

Preparing for #GivingTuesday: Questions to Ask before You Participate

Does #GivingTuesday fit with your plans? If you're not sure, ask yourself these 10 questions.

By Terrie Temkin

It's never too early to start thinking about #GivingTuesday. But first, ask yourself this: Is #GivingTuesday right for your organization? If you're not sure, you've come to the right place. Before you plan a #GivingTuesday campaign, ask yourself these 10 questions:

1. Are you willing to invest up to six months of preparation into your campaign?

Successful campaigns, whether on #GivingTuesday or not, don't happen overnight. You must be willing to invest the necessary staff time. Preparations for #GivingTuesday should start in the late spring or early summer, and you should be thinking about it all year. There's nothing harder to watch than a #GivingTuesday campaign that consists of only one half-hearted tweet, an underwhelming Facebook post, and a generic e-mail or two.

2. Do you have the tools to succeed?

Do you have the ability to create e-mails on the fly? Do you know who is opening your e-mails and what links they're clicking? Do you have the right database to easily track your #GivingTuesday donors? Can you track who is talking about you on social media? Can you segment and personalize your communications? These are just a few questions you should be able to say yes to.

3. Can you and your team be creative? Will you dare to do something different?

#GivingTuesday is getting more and more popular each year. It is getting hard to be heard above all the noise. You must dare to do something different to grab people's attention. If you aren't upsetting a couple of people on #GivingTuesday, that is a key sign that your communications are too bland.

4. Are there at least 25-50 people (other than board and staff) who are willing to be vocal ambassadors for you on #GivingTuesday?

If you take nothing else away from this article, understand this: #GivingTuesday is pointless unless you have a core

group of people who are willing to be ambassadors for you leading up to and on the day of #GivingTuesday. These ambassadors should be people who are prepared to ask their friends, family members, and colleagues to support your organization on #GivingTuesday.

5. Are you willing to call every single person who makes a gift on #GivingTuesday within 48 hours?

The key to a successful #GivingTuesday is stewardship – what you do in the days following this widespread day of giving. People will likely be giving to multiple organizations. The best way to differentiate yourself is how you thank your donors and how you communicate their impact on their community (not your organization). Think about reserving two hours late in the day for everyone on your staff to call and thank the people who made a #GivingTuesday donation that morning and afternoon.

6. Do you have a documented donor stewardship plan?

There's no point in acquiring new donors on this special day if you're just going to throw them into whatever mass communication cadence you already have planned in December and beyond. If you don't have a documented plan in place to steward them – a plan that is *just* for them – you run the risk of generating negative ROI from #GivingTuesday donors who never give again.

7. Can you make your work relevant to a broad audience?

On #GivingTuesday you should be reaching out to new audiences. As a result, you need to ensure that you're appealing to as broad an audience as possible when you communicate your work and your mission. Not everybody will fall in love with the particular work you do. However, a lot of people will appreciate your work and might be willing to give if you tell how your work impacts their lives. For example: If you're a youth-serving organization, don't focus on how a gift will impact Sally Student's life. Show how supporting 1,000 Sally Students will make your community a better place to live, work, and play.

8. Do you have a reason for people to give other than #GivingTuesday?

Asking people to give *because* it's #GivingTuesday isn't enough. Line up a series of matching gifts that you can

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announce throughout the day. If possible, connect a gift to a program goal so donors feel they're having an impact on your mission and the community by making a gift. Make it about the mission, not the giving mechanism.

9. Do you have the support of every board member and the commitment of everybody on staff?

More than any other fundraising campaign, #GivingTuesday's success lies on the shoulders of every staff and board member. If they aren't willing to donate, how can they ask others to give? Your #GivingTuesday won't be successful without staff and board contributions. Don't embark on the campaign without that support lined up.

10. Do you have a strong social-media presence and a robust e-mail list?

This is the least important of the 10 questions. While a strong social-media presence will help you reach more people on #GivingTuesday, all the tweets and Facebook posts in the world probably won't equal the impact of five great volunteers making personal asks to five dozen people in their network. People give to people, after all! 

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The Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Evolution (Vol. 30, No. 6)

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Online Strategies for Year-End Fundraising (Vol. 31, No. 3)

Turning the Direct Ask into Gold (Vol. 30, No. 1)

How to Foster a Positive Funding Relationship (Vol. 32, No. 4)

Virtual Fundraising Ideas

Open your Auction to Everyone

Bring online shopping to life with a multi-day auction that even far-flung supporters can attend. One nonprofit raised even more money than their in-person event using ReadySetAuction virtual auction software (readysetauction.com) to rack up bids online leading up to the event. They ran their live auction during the last night of the event when guests could compete with one another to score the final winning bid. See “Your Virtual Auction Planner” at donorperfect.com. It's packed with guidance on event prep and easy-to-use tech, creative ideas to involve participants in your program, and helpful tips from experienced fundraisers.

Hold a Socially-Distanced 5k

Invite supporters to lace up and run for the good of your mission no matter where they live. One nonprofit launched their virtual 5k with printable bibs and asked participants to share photos of themselves wearing them. To their surprise, people sent in photos from all over the world. The organization promptly shared the photos on social media as they came in and stitched them together to create a video that they sent to everyone on their e-mail list when the 5k concluded. These and other virtual fundraising ideas are available from Donor Perfect, donorperfect.com.

Put on a Mission-Minded Fashion Show

If NY Fashion Week can catwalk onto the computer screen, so can your annual fashion show. Here's how you can pull it off safely without sparing any glitz:

- Line up models six feet apart in a local facility or outdoors and live stream the runway show. Or have models show off their designer duds from home.
- Don't omit swag bags for your supporters. Deliver them!
- Host a live auction after the runway show using auction software that enables guests to bid in a flash from their phones or computers.

