

E-Fundraising

Like marketing, fundraising is instrumental in the operations of an arts and cultural organization. One way an organization can reach current donors and attract new ones is by utilizing the Internet and email in fundraising campaigns.

The following strategies can help support an effective online fundraising campaign.

- Investing in the organization's website
- Using email to cultivate relationships
- Promoting the organization's website
- Integrating an online fundraising strategy with the current fundraising strategy
- Being realistic throughout the process.¹⁴

A successful online campaign takes time and effort. Two requirements to the campaign are to have an informative, interactive website and a strategy to attract people to it.¹⁵ Visitors to the site may become interested in programs described there and wish to make online donations.¹⁶

Website development is one way to draw people closer to an organization. In the "Online Fundraising Handbook," Groundspring.org lists ten best practices for websites. They are:

- Content is key.
- Keep site up-to-date.
- Collect email addresses.
- Give visitors a reason to return.
- Think outside in, not inside out.
- Involve the user.
- Make it easy to find information.
- Ask for gifts.
- Develop and post a privacy statement.
- Build a system to acknowledge and respond to incoming email.¹⁷

Many of these best practices are interrelated. For example, by keeping the website content up-to-date, visitors will revisit the site to learn about new events and accomplishments. A site that is easily navigated will also encourage users to return and seek desired information. Finally, it is important to ask for gifts on the website, because one of the primary motivators for giving is someone's request to do so.

¹⁴ Groundspring.org, Online Fundraising Handbook: Making the Most of the Web and Email to Raise More Money Online, 2002, 5 June 2003 <http://www.groundspring.org/techniques/groundspring-handbook.pdf>.

¹⁵ Groundspring.org, "Internet Strategies for Success," Internet Technique Series, 4 June 2003 <http://www.groundspring.org/techniques/groundspring-topic01.pdf>.

¹⁶ Michael Stein, interview with Gary Grobman, Nonprofits and E-Commerce: An Interview with Gary Grobman, 25 Oct. 2000, 6 June 2003 <http://www.techsoup.org/articlepage.cfm?ArticleId=225&cg=searchterms&sg=e%20commerce>.

¹⁷ Groundspring.org, Online Fundraising Handbook.

The following ideas may be useful in developing content for a website:

- Keep audience(s) in mind when choosing content.
- Each audience should be able to find information that pertains to its needs.
- Ideas for content
 - Post offline content online.
 - Create new content for the website.
 - Post free content from other Internet sources.
 - An array of interactive activities such as quizzes and polls; e-newsletters; the ability for a visitor to tell a friend about the website; and community message boards.
- Link content to asking for donations to help support the work being done by the organization.

Fundraising content can also include information about donor benefits, planned giving, and volunteer opportunities within the organization.¹⁸

After an organization’s website has been developed, it must be promoted, in order to draw people to the site. The website URL¹⁹ should be listed on all collateral marketing produced by the organization. For example, a newsletter sent via mail could include a trivia question that can be answered on the website. Another way to attract people to the organization’s website is to register it with search engines and other web directories.²⁰ This makes it easy for people to find the organization’s site when they search for it by name.

When organizing an online fundraising campaign, the organization’s short and long term priorities should build upon each other. These priorities are laid out in Table II-2.

**Table II-2
Online Fundraising Short Term and Long Term Priorities**

Short Term Priorities	Long Term Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an email list • Start a monthly e-newsletter • Establish a secure online donation system • Promote website in all publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan • Increase focus on website development • Develop donor and non-donor e-newsletters • Develop online fundraising campaign • Establish online partnerships

Source: Groundspring.org “Prioritize and Allocate Resources for Online Fundraising,” Internet Technique Series, 4 June 2003 <http://www.groundspring.org/techniques/groundspring-topic07.pdf>.

To build an email list in the short term, organizations need to collect email addresses at every opportunity. To fundraise online, organizations need a secure server, in order to assure online donors that their personal information is protected. Once a secure online donation page is established, the page should be easily accessible through links on several pages of the website. Making online donations easy

¹⁸ Groundspring.org, “Catching Donors in Your Web(site),” Internet Technique Series, 4 June 2003 <http://www.groundspring.org/techniques/groundspring-topic04.pdf>.

¹⁹ A URL is an Internet address.

²⁰ Groundspring.org “Driving Traffic to Your Site,” Internet Technique Series, 4 June 2003 <http://www.groundspring.org/techniques/groundspring-topic05.pdf>.

encourages people to participate in online giving. Finally, the organization should notify people about the website and online giving page whenever possible. If people do not know about the website they will not know to visit it.

To develop a long range plan, organizations should consider what has worked and has not worked for them. This plan can include, for example, strategies on how to drive people to the website, or goals for numbers of online donations per year. The organization's website should be as interactive as possible, engaging visitors and encouraging them to return often to the site. Examples of such interactivity can include online polls, trivia and event calendars. Online fundraising appeals should be linked to page content. For example, the programs page on a website can include information about how donations are used to support each program. Lastly, websites should be continually promoted, thereby encouraging people to visit the website multiple times.

Creating different e-newsletters for donors and non-donors allows an organization to customize the information presented. For example, the donor e-newsletter could be used to thank donors and tell them how their donations are being used by the organization, whereas an e-newsletter for non-donors could provide information about the benefits of making a donation and ways to become involved in the organization. In addition to creating a segmented email list, an organization can begin to develop a long term online fundraising campaign.²¹ This type of campaign goes beyond simply posting information on a website about donating. "It's a special appeal [an organization] aggressively promote[s]- perhaps it's built around a certain event... or around a particular issue... [The] campaign could include a Flash movie that's sent to [the] email list and forwarded on to friend after friend."²²

The final recommendation for online fundraising in the long term is developing partnerships. This includes addressing existing partnerships to see if they would work online, pursuing new online partnerships, and thinking about other websites in which visitors may have interest.²³ The last option allows an organization the opportunity to have a link to its website placed on another site while adding a reciprocal link on its own site. Establishing these reciprocal links will direct people from partner websites to the organization's website, which is helpful in drawing more people to the website.

²¹ Groundspring.org "Prioritize and Allocate Resources for Online Fundraising," Internet Technique Series, 4 June 2003 <http://www.groundspring.org/techniques/groundspring-topic07.pdf>.

²² Groundspring.org, "Prioritize and Allocate Resources for Online Fundraising."

²³ Groundspring.org, "Prioritize and Allocate Resources for Online Fundraising."