

November 2021

Beyond Event Fundraising

How to plan a sustainable digital fundraising strategy



Events are not a solution — planning a sustainable digital fundraising strategy

The past two years have caused nonprofits to question everything they thought they knew about fundraising. In particular, fundraising events — normally a cornerstone of many charities' funding models — began to seem unstable and unsustainable after the shockwaves of COVID-19 upended so many parts of daily life.

To say it was a stressful time for fundraisers is an understatement. But this time of change also shed a light on how we can make our fundraising strategies stronger moving forward.

Here are three major trends that all nonprofit fundraisers should jump on board with to build strong, stable, funding models that will keep their organizations afloat, no matter what unexpected challenges the future might bring.



Trend # 1 — Diversified, year-round fundraising



COVID-19 isn't the only reason to move away from event-based fundraising. Relying too heavily on events also results in an uneven, intermittent stream of income that can leave your charity with dangerous peaks and valleys of revenue. The impact of missing even one event can be catastrophic, let alone an entire year's worth, as many organizations did in 2020.



Instead, organizations should look at using digital fundraising to create a smooth stream of year-round revenue. Events can then complement this stream of revenue, helping to bring new donors into your charity's community, instead of being your sole source of income.

A year-round, diversified funding cycle will keep your charity afloat — and when done right, it will keep bringing in more donations every year.

Here are a few tips for doing it right:

- Don't just pivot online events to virtual ones (like a virtual gala). You'll have better luck if you choose options that feel made for social media.
- Micro-projects help you tell many stories and help donors feel like they made a bigger impact.
- DIY supporter campaigns give volunteers a way to get involved and become advocates for your cause.



Trend #2 — Super-targeted storytelling

In the age of social media, we have the power to make all our donor communications feel personal, targeted, and relatable. It's no longer about broadcasting or sending out one uniform message to as many people as possible.

Today, competition for your audience's attention is so fierce that you need to be very strategic about which messages you're sending to which people. Social media and digital fundraising are the perfect solution. Especially in combination with micro-projects, you can tell super-specific, very detailed stories about your work, like a campaign journey featuring just one animal at your shelter, and communicate directly with the donors who gave to that campaign.



This kind of small-scale, super-personal storytelling is exactly what digital fundraising does so well. Here are a few tips for doing it right:

Tip #1

Make your donor the hero of the story. Focus on how their donations are coming in to save the day!

Tip #2

Break the story down. It's not the story of your charity's overall mission — it's 12 stories about each of the 12 kids who now get a hot lunch at school!

Tip #3

Share your story online through short, frequent updates. This is how people prefer to read online!



Trend #3 — A culture of innovation



Over the past 2 years, it's become clear that organizations who are willing to experiment, innovate, and try new things will come out on top. With the world changing faster than ever, it takes flexibility and bold thinking to adapt to unforeseen challenges — and unprecedented opportunities!

Even if your nonprofit is used to doing things in a certain way, it doesn't need to be stressful or scary to break out of that box. Be willing to try — and willing to fail — in small, low-stakes ways, and you might find you come up with some pretty amazing new ideas.



One great way to get started is by leveraging the wisdom of your network — including your donors! Here's how:

- Discuss with your team and identify 1-3 areas where you need the most help, like digital marketing, storytelling, or partnership strategy.
- Narrow in on the big questions you need to answer in those areas, or what your goals are for the coming year.
- Be transparent and reach out to your network of supporters for help! Your board, partners, and even donors already care about your cause, and they likely have a wide range of talents they'd be willing to lend.
- You might find you come out with some of the best new strategies you've had in years!



A sustainable fundraising future



There's nothing wrong with your yearly gala — but if you play your cards right, it could be the icing on the cake.

Follow these trends, and you'll be well on your way to a digital fundraising strategy that keeps going all year round, builds your community of caring supporters, and keeps evolving along with the world around us.



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Need help with building sustainable digital fundraising campaigns with CharityVillage Crowdfunding? We want your campaign to be wildly successful, which is why we are offering **free 15-minute coaching sessions** with our crowdfunding experts to help you finalize your crowdfunding campaign.

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK YOUR FREE COACHING SESSION](#)

Additional Resources

Click the links below for more tips and strategies on how to use CharityVillage Crowdfunding to diversify your fundraising strategy.

- [Peer-to-Peer Fundraising: Your 2021 Recipe for Success](#)
- [Fundraising Trends of 2021](#)
- [How to Run Campaigns to Generate Serious Revenue](#)
- [How to Set Up a Crowdfunding Campaign](#)
- [6 Tips to Turn Donors into Ambassadors](#)
- [How to Build Community from Scratch and Find New Donors](#)
- [5 Tools Your Charity Needs in a Crowdfunding Platform](#)
- [A Guide to 2021 Fundraising Success](#)