

## FUNDRAISING

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# Uncharted Efforts

## 7 ideas for unprecedented times

**F**undraising has never been for the faint of heart. The best fundraisers are never afraid to ask, are deeply emboldened by their organization's mission, they tell the story of that mission with passion and purpose, are persistent, and they persevere.

Then the world changes and fundraisers are confronted with the unprecedented challenges of a pandemic, social unrest, a very contentious political environment, and stiffer competition for charitable dollars, the attendant data, however, provides a measure of hope.

While it might be too early to tell if recent results in giving by the Fundraising Effectiveness Project is an accurate predictor of results that can be expected for the rest of the year, the overall number of donors increased by 7.2 percent during the second quarter of 2020.

With fundraising efforts beginning for a new year, still filled with uncertainty, there are ways to use the data to stay energized and mobilized. Here are seven tips to overcome the fear of donation stagnation and ask companies and individuals for the critical funding nonprofits and other mission-based organizations need to continue important work.

**1. Don't let economic and other uncertainty impede your drive to meet your mission.** The U.S. economy is in questionable shape and though hope is on the horizon, donors might be initially cautious. Go into your fund-



raising calls or correspondence with a positive, uplifting attitude and see how contagious that attitude can be.

**2. Assume you will find a receptive audience in your fundraising pursuits.** Low income populations and communities of color are challenged now more than in a very long time, and sources of revenue for nonprofits of many stripes

have evaporated. So, there is no need to feel sheepish about doing your job and asking for the financial support these organizations need to continue their work.

**3. Persistence, persistence, persistence.** Companies and other funders will be looking at everything with a fresh eye. And, even if they can't commit now, you need to get in on the ground floor,

stay on their radar and ask to be a part of whatever adjusted plans they are making for general and project funding in the new year. You want to be flexible, creative and in the queue. Keep them apprised of new developments and accomplishments

at your organization.

**4. You can't do enough homework.** Prepare an assessment of what your donors are prioritizing and order (or reorder) your plan accordingly. Put emphasis first on donors and prospective donors based on what you learn that aligns with your organization's ability to deliver results. Yes, the golden rule of fundraisers

is that all donors are important. But in the face of this seismic shift in the landscape, there is no shame in putting the majority of your emphasis on current prospective donors who will help you more quickly shore up the needs of your service population.

**5. Face-to-face meetings are best, but make the most of today's tech.**

They are hard to do in this climate, we know, but there is Zoom and other platforms. Making fundraising requests virtually -- along with conducting business, going to school, connecting with friends and family, even getting medical consultations -- can work. Everyone is getting better at it. Keep your meetings short and be sure your technology works, and your attendees are comfortable with it.

**6. Lead with the best news about your organization.** Portraying your organization as teetering on the brink of the abyss will not be helpful as funders won't want to join you at the edge of the cliff. But they will want you to bring to life stories of who is benefiting as a result of funding. Illustrate these stories with all kinds of media but don't forget the data! Also tell funders the backstory behind successful programs and how your organization connects to its beneficiaries

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differently than the competition. Funders are looking for information on how beneficiaries overcome and what their lives look like now.

**7. Make fundraising events work remotely.** The mainstay of many nonprofits are annual galas and other in-person special events, but there are other ways to gather the faithful at virtual events.

Good preparation, frequent commu-

nication and ease of access are key. Who knows, virtual events may become mainstays of many fundraising efforts.

The world is seeing some light at the end of the tunnel and this hope will benefit bold fundraisers. If you've paused your fundraising, hit resume and be bold.

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