



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Strategic Engagement: Activities for Sustainable Individual Giving**

By

Colette Whitney

cmwhitney@dons.usfca.edu

Capstone Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master in Nonprofit Administration

School of Management

University of San Francisco

Spring 2017

Professor Marco Tavanti, PhD.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this capstone project is to discover the trends and activities that lead sustainable individual giving. The intention is for nonprofits to recognize these trends and activities and use them in their development departments to help generate more revenue and retain their donors. The retention and additional revenue will help nonprofits better fulfill their missions and grow their programs. The methods used for data collection were a literature review, three expert interviews from nonprofit leaders, three expert interviews from philanthropists and an online survey completed by 210 individuals. The results show that proper communication, transparency and relationship building are key factors that will lead to sustainable individual giving.

**Keywords:** nonprofit, relationships, communication, donors, retention, sustainability

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	2
Right Communication	2
Relationship Building	4
Retention	6
Methods	7
Primary Data	7
Secondary Data	12
Data Results and Analysis	12
Expert Interviews, Philanthropists	12
Expert Interviews, Nonprofits	14
Survey Results	17
Conclusions and Recommendations	28
References	31

## **Introduction**

This capstone project will analyze, evaluate and determine what it takes to achieve sustainable individual giving programs in the nonprofit sector. Individual giving is the charitable gifts that are made by the general public to help raise revenue for nonprofit organizations. The gifts that are made by the donors who support the work of the nonprofit's programs and its mission. It is the Development team's job to manage and grow these relationships to maintain a healthy organization.

The goal is to examine individual giving trends and activities to uncover the best practices that nonprofit organizations can use in their development and fundraising teams. With sustainable individual giving, nonprofits will be able to generate more revenue which will help achieve a larger impact and better fulfill their mission.

## **Literature Review**

This literature review covers information gathered from six different publications related to nonprofit fundraising. The top three common themes across these publications that best relate to sustainable individual giving are communication, relationship building and donor retention.

### **Right Communication**

In order for nonprofits to increase their donor base and retain their current donors, there has to be a strategy around communication. Nonprofits need an effective way to share their mission and programs so people can understand their impact and make a connection. Burnett and Thompson explain that successful fundraising and communication involves storytelling (Burnett, K & Thompson, J 2002). Storytelling creates imagery and gives people an emotional connection that they can relate to. It creates perspective for donors and gives them a way to understand and retain the nonprofit's impact and gives them the ability to share the impact to others in a non technical way. When trying to cultivate donors, nonprofits need to "Persuade with a story. They want to solve a problem because it's solvable." (Brooks, J 2016) For donors to stay connected to a nonprofit they have to feel like they are contributing to help solve a problem that they care about. They also have to feel that there is an end goal. If donors don't feel like their contribution is making a difference, they can become discouraged and either go to a nonprofit that has a more transparent impact or put their efforts towards a cause where the problem is actually solvable. Brooks says "The best story of all is the story where the donor is the hero." (Brooks, J 2016) The donor has to feel that they are the one making the difference so that they will continue to contribute.

In addition to being a good storyteller, nonprofits have to be good listeners. They need to take a step back and listen to their donors. Panas surveyed donors about what makes a good

fundraiser, and the feedback he got back was round listening. “The donors we spoke with commended the solicitor for truly listening.” (Panas, J 2016). Donors see the nonprofit organizations from a different perspective. It is easy for nonprofit staff to get stuck in their old ways and coast through the year especially if they hitting their quotas. They can be reluctant to change which prohibits innovation. “Great fundraising requires imagination. Too much fundraising look like everything else.” (Burnett, K & Thompson, J 2002) There is a lot of competition in the nonprofit sector and it is important to them to differentiate themselves to stand out and be memorable. Nonprofits need to look outside the box for new ideas and innovation and one way of doing that is listening to their donors. Donors come from a variety of backgrounds and their advice and expertise could help bring nonprofits to the next level. One way of connecting with donors and building trust is to listen to their ideas and advice about the nonprofit’s programs. This gives the donor a different way of connecting with the organization other than supporting it monetarily.

Nonprofits also need to ask and listen to what their donors care about and learn how they want to be communicated with. Nonprofits use many forms of communication to get their message across, trying to hit as many constituents as possible. These communications include social media, email, phone calls, meetings, events, and mail. How much communication is too much communication? There can be times when over communication can turn donors off because it becomes invasive. This is why nonprofits should ask their donors how they want to be communicated with and what type of information is important to them. Sargeant and Shang say, “Surveys measure donor satisfaction”. (Sargeant, A & Shang, J. 2010) Sending out surveys is an easy way of understanding what donors want and need. Nonprofits can take the survey results and use the data to change or improve their programs and practices. Craver explains,

“By eliminating activities [communications] that don’t matter to donors and improving those that do, we’re creating a meaningfully different experience for our most loyal donors and delivering significantly more revenue from them with no mid-level or major gift officer required”. (Craver, R.M. 2014).

What Craver is saying is that nonprofits need to know their donor base and segment communication activities that are meaningful for those individuals. They should refrain from sending one standard blanket of information out to the whole database. Donors don’t want to receive massive amounts of communication about programs or issues they don’t care about. If that type of communication continues they could become bored or stop opening and reading the communications all together. The meaningful experience ties back into trust and loyalty and the donor will keep coming back wanting to know more. When nonprofits listen to their donors, the donors feel valued which will result in a deeper connection and relationship.

### **Relationship Building**

Fundraising is in the business of relationship building. One cannot build trust with the donors without establishing some type of relationship and personal connection with them. Craver describes personal connections with donors as “Personal Connection-Making the donor feel that they are an important part of the cause. The donor has to believe that the organization knows him or her and truly cares.” (Craver, R.M. 2014). The nonprofit development teams have to invest their time and resources into their donors if they want a long term relationship that they can count on and keep coming back to. Burnett and Thompson say, “People give to people.” (Burnett, K & Thompson, J 2002). It is easy for some nonprofits to be more focused on the “sale” and don’t take the time to make the personal connection with their donors. Relationships are built on trust and donors don’t want to feel taken advantage of. It is important to keep the

human relationship and not forget that it is a person, not just a dollar amount. Burnett and Thompson make an important point, “friend making comes before fundraising. Fundraising is not selling, fundraisers and donors are on the same side.” (Burnett, Thompson, J 2002).

Nonprofit development teams are numbers driven and it can be hard to see past that. Once fundraisers and donors are on the same level, the connections will deepen and the donor will become more invested.

Panas explains that fundraisers need certain qualities to build relationships with their donors. He says, “When asked what was it that made that person an effective solicitor? I call it my Three Es: Empathy, Energy, and Enthusiasm these are the qualities the donors all talked about.” (Panas, J 2016). Fundraising is a difficult job that deals with many personalities and situations so it is important that these people have enough energy and enthusiasm to represent the nonprofit. Fundraiser’s jobs are to get donors excited and wanting to learn more. They also need to have empathy and listen to the donor’s story about why they are connected to the cause and be able to show support and sympathy towards that when appropriate.

An interesting study from Craver found that “The average nonprofit has 60-70 percent chance of obtaining additional contributions from existing donors; a 20-40 percent probability of securing a gift from a recently lapsed donor; but less than a 2 percent chance of receiving a gift from a prospect.” (Craver, R.M. 2014). This indicates the importance of keeping a good relationship with current donors and nonprofits should focus the majority of their time on them rather than wasting the majority of their time and resources on prospects. When it comes to building and maintaining relationships Craver developed these indicators for donor commitment:

#### 7 Key Drivers of Donor Commitment

1. Donor perceives your organization to be effective in trying to achieve its mission
2. Donor knows what to expect from your organization with each interaction



3. Donor receives timely thank-yous
4. Donor receives opportunities to make his or her views known
5. Donor is given the feeling that he or she is part of an important cause
6. Donor feels his or her involvement is appreciated
7. Donor receives information showing who is being helped

(Craver, R.M. 2014)

If donors achieve these drivers they will be more likely to stay committed to the organization which will result in long term sustainability.

## **Retention**

Another way for nonprofits to achieve sustainability is to have high donor retention. In a 2013 study by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, only 65 of the 2,377 organizations that were surveyed had a retention rate of over 70%. (Craver, R.M. 2014). Nonprofits need to understand their constituents and get to the root of why their donors donate only one time without returning. Craver explains that the top reasons why donors stop donating to organizations:

- 5% thought the charity didn't need them
- 8% did not receive information on how monies were used
- 9% had no memory of supporting
- 13% never got thanked for donating
- 18% received poor service or communication
- 36% others (nonprofits) are more deserving
- 54% could no longer afford

(Craver, R.M. 2016)

Six of these seven reasons are issues that nonprofits have the ability to control if they made some changes in their communications and strategy with donors. This goes back to the importance of communication and why it is crucial to survey and receive feedback from donors. “The only way to arrive at a truly effective results producing retention solution is to identify and scale- the experiences that positively affect your donors’ commitment and repair or eliminate those that

don't.” (Craver, R.M. 2014). The results will be different from organization to organization however, Craver found seven actions that every nonprofit should do to keep their donors:

1. Fix donor experience pain points
2. Map all touch points across channels
3. Measure and manage relationships
4. Segment constituents based on needs
5. Organized around key segments
6. Design a desired constituent experience
7. Identify experiences that matter

(Craver, R.M. 2014)

The first step to achieving sustainable individual giving is to understand where the organization is with their communication, relationships and their retention with their donors. Once the nonprofit has an idea and receives feedback from the donors around these topics, they will be able to make the necessary organizational changes that will strengthen their individual giving practices.

### Methods

This project contains four different methods for data collection to get a broad range of both quantitative and qualitative data. The primary data included expert interviews from both philanthropists and nonprofit organizations and a survey. The secondary data incorporates publications from books and published articles.

### Primary Data

**Expert Interviews, Philanthropists.** To get the donor’s perspective three philanthropists from three generations were asked the same six questions regarding their personal relationship to the organizations they donate to and what motivates them to maintain their support and connection. Figure x shows the details and the questions that were asked to each individual.

Name	Generation	Organizations Involved
Adam Swig	Millennial	Plans parties and fundraising

		events for numerous nonprofits such as bay.org, Toys for Tots, Reboot, Project Homeless Connect, Imprint City
Kelly Nice	Baby Boomer	Previous Board Chair, San Francisco Parks Alliance
Pamela Buttery	Silent Generation	Founder, Friends like Me, at the San Francisco ARC

Interview Questions:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What makes you feel connected to an organization you donate to?</li> <li>2. What type of communication do you think is most effective from a nonprofit?</li> <li>3. How do you like to be involved with organizations you donate to?</li> <li>4. What makes you stay loyal and connected to organizations?</li> <li>5. What is one thing a nonprofit can do what would turn you off and make you no longer want to donate to them?</li> <li>6. What is your relationship like with the nonprofit you donate to the most?</li> </ol>

**Expert Interviews, Nonprofit Organizations.** To understand the different types of communication and strategies that nonprofits use for their individual giving and fundraising, four different organizations of different industries and sizes were interviewed. Figure x shows the breakdown of the organization and the questions that were asked to each individual.

Name and Title	Organization	Industry	Income
----------------	--------------	----------	--------

Curt Yagi, Executive Director	ROCK (Real Options for City Kids)	Youth Development	1.4 M
Jen Botch, Director of Development	bay.org	Environment	12 M
Daniel Lewis, VP of Development and Campaign Director	Saint Mary's College of California	Education	187 M

Interview Questions:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What type of fundraising campaigns do you do per year?</li> <li>2. What are your different forms of communication to donors?</li> <li>3. How do you manage your donor relations?</li> <li>4. What type of ways do you keep your donors engaged?</li> <li>5. What was your most successful campaign and why do you think it was successful?</li> <li>6. Why do you think nonprofits lose donors?</li> <li>7. What do you consider a major gift? (dollar wise)</li> </ol>

**Survey.** An online survey was created with Google Forms that consisted of thirteen multiple choice and rating scale questions. This survey was distributed through social media and email with a total of 210 participants. The participants included anyone that has given a monetary donation to a nonprofit organization and they were required to answer all thirteen questions. The purpose of this survey was to understand why and how donors give to organizations and analyze the different types of relationships and communications that are presented through the results. Figure xx shows the questions that were included in the survey.

Survey Questions:

1. What gender do you identify yourself with?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Other
2. What is your age?
  - a. 18 and below
  - b. 19 to 25 years old
  - c. 26 to 40 years old
  - d. 41 to 55 years old
  - e. 56 to 65 years old
  - f. 66 to 80 years old
  - g. 80+ years old
3. On average, how many nonprofit organizations do you donate to per year?
  - a. 1
  - b. 2-3
  - c. 4-5
  - d. 6-7
  - e. 8-9
  - f. 10+
4. On average, how many times a year do you donate to a single/the same nonprofit?
  - a. 1 time annually
  - b. 2-3 times per year
  - c. 4-5 times per year
  - d. 5-10 times per year
  - e. Monthly
5. On average, how much money do you donate to nonprofit organizations per year?
  - a. \$250 or below
  - b. \$251-\$500
  - c. \$501-\$1,000
  - d. \$1,001-\$5,000
  - e. \$5,001-\$10,000
  - f. \$10,001-\$20,000
  - g. \$20,001-\$50,000
  - h. \$50,001-\$100,000
  - i. \$100,001+
6. How do you most often donate money to nonprofit organizations?
  - a. By attending fundraising events
  - b. By mail campaign
  - c. Online or through social media
  - d. In person
  - e. Over the phone
7. Please rate your preferred method of donating money. 5 being your highest preference and 1 being your lowest preference
  - a. Attending fundraising events

- b. By mail campaign
  - c. In person
  - d. Online or Social Media
  - e. Over the phone
8. In what ways are you connected with the organizations that you donate money to?  
Please check all that apply:
- a. I volunteer with them
  - b. I am on their Board of Directors
  - c. I have friends that work there
  - d. I attend their events
  - e. I work or used to work there
  - f. I have family that works there
  - g. I have friends or family that are affiliated with them
  - h. I do not have a direct connection with them
9. Please rate the different forms of nonprofit communications (scale: strongly disagree to strongly agree)
- a. I like when I get a call from a nonprofit I donate to
  - b. I like when I get mail campaigns from nonprofits I donate to
  - c. I like when I receive emails from nonprofits I donate to
  - d. I like when I go to meet with nonprofits I donate to
  - e. I like attending events put on by nonprofits that I donate to
10. On average, how often do you receive communications (emails, calls, mail) from nonprofits that you donate to?
- a. Weekly
  - b. Every two weeks
  - c. Monthly
  - d. Quarterly (every 3 months)
  - e. Once a year
  - f. I don't receive any communications
11. How often do you like to receive communications (emails, calls, mail) from nonprofits that you donate to?
- a. Weekly
  - b. Every two weeks
  - c. Monthly
  - d. Quarterly (every 3 months)
  - e. Once a year
  - f. I don't like to receive communications
12. How many years have you been donating to the nonprofit that you give the highest dollar amount to?
- a. Less than one year
  - b. 1-2 years
  - c. 3-5 years
  - d. 6-10 years
  - e. 11-15 years
  - f. 16-20 years
  - g. 20+ years

13. Do you have a direct relationship with a person at the nonprofit that you donate the highest amount of money to?
- a. Yes
  - b. No

## **Secondary Data**

Secondary data was collected from six different books about fundraising, donor relations and effective communications. The purpose of this data was to understand and compare best practices to the primary data collected from the survey and interviews.

## **Data Results and Analysis**

### **Expert Interviews, Philanthropists**

*Adam Swig, Millennial Philanthropist.* Adam was born and raised in San Francisco. His family has a long history of giving and philanthropy in San Francisco and Adam is carrying on the family tradition. Adam is known in the San Francisco community for throwing lavish parties to help raise money for his favorite nonprofits. His last event, *Shabbat At The Aquarium: Unplugged* had over 200 people attend and he raised \$7,000 for bay.org.

When asked what makes Swig feel connected to an organization that he donates to, he says, “The core values and the mission of the organization are key to my decision. I also feel the staff of the organization plays a key role on creating the donor relationship to entice my involvement and personal connection to the cause.” Swig is involved with many different nonprofits and states that “Phone calls and personal emails are very effective to achieve the personal effect that nonprofits need *you*”. Swig appreciates when nonprofits go out of their way to make it personal and make communications tailored to who he is and how he can help. It is all

about relationship building when it comes to Swig and his connections. “I like nonprofits that care about building relationships because it shows they value the donor’s time and giving efforts. They take an interest in you and don’t always ask, ask, ask and ask.”

***Kelly Nice, Baby Boomer Philanthropist.*** Kelly Nice is Co-Founder of Nice and Company, and advertising agency based in San Francisco. He has been involved with the San Francisco Parks Alliance for over ten years and was the past Chairman of the Board from 2013 to 2016.

When it comes to his connection with the San Francisco Parks Alliance, Nice believes in effective communication. “Nonprofits need to listen and align” says Nice. He explains that not everyone has the time to directly help. Nonprofits need to understand all the different types of donors and give new ways to get them involved whether it is hands on or asking for advice. He also states that communication to donors needs to be “meaningful with the right timing” Nice goes on to say that time is a valuable thing and nonprofits need to make sure that they send out quality communication that is meaningful and tells the story of the organization. Nice explains that people don’t want to read meaningless information just because nonprofits feel they need to get something out the door.

***Pamela Buttery, Silent Generation Philanthropist.*** Pamela Buttery has had a long history of Philanthropy. Buttery had a successful career in commercial real estate in San Jose where she has a history of being very involved with the San Jose Chamber of Commerce, the San Jose Symphony, the San Jose Executive Council, CASA, and the Autism Aspergers Spectrum Coalition for Education for Networking and Development (AASCEND) along with many others. After her commercial real estate career, Pamela retired at 48 to raise her children. In 2013 Buttery partnered with the ARC of San Francisco and founded the program *Friends Like Me* that



helps bring adults with developmental disorders together, so they can make friends and do fun activities together.

Buttery's relationship with her nonprofits are built on trust and active listening. She has the highest regards for the ARC because she feels that the ARC took the time to listen to her ideas and thoughts before jumping into any conclusions. Buttery explains that nonprofits need to listen to their donors to get their perspective because it's fresh and they see what others don't see that work within the organization. Buttery also talked about how nonprofits need to communicate with their constituents in a "natural way" and stay away from being too aggressive or salesy. She has exposed many of her like minded friends to her nonprofits through events and creative experiences. She expresses that she naturally attended a lunch with a friend and that is how she learned about Habitat for Humanity, "It was just over lunch, and I heard the woman's passion and great work they were doing so I decided to go on a tour. The tour ended up being lovely and I have supported ever since. The woman's intention was not to sell me or force her organization on me but rather tell the story" Buttery explains that the one thing nonprofits should do is to ask their donors how they want to be communicated with. "I have never once been asked how I wanted to be communicated with." She explains that there is one organization that calls her every year and she tells them the same message each time, which is not to call. If they listened to her and communicated with her via mail or email she would respond better. Buttery feels the way to get a donor's trust is to have a clear and consistent message, and really get to know the donors by asking them their advice and perspective on the work they are doing.

### **Expert Interviews, Nonprofits**

*Curt Yagi, Executive Director, Real Options for City Kids (ROCK).* Curt Yagi started off as a volunteer at ROCK and took the position as the Executive Director thirteen years ago.

ROCK's mission is to nurture the healthy development of children by listening attentively to their needs and by providing opportunities to those who might not otherwise have access. ROCK partners with schools to provide after school programs in Visitacion Valley to help keep kids safe and off the streets. ROCK has 12 full time employees, and generates 1.4 million in revenue each year. 70% of ROCK's funding comes from City Grants and the remaining 30% comes from donations.

ROCK does a number of different fundraising campaigns and events per year. One mailing campaign, three young professional brewery events, 4-6 happy hours and their annual Fall Cocktail event. To keep donors engaged, Yagi communicates with bi-monthly email newsletters, social media posts, one mailing and personal calls and emails to his major donors. A major donor at ROCK is anyone who donates a gift of \$250 and above. Most of these major donors come from the seven Board of Director's contacts. To keep the donor communication organized, Yagi uses Neon CRM, Microsoft Outlook and Excel. Yagi's approach with donors is to keep it fun and share the story which is why he believes that small happy hours and events are effective. It gives him the opportunity to share ROCK's story while meeting and having a chance to talk to everyone that attends the events. Yagi believes that the main reason he loses donors is because they are not local which is why there are a lot of one time donors. His biggest resource is utilizing the Board of Directors and their contacts and networks.

***Jen Botch, Director of Development, bay.org.*** bay.org's mission is to restore, protect and inspire conservations of the San Francisco Bay and its watershed from the Sierra to the sea. bay.org has five divisions: Aquarium of the Bay, The Bay Institute, the Sea Lion Center, The EcoCenter at Heron's Head Park and the Bay Model Alliance. bay.org has 80 full time

employees and its revenue is 12 million. Jen Botch has been the director of development for two years.

Since bay.org uses Blackbaud's eTapestry database and excel to manage their roughly 500 annual and major donors. To keep their donor base engaged and growing, Botch and her team do two large mailing campaigns, one large gala with 400 attendees, and 8-10 smaller cocktail parties and events. They also try to keep the engagement interesting and hands on by taking interested donors on wetland tours, aquarium tours and boat rides. Botch believes that in person meetings is the most effective way to get donations so she makes sure to schedule lunches, office meetings and dinners with major donors. Botch and her team are trying to think of creative ways to communicate with donors. This past year they sent out holiday and Valentine's Day cards and a mailing with a buck slip asking their donors what type of activities they would be interested in joining. Botch says the most challenging part with such a small team is follow up and consistent communication so donors don't feel left out or forgotten. She believes that it's important to have a good database and segment donors and their interests to keep them engaged.

***Daniel Lewis, VP of Development and Campaign Director, Saint Mary's College of California.*** Daniel Lewis has been working in the Development Department Saint Mary's College (SMC) for almost 9 years. He is responsible for managing the development department staff and overseeing all fundraising campaigns and major donor cultivation.

Lewis communicates with his donors in a number of different ways. He has assigned portfolio managers with aligned campus partner relationships that manage a portfolio of assigned individuals to cultivate. His team operates an annual calendar of direct mail, telemarketing email, crowd funding and volunteer solicitation. Lewis does this to give his donors many opportunities

and ways of giving. To keep donors engaged Lewis and his team have assigned cultivation and stewardship touch points that are tailored to their prospects. They also have several events per year based on giving levels as a way to steward donors and thank them for their contributions.

Lewis believes that nonprofits lose donors because of poor stewardship with lack of transparency. Lewis says, “Showing the impact of philanthropic donations at **all** giving levels seems to be necessary in today’s nonprofits to ensure annual retention of your donor base.” Lewis’s most successful campaign to date was his 3rd 24 hour giving challenge called 1Day 1SMC. They raised \$341k with 1,910 donations which accounts for almost 29% of their donor count annually. Lewis believes that this was possible because they had successful promotion leading up to the campaign and they involved the entire SMC community. Lewis and team identified ambassadors help market the campaign through social media, pictures, email and telephone communications. They also gave real time updates and metrics on how close to goal they were which created a sense of urgency. In addition, they found major donors that would match gifts for certain dollar amounts raised which increased the impact of the campaign and got people excited.

**Survey Results**

The following is a breakdown of demographics for the 210 people that took the survey:

Category	Answer	Percentage
Gender	Female	89%
	Male	11%
Age	26-40 years old	69%
	56-65 years old	13.8%
	41-55 years old	8.6%

	19-25 years old	5.7%
	66-80 years old	2.9%

Please note that the survey results are predominantly females from ages 26-40 years of age which will have some bias/skew on the overall results.

**Overall Results.**

Question	Answer	Percentage
On average, how many nonprofit organizations do you donate to per year?	1	11.9%
	2-3	51.9%
	4-5	28.6%
	6-7	6.2%
	8-9	0.5%
	10+	1.0%
On average, how many times a year do you donate to a single/the same nonprofit?	1 time annually	47.6%
	2-3 times per year	27.1%
	4-5 times per year	8.1%
	5-10 times per year	3.3%
	Monthly	13.8%
On average, how much money do you donate to nonprofit organizations per year?	\$250 or below	45.2%
	\$251-\$500	24.8%
	\$501-\$1,000	13.3%
	\$1,001-\$5,000	12.9%
	\$5,001-\$10,000	3.8%
How do you most often	Online or through social	41%

donate money to nonprofit organizations?	media	
	By attending fundraising events	37.1%
	In person	11%
	By mail campaign	9%
	Over the phone	1.9%
Please rate your preferred method of donating money	1- Least preferred	11.9%
Attending fundraising events	2- Not preferred	14.8%
	3- Neutral	22.9%
	4. Preferred	18.6%
	5 Most Preferred	31.9%
Please rate your preferred method of donating money	1- Least preferred	49%
By mail campaign	2- Not preferred	16.7%
	3- Neutral	10%
	4. Preferred	18.1%
	5 Most Preferred	6.2%
Please rate your preferred method of donating money	1- Least preferred	13.8%
In Person	2- Not preferred	15.2%
	3- Neutral	27.6%
	4. Preferred	22.9%
	5 Most Preferred	20.5%
Please rate your preferred method of donating money	1- Least preferred	6.7%
Online or social media	2- Not preferred	11.9%
	3- Neutral	21%

	4. Preferred	19.5%
	5 Most Preferred	41%
Please rate your preferred method of donating money  Over the phone	1- Least preferred	70.5%
	2- Not preferred	16.7%
	3- Neutral	8.1%
	4. Preferred	2.4%
	5 Most Preferred	2.4%
In what ways are you connected with the organizations that you donate money to? Please check all that apply.	I volunteer with them	57.1%
	I am on their Board of Directors	16.2%
	I have friends that work there	38.1%
	I attend their events	57.6%
	I work or used to work there	14.8%
	I have family that works there	12.4%
	I have friends or family that are affiliated with them	60%
	I do not have a direct connection with them	31%
Please rate the different forms of nonprofit communications.  I like when I get a call from a nonprofit I donate to	Strongly disagree	60.5%
	Disagree	20.5%
	Neutral	12.4%
	Agree	3.8%
	Strongly agree	2.9%
Please rate the different forms of nonprofit communications.	Strongly disagree	32.4%

I like when I get mail campaigns from nonprofits I donate to	Disagree	18.1%
	Neutral	30.5%
	Agree	11.9%
	Strongly agree	7.1%
Please rate the different forms of nonprofit communications.  I like when I receive emails from nonprofits I donate to	Strongly disagree	11%
	Disagree	14.3%
	Neutral	41.4%
	Agree	22.9%
	Strongly agree	10.5%
Please rate the different forms of nonprofit communications.  I like when I go to meet with nonprofits I donate to	Strongly disagree	11.4%
	Disagree	8.6%
	Neutral	32.9%
	Agree	23.3%
	Strongly agree	23.8%
Please rate the different forms of nonprofit communications.  I like attending events put on by nonprofits I donate to	Strongly disagree	6.2%
	Disagree	6.7%
	Neutral	16.7%
	Agree	32.9%
	Strongly agree	37.6%
On average, how often do you receive communications (emails, calls, mail) from nonprofits that you donate to?	Weekly	13.3%
	Every two weeks	13.8%
	Quarterly	30%
	Once a year	2.9%



	I don't receive any communications	7.6%
How often do you like to receive communications (emails, calls, mail) from nonprofits that you donate to?	Weekly	1.9%
	Every two weeks	2.4%
	Quarterly	36.7%
	Once a year	14.8%
	I don't like to receive any communications	9.5%
How many years have you been donating to the nonprofit that you give the highest dollar amount to?	Less than one year	8.6%
	1-2 years	21.9%
	3-5 years	38.6%
	6-10 years	17.6%
	11-15 years	4.8%
	16-20 years	4.2%
	20+ years	6.2%
Do you have a direct relationship with a person at the nonprofit that you donate the highest amount of money to?	Yes	42.4%
	No	57.6%

Overall, the survey showed some common trends. When it comes to communication the majority of the survey participants do not like phone calls or donating over the phone. They much prefer attending events and meeting in person to stay connected to their nonprofit and prefer donating online. The majority shows that the participants hear from nonprofits quarterly which is also how often they would like to receive communications from their nonprofits that they donate to. This survey group likes the personal connection and face time with their

nonprofits which can be why more than half the group has a direct relationship with someone at their nonprofit. This shows that nonprofits should give their donors the opportunity to meet face to face and have different events throughout the year for people to participate. The more events and face time could also increase the amount of times they give since almost half only donate to the same nonprofit once a year.

**Results By Age Group.** Below are the highest percentage results from each of the five age groups.

*19-25 years old:*

- 66% most often donate money to nonprofits online or through social media
- 66% said they were connected to nonprofits by volunteering
- 58% either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “I like attending events put on by nonprofits I donate to”
- 41% said they would like to receive communications every month from nonprofits that they donate to.
- 75% do not have a direct relationship with a person at the nonprofit that they donate the most money to

*26-40 years old:*

- 48% most often donate money to nonprofits by attending their events
- 67% said they were connected to nonprofits by attending their events
- 57% either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “I like attending events put on by nonprofits I donate to”
- 37% said they would like to receive communications every month from nonprofits that they donate to.
- 56% do not have a direct relationship with a person at the nonprofit that they donate the most money to

*41-55 years old:*

- 66% most often donate money to nonprofits online or through social media
- 50% said they were connected to nonprofits by attending their events

- 50% either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “I like attending events put on by nonprofits I donate to”
- 38% said they would like to receive communications every month from nonprofits that they donate to. 38% also said they would like to receive communications quarterly from nonprofits that they donate to
- 73% do not have a direct relationship with a person at the nonprofit that they donate the most money to

*56-65 years old:*

- 37% most often donate money to nonprofits in person
- 62% said they were connected to nonprofits because they have friends or family affiliated with them
- 51% agree or strongly agree to the statement “I like when I go meet with nonprofits I donate to”
- 48% said they would like to receive communications quarterly from nonprofits that they donate to
- 51% have a direct relationship with a person at the nonprofit that they donate the most money to

*66-80 years old:*

- 50% most often donate money through mail campaigns
- 83% said they were connected to nonprofits because they volunteer with them
- 66% agree or strongly agree to the statement “I like when I get mail campaigns from nonprofits I donate to”
- 50% said they would like to receive communications monthly from nonprofits that they donate to
- 66% have a direct relationship with a person at the nonprofit that they donate the most money to

The results show that different generations and age groups prefer different types of involvement. The young professionals, 26-40 year olds are very event focused while the older donors prefer a more personalized interaction. The two younger generations also like to receive more communication than the older generations. This could be because they grew up with more

technology and are used to receiving large amounts of communication from different channels. The older generations like more personalized meetings and mailing campaigns. What nonprofits need to do is separate these age groups and create specific communications for these demographics. Also, nonprofits should have different types events and opportunities to get involved that appeal to the different age groups.

**Results By Highest Donation.** Below are the highest percentage results from the top two groups that have donated the highest amount of money per year.

*\$1,000-\$5,000:*

- 40% most often donate money online or through social media
- 59% said they were connected to nonprofits by attending their events
- 74% prefer or strongly prefer to donate money online or through social media
- 66% agree or strongly agree with the statement “I like attending events by nonprofits that I donate to”
- 40% said they would like to receive communications monthly from nonprofits that they donate to and 40% said they would like to receive quarterly communications from nonprofits that they donate to
- 51% do not have a direct relationship with a person at the nonprofit that they donate the most money to

*\$5,000-\$10,000:*

- 50% most often donate money online or through social media
- 87% said they were connected to nonprofits because they have friends or family that are affiliated with them
- 75% prefer or strongly prefer to donate money online or through social media
- 62% agree or strongly agree to the statement “I like when I go meet with nonprofits that I donate to”
- 75% said they would like to receive communications quarterly from nonprofits that they donate to
- 62% have a direct relationship with a person at a nonprofit that they donate the most money to

The results from the two groups that donate the largest amount of money show have few similarities and but surprisingly more differences. Both groups prefer to donate money online or through social media. This could be because it is easy, fast and secure. Both groups also like to receive quarterly communications from nonprofits. The \$5,000-\$10,000 group shows that they have more of a personal connection with the nonprofit. They like to meet with nonprofits and they have a direct relationship with someone at the organization. This group also is connected through friends and family that are affiliated with the nonprofit. This could be because they are investing a higher dollar amount, so they are treated differently than other donors, thus being more active and involved with the nonprofit staff. Their friends and family may also be in the same tax bracket as them which also gives them the ability to donate higher amounts of money.

The \$1,000-\$5,000 survey group is very event focused but slightly more than half do not have a personal connection with the nonprofit they donate money to. Nonprofits should take these mid-level donors and figure out how they can build the relationship to take them to the next giving level. This group shows they like to be involved and receive communication but are lacking the direct relationships.

**Results By Number Of Years.** Below are the highest percentage results from the top four groups that have donated to nonprofits for the longest period of time.

*6-10 years*

- 70% said they were connected to nonprofits because they volunteer with them
- 59% prefer or strongly prefer to donate money at fundraising events
- 83% agree or strongly agree to the statement “I like attending events by nonprofits that I donate to”
- 54% said they would like to receive communications monthly from nonprofits that they donate to

- 78% do not have a direct relationship with a person at a nonprofit that they donate the most money to

*11-15 year olds*

- 50% said they were connected to nonprofits because they volunteer with them
- 70% prefer or strongly prefer to donate money online or with social media
- 50% agree or strongly agree to the statement “I like attending events by nonprofits that I donate to”
- 40% said they would like to receive communications quarterly from nonprofits that they donate to
- 60% do not have a direct relationship with a person at a nonprofit that they donate the most money to

*16-20 years*

- 80% said they were connected to nonprofits because they have friend or family affiliated with them
- 60% prefer or strongly prefer to donate money online or through social media
- 40% agree or strongly agree to the statement “I like when I receive emails from nonprofits that I donate to”
- 60% said they would like to receive communications quarterly from nonprofits that they donate to
- 60% do not have a direct relationship with a person at a nonprofit that they donate the most money to

*20+ years*

- 76% said they were connected to nonprofits because they volunteer with them
- 59% prefer or strongly prefer to donate money in person
- 61% agree or strongly agree to the statement “I like when I go meet with nonprofits that I donate to”
- 61% said they would like to receive communications once a year from nonprofits that they donate to
- 76% have a direct relationship with a person at a nonprofit that they donate the most money to

The four number of year groups had interesting results. The longer people donate to an organization the less they want to receive communications. Since the donor has been involved with the organization for over 20+ years, the donor may feel that they know everything there is to know about the organization and there is a high level of trust so they don't feel that they need constant communication and updates. The 20+ years is also the only group that has a direct relationship with nonprofits that they donate to which is not a good sign. Those donors that have been with organizations for more than 5 years should have some direct connection with the nonprofit that they are donating to so the donor can feel valued for their time and efforts. The 20+ group likes to donate in person, most likely with the person that they have a direct connection with because there is an established relationship there.

The 11-20 year and the 6-10 year groups both are connected to nonprofits by volunteering with them and they both expressed that they like attending nonprofit events. This could be because they believe in the organization's cause and like having a high level of involvement. Since they have been with the organization for 6-20 years they know what to expect from the organization and keep attending volunteering and fundraising events. These are important groups to focus on in the donor base because they are loyal and can be cultivated to the next level since they are already committed.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The literature review, survey results and expert interviews provided the information and activities that nonprofits can use to help reach sustainable individual giving. The below points are the eight key points to think about when evaluating individual giving that will help lead to long term sustainability:

- Know your database and segment the donors by interest and capacity levels in order to align with their needs
- Establish how the donor wants to be communicated with. Ask if they prefer meetings, events, calls, emails, mail, etc.
- Send meaningful and tailored communication by making it personal
- Keep the connection interesting with creative ways to keep the donor involved
- Ask for advice and feedback. Survey your donor database and ask for recommendations and how you can improve their satisfaction level
- Be reliable and consistent
- Be a storyteller
- Remember to see through the donor's eyes

Below, is a model that development teams can use to build relationships with their donors to bring their giving to the next level.





## THE 6 R'S TO SUSTAINABLE GIVING



### DO THE RESEARCH



Before you meet a donor or a prospect find out their story. Who are they? Where do they live? Where do they work? What do they support? Who are their friends? Why do they care? Always be prepared and have an idea of their background.

### DEVELOP THE RELATIONSHIP

This is a person and not a sales transaction. Show your interest and enthusiasm like you would with your good friends and family members. Make a relationship built on trust. Always be curious and consistent.



### GET THE RIGHT RESOURCES



Learn what the donor cares most about and tailor the information that fits his or her needs. Don't waste their time with information or projects they don't care about. Be transparent with where their donation is going.

### KEEP IT REAL

Remember this is a person, so don't be afraid to ask how they are feeling, what type of relationship they want and how they want to be communicated with. The more you know the stronger the trust. Always ask for feedback.



### SEE THE RETENTION



Once you have built a relationship on trust, consistency, and transparency the donors will become loyal and committed for years to come.

### GET THE ROI

Grow your programs. Change the world.



## References

A. Swig (Personal Interview, April 21, 2017).

Brooks, J. (2016). *The fundraiser's guide to irresistible communications: real-world, field-tested strategies for raising more money*. Medfield, MA: Emerson & Church.

Burnett, K., & Thompson, J. (2002). *Relationship fundraising: a donor-based approach to the business of raising money* (Second ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

C. Yagi (Personal Interview, April 18, 2017).

Carnegie, D. (1981). *How To Win Friends & Influence People*. New York, NY: Gallery Books.

Craver, R. M. (2014). *Retention fundraising: the new art and science of keeping your donors for life*. Medfield, MA: Emerson & Church, .

D. Lewis (Personal Interview, April 28, 2017).

J. Botch (Personal Interview, March 10, 2017).

K. Nice (Personal Interview, April 28, 2017).

(n.d.). Retrieved May 11, 2017, from <http://www.guidestar.org/Home.aspx/>

P. Buttery (Personal Interview, April 12, 2017).

Panas, J. (2016). *Asking: a 59-minute guide to everything board members, volunteers, and staff must know to secure the gift*. Medfield, MA: Emerson & Church.

Sargeant, A., & Shang, J. (2010). *Fundraising Principles and Practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Your Guide To Intelligent Giving | Home. (n.d.). Retrieved May 11, 2017, from <https://www.charitynavigator.org/>