

# 10 Ten Ways to Improve Your Fundraising by Next Week

Use these tips to give your fundraising a shot in the arm.

By Gail Perry

“You’ll learn things that will surprise you.”

**G**ive donors what they want and they’ll reward you with continued giving. Here are some simple things you can do right now to improve your fundraising. Don’t wait!

**1. Organize a thankathon for your donors.** Your number-one effort needs to be focused on your current donors. Go all out to make them feel special and valued. For details on holding a thankathon, see “How Do I Thank Thee? Let Me Count the Ways” on page 9.

**2. Plan visits with your top 20 current donors.** Treat them like your organization’s best friends. Ask them to tell you their story of how they came to choose your organization to support. You’ll learn things that will surprise you.

**3. Rewrite your thank-you acknowledgment letter** to make it warm and personal. Begin with an innovative or creative sentence that will charm donors. Make them feel happy that they gave to you.

**4. Create a campaign for lapsed donors.** They’re the hidden gold for your cause. It’s much easier to bring a lapsed donor back into the fold than it is to convert a current prospect into a donor. Send a special appeal to lapsed donors titled: “We love you, we miss you, we want you back!”

**5. Rewrite your solicitation letter** so it’s all about the donor. Make it friendly, casual, heart-felt, and even a bit intimate. Use short sentences, action verbs, lots of white space. Remember that it’s not about your organization! It’s all about the wants and needs of the potential donor.

**6. Meet with your top 20 major gift prospects** just to bring them up to date. And be sure you use these two ridiculously simple strategies to develop your prospect’s interest in your cause:

- Don’t do all the talking. Listen instead.
- Ask your donor: “What are your impressions?”

**7. Update your on-line donation form.** Pretend you’re a donor. Go to your Web site and try making a donation. Is it easy to do? If the process is too time-consuming, change it so it’s fast and simple. You don’t want people getting frustrated and abandoning your gift “shopping cart.”

**8. Add a chart** called “Your Gifts at Work” to your Web site and newsletter. Forget the boring annual report. Instead, give donors exactly what they want — information on how their gifts are used. And tell them in no uncertain terms how they’re making a difference in the world. What to put on “Your Gifts at Work” Web page:

- pie chart on where the money comes from
- pie chart on where the money is going
- photo of a cute kid (if possible) and a story about how your organization changed or saved their life.

For a real-world example, check out [www.care.org](http://www.care.org), which provides not only the pie charts but a link to Charity Navigator, where you can find summary financials, the name of the board chair, the salary of the CEO, and third-party ratings on the organization’s efficiency. Here’s an organization that understands “transparency.” And since transparency is one of the most important factors donors consider when deciding whether to renew a gift, it’s something to put into action.

**9. Block off two days a week** for the next three months to make visits with donors. The biggest obstacle to a major gifts effort is simply getting out of the office. Set your goal. Draw a line in the sand. Make a commitment. Get your staff’s support to aid and abet you. Then make it happen.

**10. Plan a party** to honor your founders, former board members, and former capital campaign donors. These folks are your major donor prospects for the future. They’re likely feeling ignored and abandoned by your wonderful organization, just because they’re no longer involved. But once, they gave you their heart and their money. They still have a deep connection. Bring them back into the fold by honoring them. And then the door is open for you to keep them involved. **S**

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