



Getting the Second Gift from New Donors

By Innovairre Communications, 8/25/2020

Getting the second gift from new donors might be the most important gift for your nonprofit to secure.

It is also difficult to do.

According to Blackbaud's 2019 Charitable Giving Report, just 24% of new online donors make a second gift within the first 12 months. The offline donor rate is only a bit higher at 27%. Either way, that's a lot of "one-and-done" donors. If you can improve this percentage even a little bit, it will have a significant financial impact.

That's why it should be a top priority for your organization to have a strategic plan in place to inspire the second gift from new donors. You want to execute on the plan quickly as there is a relatively short window to secure that second gift.

In fact, research by Analytical Ones found that new donors who make a second gift within the first 3-months have a lifetime value nearly twice as high as those who make a second gift 12 months later.

Your strategy for new donors should have three parts:

1. You want to thank new donors and make them feel appreciated
2. Clearly show new donors the impact of their contribution
3. Inspire them to make a second gift within the critical 3-month window

Some nonprofits "feel bad" communicating so frequently with new donors. Don't be one of them! Remember, donors want to hear from you and they like giving. It is their way of helping the world, and they feel good when they donate. New donors are especially enthusiastic about your nonprofit's mission, and will be eager to hear from you.

Thank You Letter

The importance of a prompt thank you letter has been proven time and time again. Sending out personalized thank you letters can increase donor retention rates by up to 39%!

You should aim to send the thank you letter out within 48 hours of receiving the contribution. Don't let the donor worry if you have received their contribution. Establish trust right away. That's key for any good relationship!

The thank you letter should be personalized with the donor's name and gift amount, and sent to all donors, regardless of gift amount. Don't try to do too much in the thank you letter. Keep it simple and straightforward.

Your number one goal is to make the donor feel like a hero. Show them sincere gratitude, and talk about the impact of the gift and how the donor is specifically making a difference. Be sure the copy reflects what the donor has given to while also talking about your broader mission.

Send a thank you letter in the mail for all new donors, even if they gave their first gift online. Sure, you will already be sending them an email thank you, but there is just something more impactful and personal about a thank you letter that arrives in the mail. Plan to do both.

Phone Calls

Thank you calls to new donors can be a positive and unexpected touch. Your goal should be to make the donor feel appreciated. It is also helpful to ask the donor what inspired the gift, and any other information you can learn about the donor that might be helpful for future communications. Be sure to ask for an email address so you can communicate with the donor through multiple channels.

Handwritten Thank You Note

Thank your donors as many times as you can! A handwritten thank you note is one more way to do this. Handwritten notes are a great way to show you care. They feel special and personal, and will get the donor's attention.

Report Back on the Impact of Their Gift

Send communication to your new donor soon after thanking them to highlight the impact the donor's gift has made. This doesn't have to be long or fancy, but the donor will appreciate receiving this and will be reassured that they are making a difference. And will be more likely to give again in the future.

Get Feedback from New Donors

Donors love to share their thoughts and opinions, and feel valued when you ask them.

Plan to send a brief survey asking your new donors a few short questions. Ask why they chose to contribute to your organization, and what part of your mission is most important to them. Ask for suggestions and ideas about how you can do your work even better.

Their answers will allow you to better understand who these new donors are individually as well as a collective group. Be sure to use what you have learned in future communications!

Ask for a Second Donation

There are many nonprofits who hesitate to ask new donors for a second gift fearing it is too soon or will come across as ungrateful or too aggressive. Don't think that way!

Remember, donors want to hear from you. Early is better when it comes to asking new donors for their second gift. Research consistently shows that getting that second gift in the first 3 months is key. After that, conversion rates fall off dramatically.

Consider making the ask an ask to join your monthly giving donors. New donors are often very responsive to this type of ask, and gaining a new monthly donor is incredibly valuable to your nonprofit in the long term.

New donors deserve to feel like the heroes they are. Tell them. Tell them again. And then ask them to be a hero again. Remember... we humans want to be wanted.

4. <https://analyticalones.com/the-exponential-importance-of-second-gift-timing/>
5. <https://www.qgiv.com/blog/donor-thank-you-letters/>

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