

Notes from the Donor Engagement Panel Discussion

Here are some of the things I jotted down while moderating the panel discussion.

What do you see as the key elements of a successful donor engagement strategy, and how do you ensure those elements are consistently implemented?

- Understand emotional intelligence – engage the limbic system
- People want to feel nourished and safe
- Remember your wins
- Tell the story of your impact – What does the donor's dollar buy?
- Why is your program important?

What strategies have you found effective for turning one-time donors into lifelong supporters?

- Connect the donor to the beneficiary
- Tell your story
- Express gratitude – make it personal
- Say more than Thank You – Thank you for what?
- People remember how you make them feel
- Make sure donors know how key they are to your success

What role does technology play in donor engagement, and what tools have you found useful?

- Allows you to tap into younger stakeholders
- Easy to lose the relationship piece of donor engagement
- People give to a cause, not an app
- Whatever you choose, commit to it – don't change platforms all the time!
- Do what works for you!
- Build technology into your strategic plan

In a state that is heavily saturated with non-profits, how do you stay relevant and keep up with donors that may be pulled in different directions?

- Differentiate yourself
- Build personal relationships
- Build community relationships and partnerships
- "Some will, some won't, someone is waiting" – Mary Kay motto
- Seek donors from outside your immediate environment – personal contacts, connect globally – "Friendraising"

In an age of constant asks, how do you balance the need for donations with the risk of donor fatigue?

- It is likely that we are more tired of asking than they are of giving.
- Offer them something special and make them feel special even if they can't donate
- We overthink donor fatigue. Don't think (or say no) for the donor.
- Understand shifting donor priorities
- Come back to your story and impact
- Be agile in getting the message out
- Engage/Relate/Serve instead of only asking – Reciprocate support

How do you adapt your donor engagement strategies during times of economic uncertainty or shifting philanthropic priorities?

- Create a value add
- Evolve
- Reinvent your strategy
- Come back to the cause – drill down to how you serve the cause

There is an all-time low in percentage of disposable income donated to non-profits. Why?

- Pendulum swings of giving – COVID has an high percentage of giving (time and money) – this is the natural swing in the other direction.

What strategies have you found effective for engaging younger generations?

- Targeted campaigns – advertising on the platforms they use
- We need to teach philanthropy to youth
- Meet them where they are
- They want to agree 100% with your message.
- Need to understand the social constructs of the generations
- Engage with youth organizations – talk about impact and engagement, what will they get out of philanthropy?

What final piece of advice would you give to nonprofit leaders looking to enhance their donor engagement strategies?

- Alicia Scott – Know yourself – Be yourself. Also, create digital messaging (videos, online content, digital fliers) to talk for you when you are not available!
- Bill Feyk – Tell your story and then tell it again.
- Stephanie Mullins – Build partnerships and make them love your cause as much as you do!