

CONSIDERATIONS WITH REGARD TO FUNDRAISING AND YOUR WEBSITE

If you would like your website to appeal to and inspire donors, here are some things for you to think about.

Visitors should feel well informed about your purpose and your plans. They should perceive you as an *organization in action*. They should understand through your videos, photos, success stories, etc. what DONORS TO THE ORGANIZATION ARE ACCOMPLISHING. (It can't be emphasized enough how the website should not be about the organization, but about the donor!) And, by empowering the most enthusiastic and passionate supporters to spread the word through their personal networking sites, blogs and emails, you may effectively build your constituent base and raise funds.

To begin, we recommend that senior staff formally (re) confirm:

- Who are the audiences your website is intended to reach?
- Why would they visit your website?
- What are the goals of your website?
- What are the five MOST IMPORTANT things you would like donors to know about you?

This will allow you to have a "touchstone" according to which you can judge what your website should be, and when, how and why to make changes. The burden is on you and your website to be interesting to your user. The most motivated visitor may never return to your site if you do not convey your mission with passion, and engage the visitor in a conversation in which he or she wants to be involved.

- Your homepage should visually differentiate a hierarchy of elements; e.g., position your top priority content (such as logo and branding) in the upper left corner and your lowest priority item in the bottom right corner
- Keep your homepage content dynamic, updating it frequently. Avoid large blocks of text.
- If you have the technology to do it, give your visitors the opportunity to log in to your homepage to customize their use of your website
- Your purpose and vision should be prominently included and easy to find, along with information on accreditation if appropriate

- Include or update a welcome video, and other videos as appropriate
- There should be a link on every page to the donation page, and a call to action when appropriate, so visitors don't have to search for how to give to you
- With regard to the donation page, here are some very important things to keep in mind:
 - ✓ There is no clutter and one clear "call to action" – donate!!
 - ✓ There is brief copy about the why – a sense of urgency
 - ✓ There are emotionally compelling images
 - ✓ The branding is consistent with the rest of the website
 - ✓ There is a clear option to give recurring/monthly gifts
 - ✓ The donor can make the gift in honor or in memory of someone
 - ✓ There are clear options to sign up for blogs or newsletters
 - ✓ There are suggested donation amounts with impact descriptions
 - ✓ Donors are offered the option to pay the transaction fee
 - ✓ There are social sharing options to allow donors to share the page with their social networks
 - ✓ The donor is not required to set up an account or log in order to give
 - ✓ Assure that you are able to easily accept donations via credit card or e-check payment, especially for monthly donations
 - ✓ Add a checkbox: "Would you like to remain anonymous in our publications?"
 - ✓ Include an optional message box to allow for comments
 - ✓ Donors receive an immediate thank you via email, then a mailed acknowledgement (and welcome packet if they are a first time donor)
- Consider allowing prospects and donors to create memorial or tribute web pages; they can post their stories about a loved one and then send emails to friends and family asking them to visit your website and make a contribution or get involved with you in other ways
- Similarly, you can allow supporters to create a personal web page to celebrate weddings, birthdays, graduations or other milestone events (this is especially appropriate for board members, volunteers, staff)
- Your site should be linked with www.guidestar.org (where astute donors will want to look at your organizational profile)
- Create connectivity by capturing visitor comments; asking serious questions; giving visitors something to do, like completing a survey, signing up for blogs, action alerts, message boards, etc.

- Include information on your strategic objectives over the next 3-5 years
- Create a section where potential major donors can go for a quick overview of your major fundraising needs (apart from a future capital campaign – see information at the end), where perhaps you can include a video, PowerPoint presentation, project-specific info-graphics, etc.
- When you solicit comments from visitors, make sure they will be addressing a real person, not info@organization.org
- Be sure you have a 24-hour or less turnaround response procedure for donations, e-mail and questions
- Include the latest and recent back copies of all newsletters
- In addition to signing up for your e-newsletters, create many other reasons for people to give you their email addresses
- Include testimonials from “happy customers”
- Also include donor stories and testimonials
- Add online registration for events, activities
- Create polls and surveys
- Display exciting photos of events and people
- List and provide photos and brief profiles of your board members, with their permission
- List and provide photos and brief profiles of senior staff with direct email links
- Include a general privacy statement
- Make sure you are a secure site, perhaps including an SSL Certification logo
- Be sure that your website always reflects any fundraising campaigns you are undertaking
- Write articles, information briefs and opinion columns that constantly change – be conversational, clear and engaging, appealing to the heart
- Add password protected sections, starting with the board; you may also want to include such sections for staff, educators, volunteers, donors, etc.
- Synchronize donation data with your fundraising software if possible
- Add logos for your major corporate donors
- Re-examine your YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, Instagram, etc. presences and put the links to them on every page.
- Use Google alerts and tweetbeeps.com to find out what people are saying about you; you can also search using <http://search.twitter.com> for people discussing topics related to your work and drive people to your blog or website

- Create strategic email campaigns to drive visitors to your website
- Do you have the technological capacity to acknowledge return visitors to your website by name?
- Add hyperlinks from press releases to specific archived materials
- Allow individuals to submit articles for review for possible publication in your communications
- If you are redesigning your site, ask prospects and donors to try it out and give you feedback before you launch your new site

If you will undertake a major gifts/capital/endowment campaign any time soon, plan for development of a dedicated campaign website that initially will NOT be linked to your current website and will be password-protected with limited accessibility (board, campaign committees, leadership, staff). There should be no links between the sites at these early stages so that search engine spiders won't find the campaign website and inadvertently list it on Google. The "early stage" campaign site may have the following characteristics:

- "Build as you go"
- Capacity to go online for web-based meetings and conference calls
- Sample gift chart
- List of naming opportunities
- Visual concepts (eg, jpg of architectural renderings, virtual tours)
- Draft of the case statement
- Surveys
- Feedback from select users re the design and functionality
- Volunteer resources and materials
- Campaign materials in process
- Lead gift progress, donor recognition, donor videos

With regard to social networking sites, we suggest you do a small survey among your own staff to see who is using what social media and how. Then try some of these networks and see what other nonprofits are doing -- see where people already are and engage them there.

As you know, on-line giving is only a portion of your overall relationship- and community-building efforts. It should dovetail with and complement all of your other marketing and fundraising activities. That being said, keeping your website current and relevant has great value beyond just securing donations. It will bring new people into your organization's world, grow your email list, and increase your visibility.