



Easy Ways to Turn Your Supporters into Fundraisers

Personal fundraising Web pages engage supporters and raise funds.

By Dana Hagenbuch

Your organization is probably already taking advantage of online fundraising. But what if you could go a step further and use the Internet's power, ease, and efficiency to motivate your supporters to help raise funds? Welcome to the world of online personal fundraising.

What Is Online Personal Fundraising?

Most nonprofit supporters already go online to send e-mails, read news, share photos, and make purchases. The ease of communicating and making transactions over the Internet has paved the way for online personal fundraising.

Companies offering personal fundraising tools provide the technical platform for nonprofit supporters to set up their own Web pages and launch their own fundraising "campaigns." Through these pages, individual supporters can share their connection to their favorite cause with their own pictures and text. They invite their family, friends, and colleagues to visit their page and support them by making a secure online donation.

In addition to offering a meaningful way for supporters to raise funds, online personal fundraising streamlines the donation process. Personal-fundraising companies typically offer electronic fund transfers (EFT) and will cut a single check for all donations collected. Funds are processed and added to the nonprofit's bank account automatically.

The process helps nonprofits expand their donor database for other fundraising appeals. It gives them easy access to data on all donations received. These efficiencies create time and cost savings.



Invite your inner circle to create personal fundraising pages.

Five Ways to Get Your Supporters to Raise Funds for You

Here are five easy ways to help your supporters use online personal fundraising pages to share their passion for your organization's cause — and raise funds while doing so:

1. Make Any Occasion a Fundraiser.

Create a simple program encouraging your supporters to add a fundraising component to any personal occasion. They can establish fundraising pages for birthdays, anniversaries, dinner parties, office parties, or any social event imaginable. Use your Web site and other communications with donors to explain this option.

2. Encourage Supporters to Walk, Run, or Bike for Your Cause.

Even if you don't sponsor your own "a-thon," you can ask your donors to raise funds online as part of their participation in any marathon, swim meet, or other individual athletic event. This is also a great way to attract new supporters by reaching out to the athletic communities in your region.

3. Help Supporters Honor a Loved One's Memory.

It's common for supporters to make a single contribution after a loved one passes away. Creating a personal fundraising page is a special way to honor someone's passing and generate more funds in memory of a loved one. Share this idea wherever you talk about "in memoriam" donations on your Web site.

4. Offer a Wedding Registry Option.

Online fundraising pages make a couple's registry more personal. Since donors can leave comments, the page takes on the quality of a guest book that the couple will cherish for years. Work with local wedding

vendors to encourage their clients to consider this meaningful wedding registry alternative.

5. Involve Your Board Members, Employees, and Volunteers.

Invite your inner circle of board members, advisors, and other engaged supporters to create personal fundraising pages. They're passionate about your organization's cause and eager to discuss it with others. Online personal fundraising is an easy way for them to share their passion, mobilize support, and raise funds.

Getting Started

Before venturing into online personal fundraising, ask yourself a few questions:

- **How much time and money** can you devote to new fundraising efforts?
- **Do you need a streamlined way** to manage donations of your sponsor-driven events?
- **Are you seeking creative ideas** to help new and existing supporters raise funds?

Your answers to these questions will help you decide how to get your system up and running. In some cases, nonprofits build their own in-house fundraising solution.

But for most nonprofits, it's easiest and most cost-efficient to work with a third-party provider. Some vendors offer online personal fundraising as part of an enterprise-wide set of products, such as donor databases and e-mail management tools. These vendors include Convio (www.convio.com), Kintera (www.kintera.com), and Campagne (www.campagne.com) and may be most appropriate for larger nonprofits. Others, such as Firstgiving (www.firstgiving.com/usa) provide online personal fundraising as a stand-alone service. With low set-up fees and no binding contracts, these stand-alone providers tend to be the most cost-efficient solution for small to mid-sized nonprofits.

Build It and They Will Come: Best Practices for Online Personal Fundraising

After you make the decision to try online personal fundraising, here are some ways to communicate this option to your supporters:

- **Develop awareness** of online personal fundraising on your organization's Web site.
- **E-mail your supporters** to

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explain how they can set up personal fundraising pages.

- **Create a section in your organization's newsletter** to promote online personal fundraising.
- **Use the kick-off session** for your fundraising event to get your supporters excited about the personal fundraising option.
- **Tell your co-workers, peers, and partners** about online personal fundraising. You never know who might pass the news along to their own social networks.
- **Set up your own page.** There's no better way to start a trend than by adopting it yourself. E-mail your personal fundraising page to your friends, family, and social network.
- **After your e-mail signature, provide a link** to your Web site's personal fundraising section so that every e-mail you send will help drive supporters to your site. ■

Resources

Atlas, Leonard, "Charity Begins On the Web: Tips to Enhance Online Fundraising," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 23, No. 4.

Frenza, JP & Leslie Hoffman, "Fundraising on the Internet: Three Easy Strategies," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 17, No. 4.

"Six Ways to Make Your Web Site Donor-Friendly," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 23, No. 6.

These resources are available at www.snpo.org/members.

How One Small Nonprofit Raised \$10,000 in Two Months

The poet Henry Adams asked, "What do we plant when we plant a tree?" To the Foundation for Self-Sufficiency in Central America (FSSCA), planting a tree is an act of hope. FSSCA, a small Texas-based nonprofit, partners with low-income communities in Central America to achieve environmental, economic, and social change.

FSSCA launched the Romero Memorial Tree Project to plant 50,000 trees in deforested lands in El Salvador. Year 1 of the project aimed to plant 2,000 trees. To make this goal in time for its first delegation, FSSCA needed to raise \$10 per tree, or \$20,000 total, in just a few months.

To raise funds quickly, Assistant Director Sean Hale turned to the Internet. After a search on Google, he discovered Firstgiving (www.firstgiving.com), which allows individuals to set up personal Web pages to help raise funds for the nonprofit of their choice. Through Firstgiving, Sean set up a fundraising page promoting the tree-planting project. He then sent FSSCA's supporters a link to the landing page, inviting them to create their own fundraising pages to support the project.

"What happened next was magical," says Sean. "Over the next few months, five of our supporters created online fundraising pages and e-mailed the link to their own social networks, asking them to donate \$10 per tree. As a result, \$10,000 was raised by just a handful of supporters."

Dana Hagenbuch has worked with nonprofits for over 10 years. She is director of marketing and communications at Commongood Careers (www.cgcareers.org), a search service for nonprofits and social entrepreneurs. She previously led marketing at Firstgiving (www.firstgiving.com), an online service devoted to helping nonprofits and individuals raise money online, and TechSoup.org (www.techsoup.org), an online technology publication and product donation service for nonprofits.