. Keep in mind, however, that match-rates vary, and while appending solves the problem of matching email addresses up to current supporters, it is not a substitute for a long-term strategy to build and maintain your email file.

Developing e-Relationships

Most development professionals understand the value of strong constituent relationships for driving donations. However, the high-touch nature of relationship building typically makes it impractical for use with every constituent. The Internet can help.

Because it's a fast, cost-effective channel for ongoing constituent communications, you can build online relationships quickly and easily. Sending email newsletters, notifications of upcoming events and updates on the organization's progress, as well as creating an online community, all help to keep your organization "top-of-mind" and make constituents feel more connected to the organization. This, in turn, makes them more likely to support the organization when you send an appeal. Following are a few ways to begin building online relationships with your constituents.

→ TIP

When using an email appending service, or when using rented or purchased lists where you will be communicating with new contacts, be sensitive to the fact that some recipients might not want to receive email from you. Ensure that the first email you send asks the recipient to opt in to receive future email communications. Do not just add them to a file and start emailing — that is spamming.

OFFER BETTER SERVICE TO DRIVE ONLINE AND OFFLINE DONATIONS

The economics of direct mail fundraising, or the cost to produce and send a piece of mail, require an approach focused on solicitation. Through almost every piece of direct mail they send, nonprofits must solicit a contribution to offset the cost. With this approach, however, there is little focus on treating a donor or prospect like a valued constituent.

Online fundraising turns this approach around. Through email, you can communicate with donors and prospects at close to zero cost, so acknowledgements and general updates no longer have to be cost-justified. In addition, online Constituent Relationship Management (**eCRM**) technology makes it easy to learn what is most important to donors and personalize updates and appeals according to their interests and giving history.

For example, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), one of the nation's leading animal welfare organizations, has achieved positive results by focusing on donor treatment. Donors with email addresses receive frequent email updates that explain how the ASPCA is using their dollars and fulfilling its mission. These communications encourage visits to the organization's Web site (www.aspc.org) to get more information, share stories about animal adoption successes and engage in advocacy.

→ TIP

Convio's online fundraising software includes constituent relationship management functionality, making it easy to learn what is most important to donors and personalize updates and appeals according to their interests and giving history.

Additionally, the ASPCA has captured constituent information on pet preferences so it can personalize communications, including appeals, based on interests. These strategies are working: In the last two years, the segment of donors receiving regular email communications has given 2.1 times as many dollars — primarily driven by higher giving frequency — as those who do not. While there may be natural loyalty differences for donors who volunteer their email addresses, this only explains part of the story.

Strong evidence suggests that higher levels of online donor service influence donations. For example, donors choosing convenient online renewal have increased their average gifts by more than 40 percent. Additionally, donors receiving targeted appeals based upon their pet preferences have responded at two to three times the rate of those receiving neutral — or non-pet-specific — messages.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals **ASPCA**

Pick a shelter cat to sponsor

Provide haven to these cats until they're in forever homes

Receive a personalized Sponsorship Certificate with your name and your cat's picture with any online gift.

Sponsorship Certificate

When you open your heart and sponsor one of these deserving pets you will be changing more than just one life...you will be changing thousands.

Your gift will allow the ASPCA to provide safe haven for each of these pets until they are placed in their forever homes.

Make a monthly gift | Make a one-time gift

Corona was abandoned in a cardboard beer box in the ASPCA lobby. 9 months old, she is mostly blind. Our hope is to soon place Corona with a patient animal lover who will treat her with the dignity, love and respect that she deserves.

Paul was brought to us weighing just 4 pounds. He was rescued from an owner keeping 48 cats in a crowded apartment. Paul is now up to 7 pounds, and has earned the nickname "Piggy" from the vet techs that have fallen in love with him.

Mr. Meow is an FIV-positive street cat, fed by everyone in his neighborhood and brought to us by a local animal rescue group. Our hope is to place him in a single-feline family household or one with other FIV-positive cats.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals **ASPCA**

Pick a shelter dog to sponsor

Provide haven to these dogs until they're in forever homes

Receive a personalized Sponsorship Certificate with your name and your dog's picture with any online gift.

Sponsorship Certificate

When you open your heart and sponsor one of these deserving pets you will be changing more than just one life...you will be changing thousands.

Your gift will allow the ASPCA to provide safe haven for each of these pets until they are placed in their forever homes.

Make a monthly gift | Make a one-time gift

Drew was a stray who came to us with a broken pelvis, most likely from being hit by a car. After surgery to repair his injuries, Drew is now on the road to recovery, healing beautifully and steadily putting on weight.

Mr. T is a lovable 3-year-old Belgian Malinois who suffered from severe neglect, filth, starving and covered with wounds. He's now recovering nicely and gained much needed weight.

Pugsy was put in our care after he collapsed at another shelter due to respiratory distress. After surgery to open up his airways, his spirit has emerged as a pup who loves to play and snuggle.

The ASPCA personalizes communications, including appeals, based on constituent interests.

GIVE CONSTITUENTS A VOICE

Constituents who feel they have a voice in the organization are more likely to contribute time and money. Create an ongoing conversation with constituents through online surveys, polls and petitions. In addition, create a constant narrative by regularly updating Web site content. Supporters will stay engaged online to see how the organization is progressing.

CREATE A SENSE OF SHARED IDENTITY

In addition to giving constituents the sense that they have a voice in the organization, it is important to make them feel a part of the cause. Consider creating an **online community** as well as online forums (such as Web logs, also known as **blogs**) to allow constituents to voice their opinions, make suggestions and communicate with other supporters as well as your organization's staff. Also, take advantage of grassroots, community-based online organization forums, such as Meetup.com (see tip on this page). The access to ideas and opinions on the site gives each supporter a sense of being part of the organization and part of a community.

OFFER REWARDS

Consider offering reward points that constituents can accrue based on various online behaviors such as donating or forwarding email messages to friends. Allow each registered constituent to view his reward point balance at any time on a personalized Web page and redeem rewards points online for gifts. Offer special recognition gifts for supporters with high point balances to provide incentives for constituents to increase their interaction with your organization. Convio's online fundraising software allows you to easily create a reward point program.

→ TIP

Consider setting up meetings around the nation through Meetup.com — a free online Web site that organizes local gatherings about anything, anywhere — and publicize them on your Web site. Chatting with each other on www.meetup.com, your supporters can get together with other supporters in their areas to exchange ideas and voice opinions in support of your organization.



Online Fundraising Campaigns: the Basics

Once you have developed an online relationship with your constituents, it's time to make that first "ask." Consider the approaches in this section to ensure each email appeal and online campaign is as effective as possible.

Determining Objectives

As with any campaign, it is critical to clearly understand your strategic objectives before you execute an individual fundraising email or launch an online fundraising campaign. Setting objectives will help you sharpen your message and determine the best approach — from email newsletters and urgent news updates to email fundraising appeals — for your communications. It also will help you to effectively evaluate results and understand your return on investment.

For instance, your goal might be to improve awareness of your organization and acquire new donors among younger supporters aged 28-40. This campaign might include four different individual emails, executed over a 12-week period. The objective of the first communication might be to engage this demographic with an informational update on your organization's activities. The second mailing might be an invitation to a special event for younger supporters. And the third might include a fundraising appeal, followed by a reminder to those who have not yet donated.

Segmenting Your Email List to Target Specific Audiences

As in direct mail, you will improve response rates by segmenting your email file based on factors such as constituent interests, donation history, gender, age, length of membership or any other defining characteristic, and **targeting** them with specific messages. Here are a few techniques for gathering more information about your donors and prospects:

- Regularly ask registrants to volunteer information about themselves, such as their preferences for specific causes, that will enable more personalized communications with them. Include these questions in online surveys and forms, and create printed surveys for gathering information at events.
- Conduct "profiling drives" of existing donors, offering them the opportunity to receive personalized information that matches their specific interests.
- Ask donors and prospects for ZIP code information, which you can then use to send communications about events or news in their individual communities.

Cross-Marketing to Reach More Donors

One of the greatest benefits of creating a database of email addresses with detailed profiles of each constituent is the ability to cross-market. Say, for example, that you know through your profiles that several constituents have previously volunteered for your organization, but have never donated. This indicates that they already have a strong affinity for your organization — after all, they donated their time for your organization's cause and provided you with information about their interests. Why not send them a targeted email thanking them for past support and re-engaging them with the organization? Then, after re-establishing that relationship, send them another email encouraging them to donate.

Building the Online Fundraising Campaign

While setting goals and targeting your audience is the beginning of an effective online fundraising campaign, you should consider other campaign "building blocks" as well. The following approaches will help to ensure your online success.

CREATE COMPELLING MESSAGES THAT GET READ (THE TRUST RULE)

Email messages are the cornerstone of any online program. To ensure that each email message gets optimal response, follow the TRUST rule. Be sure each email is:

- **Timely** — Time email messages around some kind of current event, holiday or something else that's happening with your organization. This will help grab the recipients' interest.
- **Relevant** — By including information specific to each constituents' interests, each email communication from you will be more valuable.
- **Urgent** — Email messages should make it clear why it's important for the recipient to act immediately. Otherwise, the message might sit for days without a response.
- **Specific** — Make sure the reader can determine exactly what you want them to do, such as make a donation or sign up for an event, after reading your email message.
- **Tested** — Test your email message before sending to your entire list to ensure all links work properly. In addition, run it through a **spam checker** to test for elements that might get your message caught in a spam filter. Also, test the message content for effectiveness by sending two or more messages — with a varied element in each message, such as the subject line — to a percentage of your target audience. Then, send the most effective message to the remainder of the audience without sending again to the test group. Your online fundraising software should allow you to do these types of tests.

→ TIP

Convio's online fundraising software allows you to automatically customize an email message based on each recipient's interests, geographic location or other unique characteristics from your database.

BUILD CONTEXT IN WHICH SUPPORTERS CAN PARTICIPATE

By its very nature, the Internet is an ideal vehicle for providing campaign context and for creating a sense of urgency. You can take advantage of this by challenging supporters to participate in specific drives with stated deadlines and goals. Create the context — or use an existing context such as a breaking event — and then give the supporters the opportunity to take action and be heard within that context. For example, an animal welfare organization could create a campaign to raise funds for dog immunizations, with a stated goal of \$30,000. The group could then ask its constituents to donate to that campaign, and send weekly updates to let them know how the campaign is progressing.

CREATE MULTI-PHASED EMAIL APPEALS

As with any campaign, it is important to include a series of communications to maximize response. Your online fundraising campaign should do the same. For example, in the first message of a campaign, you might announce the campaign and provide details including how the funds raised will be used. A second message, sent only to those who did not respond to the first, could remind recipients about the campaign and encourage them to respond. A third message, again sent to those who did not reply to the first or second messages, might tell recipients how the campaign has progressed, and encourage them to help your organization meet its goal. Managing multiple messages and recipient groups in a campaign might seem overwhelming, but online fundraising software can help. Choose software that automates the process of sending multiple campaign messages and tracks responses within the context of the campaign, versus requiring you to track results for each email, then aggregate the results.

→ TIP

When choosing online fundraising software, be sure it allows you to set up a personal campaign page so that it automatically recognizes existing donors and inserts the appropriate information onto each of their individual pages.

INCLUDE DEDICATED LANDING PAGES/WEB PAGES

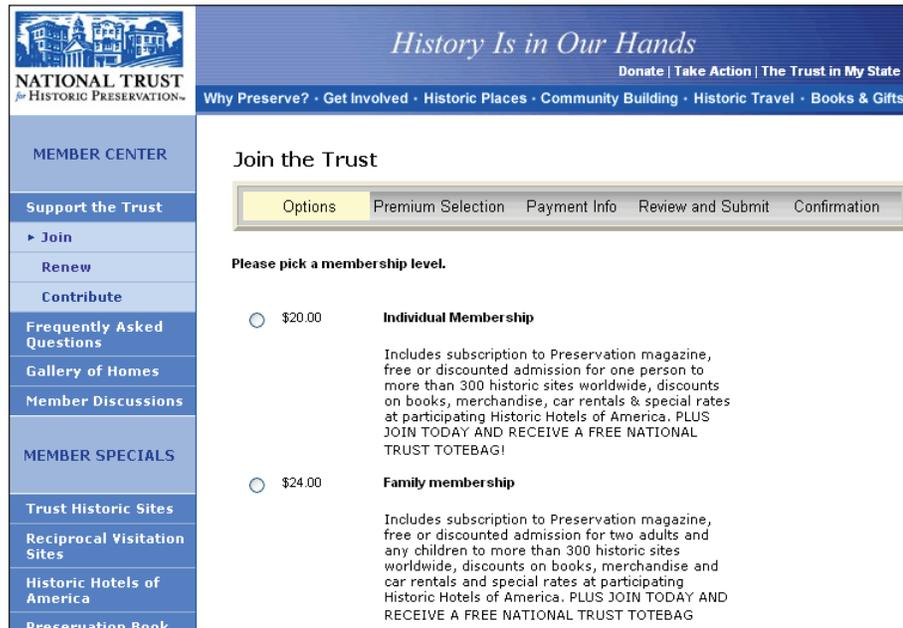
While email is the cornerstone of your online fundraising efforts, it's also important to include a link to a landing page for each campaign. A landing page is a Web page where the constituent goes to find out more details about your campaign and where they can make a donation. Another way to extend the reach of your online campaign is to promote it on pages throughout your Web site. In addition, consider creating a dynamic personal campaign page where each existing donor is individually recognized, thanked for his last donation, shown the results of all of his past donations and offered the opportunity to donate again. This special touch helps you to acknowledge past donors and make them feel appreciated.

OFFER GIVING LEVEL OPTIONS

Not all donors or members want to give at the same level. Be sure to include several giving options so that donors/members can make the donation at the level they desire. Your fundraising software should allow you to not only offer different giving level options, but also display the options based on the donor's last donation. For example, if a donor gave \$100 one month, the next time he visited the site, he would see giving options for \$100 and more. This helps to encourage increasingly greater gifts.

In addition, your Web site should offer sustainer giving options that allow repeat donors who support any ongoing cause to set up regular online payments. Also, consider offering honor or memorial gifts as another option that can make the gift more meaningful for the donor.

OFFER CONVENIENT ONLINE DONATION PROCESSING



The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers Web site visitors several membership options.

Offering online donation processing can help your organization in multiple ways. Donors often prefer the convenience of making a donation online using their credit card. In addition, providing donors with the option to give online allows you to receive the funds immediately and automatically, versus waiting on the mail for a check that must be manually processed. Choose online fundraising software that offers donation-processing capabilities, including configurable online donation forms so you can choose exactly what donation options you will offer.

GIVE ONGOING FEEDBACK

While most fundraising professionals ensure that every donor gets a thank you message of some kind, they don't always keep the constituent informed about what the organization did with the donation. Constituents can feel disconnected with an organization when they make a donation, and then never hear from the organization again. They may ask themselves, "What happened to my donation? Did it make a difference?" To keep donors involved, be sure to always give feedback. If they make a donation to a specific campaign, for example, send them an email update on a regular schedule to let them know how close the organization is to meeting its goal for that campaign. Then, send them another update to let them know how the organization used the funds. With this simple act, donors will never feel as if their donations were meaningless because they will always know the results of their gifts. And, they'll be more likely to give again when they receive your next fundraising appeal.

→ TIP

Convio's online fundraising software enables you to offer convenient, secure online donation processing, including sustainer giving options that allow repeat donors who support any ongoing cause to set up regular online payments billed directly to their credit card.



Tapping Your Constituents for Volunteer Fundraising

Your constituents are your organization's greatest asset. They share passion for and commitment to your organization's mission. What if you could channel that passion and commitment by turning your constituents into volunteer fundraisers for your organization? Using the right Internet software and strategies, you can.

This section describes how to use the Internet to mobilize your constituents as volunteer fundraisers, motivate them to help raise the funds that are vital to your organization's mission and give them the tools and guidance they need to succeed.

Raising Funds Through Walk/Run Events

Many organizations already have discovered the effectiveness and efficiency of tapping their constituents for fundraising events such as walks and runs. This approach allows you to not only raise funds through participant registration fees, but also provide participants with the motivation and online tools to tap the people they know for contributions, who in turn can reach out to the people they know, and on and on for a continuously growing support base. This approach also enables your staff members to involve constituents directly with your organization, giving supporters a sense of responsibility for your organization's success.

Following are the basics for a successful online program for walk/run volunteer fundraising:

CHOOSE THE LATEST ONLINE TOOLS FOR WALK/RUN FUNDRAISING

To create and maintain an effective volunteer-based fundraising program through walk/run events, it's important that you first select online tools that help you and your volunteers (including event participants, team captains and corporations) manage effective campaigns via the Internet.

Consider the following online software capabilities before choosing your Internet tools:

- **Increasing donations by leveraging corporations** — Jump-start your volunteer participation and raise more funds by leveraging corporations. Choose online software that allows you to set up special administrative access for a designated coordinator at each of your participating companies. You should be able to easily send updates and motivational communications to all company coordinators, their team captains and team participants. The coordinator also should be able to use your online software to easily email updates, reminders, motivational messages and other communications to all team captains and participants within his or her company, encouraging them to tap their networks of friends and family to support your cause. The benefit: Instead of having several teams at the same company raising funds without overall coordination, the company can create a "super team" with a single point of contact between the company and your organization.
- **Communicating with participants, team leaders and company coordinators** — Your organization's central administrator should have online capabilities including Web site activation and email communication to ensure your volunteer network's success. Your administrator should personally communicate with all volunteer fundraisers, or set up automatic emails that remind volunteers to update their Web sites or that encourage and re-activate stalled fundraising campaigns.
- **Tools for participants to create personal fundraising Web pages and send donation appeals via email to their networks of family and friends** — Be sure your online software allows individuals or teams to create and maintain their own Web sites, manage email communications with friends and family regarding their event participation and easily measure and display progress according to their fundraising goals. They should be able to include photos, links and progress reports on their sites, and online donation processing should be fast and secure.

→ TIP

Convio TeamRaiser™ for special event fundraising includes executive summary reports to give you insight into your run/walk event participants and volunteer fundraisers.

MOBILIZE WALK/RUN PARTICIPANTS AS VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISERS

Once you've chosen and implemented your online software, it's important that you get your participants motivated as volunteer fundraisers. The more engaged they are with your program, the more funds they will help you raise.

To maximize results from your walk/run volunteer fundraisers, try these techniques:

- **Get team leaders and company coordinators started early** — The earlier you get your team leaders and company coordinators started on their fundraising activities, the more time they'll have to raise funds and the more likely they will be to meet their goals.
- **Give volunteer fundraisers suggested best practices for their fundraising efforts** — Encourage your volunteer fundraisers to keep their personal pages current to help motivate friends and family to support their fundraising efforts. (Convio clients typically see higher donations from personal pages that are continually updated.) Also, encourage volunteer fundraisers to check their progress regularly to see who has donated to their campaigns, and then send thank you emails to those who have, and reminder emails to those who haven't.
- **Motivate and encourage your volunteer fundraisers** — Send regular emails to keep volunteer fundraisers motivated. Consider sending special messages to those who are close to their goals; and to those who are not. Also, send emails to volunteer fundraisers at intervals — such as four weeks out, three weeks out, and two weeks out — as you reach your event date to keep volunteers engaged. Be sure to include motivational stories to remind them of how their work is helping the organization.

→ TIP

Convio TeamRaiser™ allows you to set up emails to send automatically at specific times, such as two weeks prior to the event, to keep your volunteer fundraisers motivated to reach their fundraising goals.

Driving a New Source of Funds Through Tribute Web Sites

Tapping your constituents for fundraising events such as walks and runs is just the beginning of this unique and effective approach to fundraising. The same approach can be used throughout the year to further tap your constituents to raise funds and drive support. It's done through tribute Web sites in which you give constituents online tools to set up Web sites in memory or in honor of a friend or family member.

From a tribute site, a constituent can tell his or her story about a friend or loved one through Web content tools, send emails to friends and family asking them to visit the site, and solicit donations on behalf of your organization. These activities help your organization raise much-needed funds, reach new constituents and put a personal face on your organization's mission.

Some examples of constituent tribute sites include:

- A site supporting breast cancer research for a loved one who is suffering from or has died from breast cancer;
- A site honoring a community teacher, with donations going to a local reading program;
- A site created by a homeless shelter volunteer, describing how he's been touched by his work, and encouraging friends and family to make donations to the organization; and
- A site in tribute to a grandmother whose lifelong passion was promoting animal welfare, with donations from the site going to a humane organization.

Try the following techniques to create and maximize a tribute site program for your organization:

GIVE CONSTITUENTS CONVENIENT TOOLS FOR TRIBUTE SITES AND EMAILS

By empowering your constituents with a convenient way to support your organization, you can drive new sources of sustainable funding. For example, offer constituents the option to create a tribute site to enable donations in lieu of flowers for a funeral. Visitors and those invited to the site can make donations directly to the organization as a tribute to the person being memorialized. Be sure to choose online software that allows your constituents to easily set up their sites and send emails to friends and family throughout the year.

GIVE CONSTITUENTS SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES

Be sure to communicate with those constituents who have set up tributes sites. Encourage them to keep their sites updated with fundraising progress reports and recent personal stories. Also, suggest that they send solicitation emails on the honoree's birthday, anniversary or other occasion such as Mother's Day or Father's Day to keep their tribute site active.

→ TIP

Be considerate of constituents who may have just suffered a loss. Use more sensitive wording in communications with constituents who have set up memorial sites compared with those who have set up sites honoring a living person or pet.

CONVEY YOUR MISSION THROUGH A LIST OF PERSONAL STORIES

In addition to being an effective fundraising vehicle, tribute sites can be one of the best ways to communicate your mission. A list of many tribute sites with corresponding personal stories conveys a powerful message. For example, an anti-drug organization might have 50 constituent-created memorial sites around victims of drug-related violence, helping the organization further its message and make its concerns more personal and compelling. Consider beginning your tributes program by having your top five strongest supporters establish tribute sites that you can promote on your organization's Web site.

CONSIDER MULTIPLE BENEFITS WHEN MEASURING TRIBUTE SITES

While your online software should allow you to measure the amount of donations made through your tribute sites, be sure to also consider the other benefits of tribute sites to your organization. For example, tribute sites give your supporters an outlet to relate how your organization's mission has touched them or those close to them, getting your constituents more involved and dedicated to ensuring your organization's ongoing success. In addition, your organization will be reaching out to new people as your existing constituents promote their tribute sites to friends and family. The constituents' contacts are more likely to donate and become involved with your organization in other ways since the appeal comes from someone they know and trust.

Measuring Online Fundraising Success

Online donations are a clear measure of fundraising success, but this metric is just one way to define a successful online fundraising program. Several metrics can help you to determine each online campaign's effectiveness at meeting your organization's goals. This section covers several factors that you can use to gauge how well your organization is doing online.

Key Metrics

Any time you run a campaign, it is critical to understand your goals and track key metrics to determine the success of your campaign. Here are three example objectives with corresponding key metrics, benchmark numbers¹ and best practices that you should consider when planning campaigns, evaluating results and determining success:

IMPROVING OUTREACH

Building a base of future supporters by growing your email address file so you can begin an online relationship with them should be a key component of your online plan. The following metrics will help you track your results in improving outreach:

- **Web site traffic growth** — Increasing the number of people visiting your Web site is important because it helps ensure you are increasing your organization's exposure to potential future donors. This is typically measured on a monthly basis so that you can rapidly see the month-over-month impact of specific campaigns on Web site traffic.
- **Percentage of Web site visitors who register**, also known as conversion rate — While getting people to visit your site is important, equally important is getting them to register so that you can capture their email addresses and begin an online relationship with them. It also gives you a better idea of how effective your Web site is in grabbing site visitors' attention. (For more information about calculating conversion rate, see [pages 5-6](#).) A typical conversion rate for organizations is 2 to 3 percent.
- **Email address file growth** — A growing number of names in your email address file is critical to online fundraising success since you need to grow your pool of prospective donors in order to grow overall online dollars raised.

To maximize results for each of these metrics, try these techniques:

- Draw members, constituents and new browsers to your Web site and focus on site traffic growth by promoting the site at offline events, adding frequent content updates and making the site a valuable resource.
- Convert Web site visitors into registered constituents by using a prominently displayed registration field and clearly stated registration benefits. Offer members and other constituents a reason to sign up to receive emails and to return frequently to your Web site.
- Integrate online and offline programs, events and campaigns to draw more people online.
- Use urgent appeals that motivate constituents to forward Web pages and messages to family and friends, also known as viral marketing. Also consider offering incentives and online "gifts" such as email greeting cards that registered site visitors can send to friends and family.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Getting to know your donors and prospects by building a profile of their interests and online interactions with your organization and communicating with them regularly will help you develop

→ TIP

Understanding the return on investment (ROI) for your online software is important when measuring your organization's overall online fundraising success. However, several variables that are unique to each organization can affect this calculation. If you are interested in seeing an estimated ROI for Convio online fundraising software, contact us at 1-888-528-9501, or email info@convio.com.

→ TIP

Email greeting cards, or "eCards," are a great way to build your email address list. With eCards, your constituents can create their own emails — using your email greeting card template, with your organization's branding — to send to their networks of friends and family. Convio's online fundraising software can help you easily create and offer eCards on your Web site.

¹ Benchmark numbers based on average data across Convio client organizations.

a loyal online relationship with them that will lead to ongoing support. Consider these metrics when tracking results in relationship building:

- **Percentage of email file providing a detailed personal profile** — Gathering email addresses and names is a good starting point. However, more detailed profiles about constituent interests, geography and other demographics allow you to segment your list and target constituents with information that interests them most. The greater percentage of people who provide you with details about themselves, the more effective you will likely be in developing relationships and turning them into donors. To develop constituent profiles, determine the four or five pieces of information relevant to your organization for more targeted communications, and begin gathering that information.
- **Email open rate** — This shows how well you're getting through to your constituency and how engaged they have become. Open rate tells you what percent of the total recipients of your message actually opened it. A good open rate is 30 percent or more.
- **Email click-through rate** — This metric is the percentage of your total email recipients who clicked on a link within your message — such as a donation form, petition, survey or other link. This metric shows how effective your email communication was at driving action from recipients. A good click-through rate is 4 to 6 percent, however, organizations see as high as 10 percent for targeted, personalized communications.
- **Email forwarding rate** — This rate indicates how important and effective your messages are to each constituent since the constituents were compelled to forward them to their friends and family. Forwarding rates show how many emails that you sent were forwarded to other people not on your original recipient list. This metric can be shown as a percentage of total emails opened, or as an absolute number.
- **Response rates to surveys and polls** — Surveys and polls enable constituents to provide their feedback and further information about themselves. Measuring the percentage of recipients who fill out surveys is a way to understand how many are open to a deeper relationship with your organization. A 1 to 2 percent response rate typically is good.
- **Opt-out rates on email newsletters** — This is a measurement of the number of people who unsubscribe to your emails each time you send a communication to your email file. It is important to minimize the opt-out rate to maintain a list of interested and engaged constituents, and to avoid getting labeled as a spammer, or someone who repeatedly sends unsolicited emails. Your opt-out rate should be at 0.1 to 0.2 percent.

The following approaches can help you maximize your results for these metrics:

- Ask constituents to indicate their interests, and then offer relevant, personalized content both in email communications and on Web pages.
- Build detailed profiles of constituents over time using surveys and polls, rather than asking for a lot of information up front.
- Integrate between functions within your organization — such as development and advocacy — to build a richer, deeper understanding of each constituent.
- Engage constituents online with surveys, stories, photos and online communities to keep them interested in your organization.
- Use email marketing best practices, such as sending emails at an optimal frequency, to minimize the number of people who opt out of receiving communications from your organization.

→ **TIP**

Using Convio's online fundraising software, you can track multiple metrics, including forwarded click-throughs, which will tell you how many recipients of your forwarded messages clicked through and opened links on your messages.



DRIVING ACTION

The key objective for most online fundraising campaigns is to motivate constituents to respond by making a donation, becoming a member or purchasing a ticket for an event. In addition to overall funds raised online, the following metrics can help you gauge success in driving action:

- **Response rates to email solicitations for donations** — With this metric, you are looking at the percentage of people who responded, versus the total number who received the solicitation email. It's a measure that will help you to determine the effectiveness of each individual email message as well as overall campaign effectiveness. A response rate of 1 percent is good, while anything above 1.5 percent for a targeted, personalized message is very good.
- **Average online vs. offline donation** — This measures how effective your online channel is at soliciting increasing gift sizes, and moving individual donors to increasingly higher levels. Convio clients typically see online donations that are 10 percent higher than offline donations.
- **Overall offline plus online funds raised** — This metric will help you to determine if your campaigns are meeting or exceeding your organization's goals. It is particularly important for campaigns that include both direct mail, telemarketing and email/Web site communications so you can see the overall effectiveness of the multiple communication methods.
- **What percentage of the email file donates** — This metric helps you predict the total value of your email file as well as the incremental value of adding an online constituent. Measure this throughout the course of a campaign, and throughout the year, to determine the proportion of people in your email file who became donors for each period. Greater than 5 percent is very good for this metric.
- **What percentage of respondents are new donors from each online campaign** — It's important to understand how many new donors you are reaching online to ensure a constantly growing pool. This metric will help you to determine how many new donors you are gaining with each online campaign, and how that number is changing over time. A 55 percent rate for this metric is very good. Convio clients have seen as high as 98 percent new donors in a single online campaign.
- **Number of Web donors** — For every fundraising campaign on your Web site, look at how many browsers turn into donors by measuring the number of people who donate via the Web site (versus those donating in direct response to an email solicitation). This metric will help you determine how effective your Web site content is for motivating donations.

Try these techniques to improve results for these metrics:

- Use urgent, timely calls to action with clear deadlines and purposes.
- Develop a relationship with constituents by providing them with something of value prior to asking them to take action.
- Provide constituents with multiple ways to respond, to match a variety of preferences.
- Use **micro-campaigns** — each with a specific purpose — rather than a single, broad online request for donations.
- Offer premiums — such as a certificate or bumper sticker — in exchange for online gifts.



Other Online Success Factors

The true value of the Internet for any organization is in creating and sustaining constituent relationships to ensure ongoing support. This is achieved by implementing an online Constituent Relationship Management (eCRM) strategy to involve constituents, especially donors, in more than one activity so they can provide support for the organization in multiple ways at different times.

Consider these factors, which, in many cases, are more significant to the organization than online donations, when evaluating the overall success of your online fundraising efforts:

DRIVE ONLINE AND OFFLINE GIVING

Consumers frequently conduct research online before making a purchase. However, when making the decision about where to make actual purchases, they tend to follow individual preferences based on convenience, comfort with online transactions and other factors. Donors, like consumers, make gifts or purchases where they feel most comfortable and, for some donors, that still is through traditional methods such as direct mail or telephone. Keep in mind that your online communications and appeals will likely drive offline donations, and remember to factor that into the assessment of your online success.

INCREASE DONOR LIFETIME VALUE

The lifetime value of a donor is based upon his average gift level, gift frequency and expected retention rate. Each of these variables depends on the quality of the organization's relationship with the donor. Effectively communicating with your donors and involving them in additional activities — such as advocacy, volunteering and sending messages to friends — will likely help you develop closer and stronger donor relationships.

Research by the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy (published in *FRM Weekly*) suggests how important this is. One thousand lapsed donors from nine charities were asked why they discontinued giving. The study yielded the following "Top Ten Reasons Why Donors Stop Giving":

10. Charity did not inform donor how contribution was used (1.7 percent)
9. Charity asked for an inappropriate donation amount (3.1 percent)
8. Charity did not remind donor to give again (3.3 percent)
7. Charity's communications were inappropriate (3.6 percent)
6. Death (5.2 percent)
5. Donor relocated (6.7 percent)
4. Donor still supports charity by other means (6.8 percent)
3. No memory of ever supporting charity (11.4 percent)
2. No longer able to afford support (22.3 percent)
1. Feeling that other causes were more deserving (26.5 percent)

Most of these reasons for lapsed giving could be attributed to poor donor relationships. Traditional mass communications such as direct mail and telemarketing focus primarily on solicitation, but the Internet opens up a world of new possibilities for donor relations because of the ease and low cost of sending constituents frequent, targeted and personalized online communications. Remember when measuring online success that online communications increase an organization's capacity to build stronger, more personalized relationships. And, that often leads to greater lifetime value of each donor.

REDUCE COMMUNICATION AND FUNDRAISING COSTS

Paper-based communications such as newsletters, member updates and program guides are expensive. By moving many of these communications online, you can significantly reduce costs without sacrificing the frequency or quality of communications. While the Internet will never completely replace paper-based communication, in some instances — for example, urgent appeals based on a current event — email and Web site content are stronger alternatives. Plus, by using the latest online fundraising software, you can prevent information overload for your constituents (and cost overload for your organization) by only sending relevant information to your constituents based upon preferences they indicate through online registration and other means.

SUPPORT MAJOR GIVING

As your donors become more comfortable giving online, your organization likely will see larger transactions over the Internet. That said, consider using the Internet to support traditional major giving efforts. This will allow your organization to cost-effectively expand its capacity to communicate regularly in a personalized manner with large groups of major donors and prospects, resulting in more "marketing coverage" at a reduced overall cost.

CONTRIBUTE IN OTHER AREAS

Donors and prospects may want to support your organization in ways other than providing financial support. This support can be just as valuable as a direct financial contribution. A nonprofit can use email and Web site content to encourage constituents to volunteer, participate in advocacy campaigns, attend fundraising events and forward your organization's messages to friends.

Ten Tips for Successful Online Fundraising

by Brian Walsh, associate director, Fundraising Division, Changing Our World, Inc.

While organizations' approaches to online fundraising can vary based on mission, staff resources and constituent base, every online fundraising program should have four basic goals:

- Make people aware of your organization
- Get people to care about your organization
- Encourage people to support your organization
- Keep people connected to your organization

Here are ten quick tips that will help you reach these goals and get the results you want from your online fundraising efforts:

1. Drive traffic. Never pass up an opportunity to gather email addresses at your functions and encourage people to register at your Web site — even if they don't donate — so you can continue to cultivate them. Network with other relevant organizations so you can place links and ads on their sites to drive potential donors to your site. In your offline publications, highlight your Web site and the benefits of donating online.

2. Know your audience. Who do you hope will donate to your organization? Keep in mind their age, technological comfort level, and Internet connection when creating an online fundraising presence. A Web site heavy on graphics and presentations, for example, may turn off a potential donor connecting via a slower connection.

3. Maintain your brand. Your online identity and message should reflect your offline identity and message, since that's the brand with which your constituents identify. It is important to maintain consistency among all communication channels.

4. Stay fresh. View your Web site as a high-impact marketing and communications tool. Keep it updated. This demonstrates that your organization continues to have relevance and an impact. Potential donors aren't likely to have confidence in an organization that last updated its site in 1999. A vibrant, useful, user-friendly site will not only engage first-time visitors, but also encourage them to return.

5. Make it easy. While a Web site should tell about the nonprofit's mission through vivid graphics and inspiring stories, it also must allow both casual browsers and frequent visitors to donate to the organization. People don't want to wade through Web pages to discover how they can donate online. Make the donation process easy by posting the "donate now" button clearly and prominently on every Web page.

6. Be clear, be brief. Articulate your organization's mission on your home page. Individuals' attention spans are much shorter on the Internet than they are reading through a brochure or an annual report — especially if it is on a site they have stumbled onto. You have a short window of time to "sell" your organization to these types of visitors, and don't want to lose their attention.

7. Get personal. If you don't personalize email, you should. Each online interaction with a constituent is an opportunity to learn more about his or her interests, which you can use to personalize communications. Personalized communications are more relevant and help organizations break through the increasing barrage of generic emails cluttering people's in-boxes. Also, work on achieving the right tone. You wouldn't just take a direct mail letter and slap it into an e-mail message any more than you would put a phone-a-thon script in an envelope and mail it. E-mail should be a bit more casual, as if you were dropping a note to a friend.

8. Make it interactive. Think of online fundraising as building an online community. Provide people the opportunity to sign up to volunteer on your Web site. Allow donors to post messages and publicly share their reasons for giving. Encourage donors to spread your organization's message to people they know. Allow people to choose what information about your organization they want to hear more about from you.

9. Keep track. Measure email response to find out what to do more of — and what to stop doing. Here's one approach: Split your email list into two groups and mail the same content to both groups using different subject lines. Then, see which version is opened more frequently. Another idea: Experiment with story order in your e-newsletter, and track click-throughs to see which story gets more response. Look for software that will allow you to track click-throughs on emails and Web pages and test the effectiveness of email messages so you can learn what's most effective.

10. Stay flexible and adapt. Some people want to mail a check. Others want to charge their donation by phone. Still others want to give online. Provide an array of easy-to-use options so that your donors can choose the means they like best. All methods should work together for the benefit of your donor, and your organization. Be ready to adjust your online fundraising program to reflect what works best with your constituents.

Brian Walsh is an associate director in the Fundraising Division of Changing Our World, Inc., a leading fundraising and philanthropy services consulting firm helping nonprofits and corporate grant-makers achieve their philanthropic goals. For more information about Changing Our World, visit www.changingourworld.com.

Online Fundraising in Action: Examples from Successful Nonprofits

As an increasing number of organizations take their fundraising efforts online, more examples of effective campaign strategies are emerging. Here are just a few examples of effective approaches from some of today's leading nonprofit organizations:

Current Event Campaigns

Because the Internet allows for fast communication, it is ideal for creating campaigns around current events. By jumping into action immediately following a current event, your organization can create a fundraising campaign that grabs constituents' attention and moves them to respond. Jewish National Fund executed a good example of this type of campaign. After the space shuttle Columbia disaster in early 2003, the organization quickly set up an online campaign to accept donations in memory of the first Israeli astronaut as well as the entire crew. This timely campaign raised \$75,000 online within 72 hours.

The screenshot shows the Jewish National Fund's website with a campaign for the one-year anniversary of the Space Shuttle Columbia crash. The page includes a search bar, a navigation menu with links like 'LOG IN', 'HISTORY', and 'DONATION OPPORTUNITIES', and a central article titled 'Ilan Ramon & the Columbia Crew'. To the right of the article are several call-to-action buttons: 'CLICK HERE TO PLANT A TREE IN ISRAEL', 'CLICK HERE FOR JNF STORE', 'CLICK HERE TO EARN 12% ON YOUR MONEY', 'CLICK HERE TO EARN MONEY FOR YOUR CONGREGATION OR ORGANIZATION', and 'CLICK HERE FOR TAX WISE GIVING'. A quote from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is also visible at the bottom of the article.

Jewish National Fund's online campaign following the space shuttle disaster raised \$75,000 online within 72 hours.

eCards

eCards are a powerful communication tool that can help leverage one of your greatest assets — your existing supporters. With eCards, you offer online greeting cards on your Web site so constituents can send them to friends and relatives. Because people send eCards to others with whom they already have a personal relationship, recipients are more likely to open these communications and read the content, which may include a fundraising appeal.

While eCards help increase awareness about an organization, they also can be used to:

- **Build an organization's email file** — An organization can include a message that encourages card recipients to visit the organization's Web site and sign up for an email newsletter or other online communication. Compelling content, including an attention-getting graphic, helps drive response. Convio clients often use this type of eCard as a simple way to add new constituents to their email files.
- **Get people to donate to a timely campaign or in the wake of current events** — A nonprofit can use eCards to quickly send a high-impact message. For example, a relief organization could include a photograph of flood victims with information about the extent of

→ TIP

Convio's eCard capabilities — included with Convio's email marketing software — allow an organization to create its own unique online greeting cards by uploading photos, logos and other graphics into eCard templates on its Web site.



damage the people have suffered. This kind of communication can motivate people to donate, volunteer and become involved in a timely cause.

- **Expand a campaign's reach** — eCards can increase the effectiveness of almost any campaign. For example, an organization promoting a membership drive through email, direct mail and telemarketing could add a series of membership eCards to its Web site, encouraging existing members and other constituents to send them to friends and family.
- **Provide constituents with an online service** — Constituents typically are involved with an organization because they care about its mission. By offering graphical, motivational, humorous, fun or informative eCards, an organization provides a valuable service for constituents. They now have an easy and fun-to-use tool for promoting the group and its cause to others. Compared with a form letter sent from an organization's Web site, eCards are a friendlier, more personal way for a constituent to encourage someone he or she knows to get involved.

Membership Campaigns

Using the Internet can help member-based organizations to recruit new members through targeted email solicitations to its email file. In addition, it can help organizations steward relationships with existing members, positively influencing renewal rates. An example: Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh boosted its member renewals and revenue through regular, personalized email communications including email newsletters and other communications based on each constituent's interests. This attention to developing e-relationships worked. In 2003, 88 percent of the members who received email newsletters renewed and 72 percent who received other email updates renewed, while overall renewal rates were 62 percent. In addition, the organization developed a dedicated area on its Web site for membership, offering multiple member level options and opportunities to log in for special member information. The organization raised \$121,000 online in 2003 after taking membership sales online for the first time in late 2002.

Another example: Chicago Public Radio has seen strong results through focusing on donor/member service using the Internet. Historically, a major challenge for public broadcasting stations has been retention of first-year members, however, sending members a high quality email newsletter has helped Chicago Public Radio grow first-year member retention rates. Those members who received the newsletter renewed at a 20 percent higher rate than those who did not.

Micro-Campaigns

Micro-campaigns can be a highly effective way of raising funds quickly for a specific project by targeting constituents who would be most likely to donate to the campaign. For example, the SPCA of Texas sent email appeals to dog owners, requesting donations in support of replacing plastic water bowls — which can harbor bacteria — with more hygienic stainless steel bowls for the SPCA's dogs. In another campaign, the organization targeted cat owners with an email appeal for donations to support the purchase of cat litter for the SPCA's animal care centers. The result: the organization doubled its goals for both email appeals. Not only are these types of campaigns highly effective, they also allow you to conduct more campaigns without over-mailing the constituents in your email address file.




THE PAW STREET E-JOURNAL

Hello, Jennifer!

The SPCA of Texas' kitty bathrooms "out of order"? Well, not really but ... with kitten season in full bloom, we're almost completely out of cat litter! For as little as \$3.00 you can help the orphaned cats in our care!



As mentioned in the June issue of the **Paw Street e-Journal**, the SPCA facilities - located in Dallas, Collin County & The Colony - use almost 1,200 pounds of litter each & every month. We desperately need to replenish our supply as quickly as possible ... the cats are depending on us!

The cat litter is purchased in "bulk" and delivered to & unloaded at each facility. The cost is only 15 cents per pound. For less than a quarter-pounder value meal, you can make a big difference for the orphaned cats in our care at this critical time by donating to our [Summer Cat Litter Drive!](#)

This urgent appeal is for a day-to-day necessity for the kitties in our care and regardless of size, every penny will be used to purchase the much-needed cat litter. Will you please consider making a [donation](#) to our Summer Cat Litter Drive?

20 lbs.	= \$ 3.00
35 lbs.	= \$ 5.25
50 lbs.	= \$ 7.50
75 lbs.	= \$11.25
100 lbs.	= \$15.00

The SPCA of Texas uses micro-campaigns to target constituents most likely to donate.

Online Auctions

Many organizations already use auctions for raising funds. However, adding an online component, or taking the entire auction online, can enhance results. An example: For its second annual black-tie fundraising gala, the National Trust for Historic Preservation — a national organization — involved more than its local Washington-DC constituents by taking the gala's auction online using Convio partner cMarket's Internet auction solution.

By opening the auction to a wider constituency, NTHP was able to identify constituents with a previously unknown higher capacity for giving based on their purchase of high-end auction items.

After learning key lessons from its first online auction — such as which items tend to raise more in online bidding versus live bidding — the organization plans to expand its online auction in the future, offering some items exclusively online and possibly even turning the auction into an online-only event.

Premium-Based Campaigns

Offering premiums, or gifts, for donations not only provides additional incentives for constituents to donate, it also gives your organization another chance to show donor appreciation. Chicago Public Radio, for example, offers premiums including chances to win prizes as an incentive for constituents to pledge a donation by a specified date. The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers gifts, such as a free tote bag, for new members.

Special Events

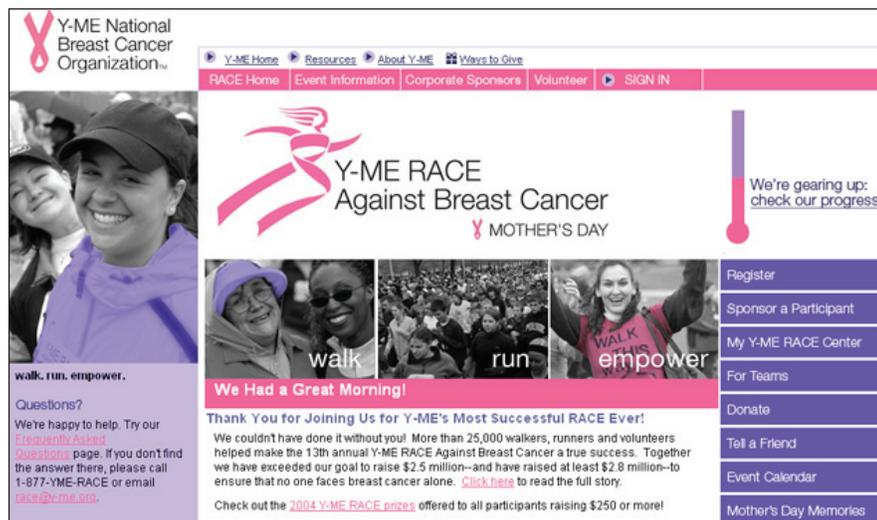
A key component of many organizations' development programs, events are a great way to raise funds. Increasingly, organizations are publicizing events through email communications and their Web sites to improve attendance and donations.

Taking the use of the Internet even further, some organizations offer online participation for their events. An example: Booz Allen Hamilton — one of the world's leading strategy and technology consulting firms — used Convio's online software to allow people to participate in its Booz Allen Classic PGA Tour tournament, which raised funds in 2004 through the Birdies for Charity program. Birdies for Charity is a fundraising vehicle used at more than 20 professional golf tournaments. Through this program, golf fans support a charity by pledging donations for every birdie — a score of one stroke better than par on any hole — made by a PGA Tour professional during a golf tournament. Birdies for Charity traditionally has been conducted offline through fundraising techniques such as paper-based pledge forms.

The Booz Allen Classic kicked off its Birdies for Charity online fundraising drive several weeks prior to the tournament. Golf fans and other supporters interested in participating online would go to the Web site and choose a favorite charity from a drop-down menu of nearly 40 D.C.-area organizations. The donor would then select a pledge amount — from one cent to one dollar per birdie. During a professional tournament, players typically make about 1,500 birdies, so a pledge of one penny per birdie generates a \$15 donation, a dollar per birdie raises \$1500 and so on.

Volunteer Fundraising

Every organization understands the importance of its supporters, so why not take advantage of this valuable asset by empowering them to raise money in support of your organization? Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization used this approach for its annual RACE Against Breast Cancer fundraiser, enlisting the help of volunteers to raise money on behalf of the organization. Using Convio TeamRaiser™, the organization gave its volunteers online tools for setting up their own fundraising pages and sending email solicitations to their networks of friends and family. For its 2004 RACE, the organization exceeded its goal of \$2.5 million to raise \$2.75 million, with more than \$1 million raised online.



Y-ME gives volunteer fundraisers the tools to help raise funds for the organization.

In another example, the Howard Dean for America presidential campaign motivated hundreds of thousands of supporters to raise funds on behalf of the campaign. This approach, based on viral marketing, allowed the campaign to provide supporters with the motivation and online tools to touch the people they know, and allowed those supporters to touch the people they know, and on and on for a continuously growing support base. The result: the campaign raised more than \$11 million in less than 180 days. By encouraging supporters to reach out to their networks and by providing them with online tools to reach those networks, any organization can take advantage of this "viral" marketing technique to create an ongoing ripple of interest and support.



Spotlight on Convio: Comprehensive Solutions for Online Fundraising

Convio software and services help nonprofit organizations and higher education institutions use the Internet to build strong constituent relationships that drive support and participation. Convio's software suite includes Convio Fundraising and TeamRaiser™ for driving online donations. As with all Convio software, the Fundraising Center and TeamRaiser feature Best Practices Built In™ to help you follow the steps needed to ensure you get the most from your online programs, regardless of your technical expertise.

CONVIO FUNDRAISING

Convio Fundraising delivers the capabilities you need to raise funds online. More than a "donate now" button on your Web site, Convio Fundraising helps you build and grow donor/member relationships, and drive donations through online campaigns. It lets you create and send emails and build Web pages in support of your fundraising campaigns, and it lets you customize information, gift levels and campaigns to each donor's interests — helping you significantly grow online gifts.

Convio Fundraising includes:

- email marketing capabilities
- configurable online forms and surveys
- fundraising/membership Web page publishing tools
- donation/membership transaction processing
- Convio Rewards for online loyalty programs
- email greeting cards
- calendar and event registration
- online auction capabilities
- comprehensive reporting tools

CONVIO TEAMRAISER™

Convio TeamRaiser is a complete solution for tapping into the personal networks of your strongest supporters and mobilizing volunteers over the Internet. It allows you to take advantage of your most valuable assets — your supporters — by empowering them to raise more money in support of your cause with a convenient, effective way to solicit donations from friends and family.

With TeamRaiser, you can give volunteers the tools they need to easily set up Web pages associated with your organization and events, plus email communication capabilities to mobilize friends and family, easy online donation capabilities and reports for measuring progress. TeamRaiser also offers optional event management tools for posting a calendar to your Web site that displays event listings and allows constituents to register or purchase tickets for events online.

TeamRaiser includes:

- online participant center
- personal pages for participants
- email tools for participants
- email marketing capabilities for the organization
- Web publishing tools for posting event information
- configurable gift and registration forms
- credit card processing
- comprehensive reporting

A COMPLETE VIEW OF CONSTITUENTS

Convio Fundraising and TeamRaiser include Constituent360™, the online database that centralizes constituent data and integrates with offline databases, giving you a unified view of constituent interests — key for personalized, targeted outreach and communications.

For more information about Convio software and services, visit www.convio.com.



Glossary

Above the Fold

The portion of a Web page or email that is visible without scrolling. The fold varies depending on the resolution settings on a visitor's monitor. At lower settings (i.e. 640x480) the fold is relatively high on the page. At higher settings (i.e. 1280x1024) the fold extends much further down the page. Decisions concerning what goes above or below the fold are often made based on a minimum targeted resolution.

Blogs

Personal journals that are frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. Blogs generally represent the personality of the author or the Web site and its purpose. Topics sometimes include brief philosophical musings, commentary on Internet and other social issues, and links to other sites the author favors. The essential characteristics of the blog are its journal form, typically a new entry each day, and its informal style.

eCRM (Online Constituent Relationship Management)

Using the Internet for the process of collecting information about past, current and prospective constituents, tracking their activity with the organization and aiming to build relationships with them to encourage future support.

Email Appending

The process of adding an individual's e-mail address to that individual's record inside a marketer's existing database. This is accomplished by matching the marketer's database against a third-party, permission-based database to produce a corresponding e-mail address.

Micro-Campaigns

Campaigns targeted to constituents who would be most likely to respond to the campaign subject matter.

Online Community

A community of constituents sharing common interests, ideas and feelings over the Internet.

Page Wrapper

A consistent, graphical element (usually in the masthead position or along the left side of the page) that is branded to your organization and frames the content of each page of your Web site.

Spam Checker

Software functionality that allows you to check emails prior to sending for anything that might trigger spam filters — such as excessive punctuation in a subject line.

Targeting

Sending the right message to the right recipient at the right time.

URL

Universal Resource Locator, or the "address" of a particular Web page.

Viral Marketing

Marketing phenomenon that facilitates and encourages people to pass along a marketing message.