Fundraising During a Pandemic: More Best Practices & Lessons Learned So Far

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OVERVIEW

• Presentation Based on Past & New Best Practices
  • Tactics for donor communication, emergency campaigns, & managing virtual events
  • Strategies for longer-term donor engagement

• Q&A & Group Discussion
WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS

Non-profits are smart. Under the most difficult of circumstances, you have:

- Developed Coronavirus fundraising plans
- Emphasized empathy
- Called your major donors to check-in
- Conducted asks where appropriate
- Re-scheduled, re-tooled, &/or reimagined your events
- Have been transparent about your needs
- Figured out how to maximize technology
IMMEDIATE TACTICS THAT SEEM TO BE WORKING

• Communication
  • Yes, written pieces likely won’t be read, but are necessary
  • Key messaging: empathy & you are “one of us”
  • Combination of data & storytelling
    • Utilize email blasts with embedded video
    • Involve program staff & social workers: your frontline people
    • Describe your vulnerable populations

• Large sponsor & donor management
  • “Credit” toward future support
  • Supplemental support (especially if donor has a DAF or foundation)
  • Leverage & matching
  • “Asks”
    • Phone, Zoom & FaceTime
TACTICS, CONT.

• Small Donor Management
  • Focus on current donors
  • You should keep asking, but timing is everything
  • Text messaging & social media
  • Recognize the scope/complexity of the crisis, but stress that “your gift will make a difference” (“Your $100 can pay for....”)

• Case for Support
  • Your unique value proposition
    • How you are uniquely addressing client & community needs
    • Address social disparities & the most vulnerable: op-eds & blog posts
  • Expressing urgency but not panic
    • You have serious need, but are not in immediate jeopardy
  • Demonstrating good citizenship
    • E.g. become a meals distribution site
TACTICS, CONT.

• Board member deployment: as fiduciaries, board members are obligated to help you preserve/gain revenue
  • 100% board participation in special campaign
  • Board/staff steering committee
  • “Require” phone calls to major donors ( & especially related to canceled events)
    • Provide talking points
  • Budget discussion: if/how reserves should be used to bolster fundraising. (It might be a good time to hire....)
VIRTUAL EVENTS

• Zoom & YouTube events
  • Combined events
  • Value of videos & testimony
  • Feature list of virtual supporters. Update daily

• Table captain & other “competitions”
  • Adopt-a-program

• Roll-up gifts
  • No baby-sitters, no salon visits, no Ubers, no parking...

• On-line auctions
  • Post-pandemic fun
  • Roll-out slowly. Add gifts everyday
POST-IMMEDIATE STRATEGIES

- Stewardship
  - Service provision updates
    - More storytelling & data
    - All communication platforms
    - Segmentation, if possible
  - Offer services (& continued empathy)
  - Fundraising updates
  - Major donor assessments
STRATEGIES, CONT.

• Diversification
  • If resources allow, begin new prospect identification, cultivation, & solicitation. (Ask institutional donors to recommend you to peers)
  • Renew lapsed donors

• Institutional Donor Management
  • Most grant-makers want to help & have established emergency funds
    • Start communicating when you’re ready
    • Combined emergency grant proposals
  • Provide “good” corporate citizen acknowledgement to corporate supporters
AND A FEW MORE IDEAS

• Re-deploy your volunteers
  • Do you have volunteers who can no longer carry out their usual tasks?
  • Ask them to be your AMBASSADORS by calling your donors to see how they are & thank them for their past support

• Show the delta
  • Have you lost earned income while your mission-related expenses are increasing?
  • Create a graph to show the delta between the two & show it to your donors. It’s a visual demonstration of your challenges
MORE IDEAS

• Donor meet-ups

  • The “herd mentality” in giving means that donors want to feel they are part of a larger group. It validates their giving by associating with others who do, as well

  • Invite your donors for a zoom “favorite snack” party. 30-minutes of facetime munching, when you & your donors can informally get together with no agenda other than getting to know one another
AND FINALLY (FOR NOW)

- Put your best listening tools to work
  - Ask what your stakeholders need and want from you – it might not be what you think!
    - Use online surveys, crowdfunding platforms, & social media to collect information

- Show impact
  - It’s been over 8 weeks since the pandemic began. Show how your work has had positive impact on your community
  - Use a combination of data & story-telling
ADDITIONAL IDEAS & MORE

• These ideas served as a platform for brainstorming & problem solving

• Let’s move on to discussion/Q&A

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