



they can participate in meeting your mission and making a difference in the world.

Talk about your mission in action, not how great your organization is. For example, consider which of these two statements has more impact:

“Last year, our organization fed 12,000 people.”

“Last year, you helped 12,000 hungry people eat healthy meals, reducing the need to steal, helping stave off malnutrition, and decreasing the costs to our law enforcement and healthcare systems.”

Which do you think would garner more donations?

## Appeal to Smaller, Defined Groups

Attracting donors takes time and effort. You don't want to spend money looking for just anyone to support you. You want your efforts to attract as many new donors as possible.

So, instead of going after everyone, target smaller, distinct donor groups. As an example, say you want to fish for flounder. You could go out with a boat, cast a wide net, and get a lot of fish, a few of which are flounder. Or, you could go where flounders tend to congregate and cast a small net. You'll get fewer fish but a lot of them will be flounder. You won't end up with as many individual fish, but you'll get a whole lot more of what you want.

Where can you find your “flounders” – those people interested in supporting you? Start by asking these questions:

Who are your nonprofit's most ardent supporters? What are their characteristics? What do they read? What groups are they part of? How do they communicate with one another? How do they spend their leisure time? What do they spend their money on? What's important to them? What are their values?

The answers will tell you where to find people to target with your fundraising messages. You need to know these people inside and out.

## Define Your Target Markets

Remember the old adage, “different strokes for different folks”? Well, it holds true in fundraising and marketing. The more defined your target group, the easier it is to speak directly to them and allocate resources to have the biggest effect.

Clients, board members, donors, staff, volunteers, advocates, and community leaders are the most critical constituencies

“Show people how your mission benefits them.”

“Hear what they say, not what you want them to say.”

for your nonprofit to reach. Each of these groups plays a vital role in advancing your mission. Yet, each of these groups has its own set of demographic characteristics, likes, dislikes, values, places they hang out, and preferred methods of communication. Thus, each group needs its own outreach strategy.

To target potential donors, look for people who are interested in your cause and have the means to give financially. If you're trying to realize revenue as soon as possible, target people who care about your mission and have the capacity to make large gifts. If you can wait for a big donation, go after high-net-worth donors who don't yet have affinity for your mission but could if you spent time and resources educating them. Know, though, that you will need a big hook to interest them. For example, you might hold a lavish social event, but do so knowing that your primary goal isn't to raise money from the event but, rather, to start a relationship with wealthy individuals. You can follow up with them after the event and develop their interest in your mission.

The best way to get more community support is for your message to come from the community itself. Think of it like aiming at a target. Aim for the bullseye – your core group of supporters. They can reach out to the next ring, and those people can carry your message to the ring after that, and so on.

Start from where you are with what you have. From there, branch out, and grow your base.

## Do Your Research

To find out about your potential donors, research them:

**To learn the group values, beliefs, and preferences of individual donors**, you might visit the Center for Generational Kinetics and analyze its research. Or you might start a conversation and interact with the people you want to reach, then write down your observations. You could also conduct a survey or convene a focus group.

**To learn about prospective foundation donors**, study their IRS Form 990s and giving trends. Visit their websites. Study their application guidelines. Read their reports, white papers, and press releases. It's all public information.

**You can study potential corporate donors** by reviewing information on their website and in their corporate reports and company press releases. You might also want to become more proficient in understanding their issues and speaking their language by reading business journals and economic reports.

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**If you're researching potential government funders,** visit their websites to see what they do and what they fund. Read the results of any community studies they've conducted. You also have legislation, rules, and regulations ad nauseam you can read.

When you get information about your donor groups, hear what they say, not what you want them to say. Listen to them. Find a way to loop back with them and confirm your perceptions. Take the evidence you end up with and use it to fashion your approach and subsequent communications to them. To get those communications just right, base your efforts on the objective data they've provided.

## Outline the Benefits for Each Target Group

A value proposition – a statement of the benefits someone will receive by being involved with your organization – helps people see how your mission benefits them and why they might want to support you within their sea of options. A well-written value proposition will explain how your organization solves community problems and improves the lives of your clients and the donor as well. It will be specific. It will tell your supporters why your nonprofit is worthy of their backing.

All the value propositions will be related yet different. You'll want to use the language from each constituency group for best results.

You can use value propositions in countless ways. Some examples:

- **Use a value proposition for press releases,** social-media posts, and other general communications.
- **Put a value proposition** on your website.
- **Include value propositions aimed at donors** in your case for support and the materials you create from it – for example, brochures, donation pages, annual appeals, corporate giving campaigns, grant narratives, and other fundraising items.
- **Place specific value propositions on individual web pages** and in your outreach, recruitment, and retention materials to gain more clients, employees, volunteers, and board members

Your goal is to give your target groups opportunities to interact with your organization so that they'll become excited about your message. Once they understand the value you offer, they'll be eager to spread the message to their networks.

“Each group needs its own outreach strategy.”

## Watch Your Support & Funding Grow

People who are passionate about your cause will likely give you more than money. They'll give you a good word when talking to their friends and family. They'll provide volunteer time and in-kind donations so that your costs are reduced.

It's all about your target groups' needs, values, and preferences. Define the specific groups you want to reach. Research them. Design your fundraising campaigns around what you've learned. And watch the money roll in. 

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### Get the Right Message to the Right People

Target your communications to the groups you want to reach, using the strategies in these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

**How to Keep Your Customers Happy: Market Research Is Key** (Vol. 14, No. 4)

**Boosting Visibility** (Vol. 27, No. 2)

**Grounded Visioning: A Quick Way to Create Shared Visions** (Vol. 26, No. 4)

**Quick & Dirty Research** (Vol. 19, No. 3)

**Empower Your Employees to Be Mini-Marketers** (Vol. 25, No. 6)

**Surveys Provide Crucial Feedback** (Vol. 22, No. 5)

**Using Multi-Generational Marketing to Target Donors** (Vol. 23, No. 5)

**Increase Your Organization's Influence in Just 15 Minutes a Month** (Vol. 38, No. 1)

**What's the Trick to Writing E-Mail Fundraising Letters?** (Vol. Vol. 34, No. 4)

**For Long-Term Stability, Look to Corporations** (Vol. 32, No. 4)

**Your Mission Statement Has a Mission** (Vol. 19, No. 5)

**Relationship Marketing: Guaranteeing the Future** (Vol. 14, No. 5)

**How to Conduct Focus Groups** (Vol. 17, No. 5)

**Two Keys to Successful Grant Proposals** (Vol. 15, No. 3)

**Using E-Mail & the Web to Acquire & Cultivate Donors** (Vol. 21, No. 1)

**Think Out of the Box for Fundraising Gains** (Vol. 29, No. 5)