



For Best Results, Mix Well Before Use



To reach donors, fundraisers must integrate a variety of media. CD-ROMs are a cost-effective way to do so.

By Tom Brand

Today's nonprofits face a challenging marketplace. Potential contributors are overwhelmed with mailings and telemarketing calls, all making the same plea to give.

To illustrate this point, try to recall all the requests for donations you've received in your own mailbox over the past few weeks. Do you remember the names of the organizations? More important, did you make a contribution, or did you throw the literature away as junk mail?

At a time when it's becoming harder to gain the attention of prospective donors, fundraisers can take a page from the business world, which has relied on multimedia for years as a powerful and compelling communications tool. CD-ROMs perform well as the hub

for multimedia presentations, due to their ability to contain integrated text, graphics, video, and sound, embedded Web links, and interactive features that respond to the

On-screen tax calculators let potential donors figure out the tax benefits of making various donations.

user's action, such as a mouse click. These presentations are also easily accessible, since CD-ROM drives have been standard in PCs since 1997, and recipients simply insert the disc to launch the presentation.

Research conducted by Cambridge Associates, Inc., for the

International Recording Media Association (IRMA) indicates that when used for direct marketing, CD-ROMs can create a response rate nearly three times greater than print brochures.¹ The research also shows that the recall of information on CD-ROMs is 50 to 60% higher than that from printed materials.

CD-ROM multimedia presentations offer a fit with an increasingly youthful donor base that expects innovation in message delivery. At the same time, because of the discs' ease of use, they don't alienate older donors. CD-ROMs are also more likely to be viewed than traditional mail pieces, since most recipients perceive them as more "valuable," again as evidenced by the Cambridge Associates/IRMA research.

Some nonprofits, such as Sharp HealthCare System of San Diego, have already begun adopting CD-ROM-based marketing initiatives. Sharp has undertaken numerous CD-ROM projects over the past few years, including a multimedia presentation to build awareness for a \$50 million capital fundraising drive. The CD-ROM serves as a presentation aid in meetings with high-dollar donors and as a mailer and hand-out to the community at large.

The CD-ROM presentation brings the Sharp HealthCare campaign to life with the use of video, photography, music, voice narration, and interactive features. For example, on-screen tax calculators let potential donors figure out the tax benefits of making various donations, while interactive floor plans let viewers reveal naming opportunities in planned facilities, as well as associated costs, by clicking on different areas of the drawings.

Power of Immediacy

A children's healthcare system has a local TV commercial that makes a very compelling plea for support. The unfortunate thing is that the spot tends to air late at night, when few people are likely to take action. Viewers may already be in their pajamas and aren't inclined to dial a phone or go to a Web site to make a donation. By morning, these late-night viewers have most likely forgotten the commercial or lost the desire to respond.

In contrast, multimedia presentations make it easy for recipients to act on the impulse to give. Glendale Adventist Medical Center in California recently completed a CD-ROM multimedia presentation to support its \$10 million capital campaign. Among its many features, the CD-ROM includes an embedded Web link that takes the viewer directly to the hospital's online pledge form, making the act of giving an immediate and seamless process.

The CD-ROM integrates with the healthcare system's Web site in other ways as well. Like the Sharp HealthCare CD-ROM, it lets viewers

With a simple mouse click, people are taken instantly from the point of presentation to the point of action.

peruse an interactive floor plan to reveal donor recognition naming opportunities and costs. The Glendale Adventist CD-ROM also lets potential donors link directly to the Web site to see which naming opportunities have been reserved by whom and which are still available. This link extends the CD-ROM's lifespan by placing frequently-changing data on the Web site, where it can be easily updated. The link also facilitates friendly competition within the donor community, since potential donors can see the areas that their peers have reserved.

With a simple mouse click, recipients of such CD-ROMs can be taken instantly from the point of presentation to the point of action — whether it's to make a

donation or register to participate in fundraising events. Such direct links can eliminate navigation confusion. And visits generated to a Web site via CD-ROM are trackable, letting organizations monitor the success of their marketing initiatives.²

Affordable Solution

For many nonprofit organizations, one of the obstacles to CD-ROM-based marketing is a perceived higher cost compared to traditional print. In many cases, this is a misperception. CD-ROMs do tend to have higher design and development costs but also have lower costs per unit in terms of duplication and mailing. For organizations sending out hundreds to thousands of solicitations annually, such lower per-unit costs can result in cumulative savings. Also coming into the equation are the proven higher response rates and greater perceived value of CD-ROMs versus print.

The Dikembe Mutombo Foundation, headed by New York

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Knicks' Dikembe Mutombo, is dedicated to improving the health, education, and quality of life for people of the Congo's Democratic Republic. The Foundation has begun using a multimedia CD-ROM to support fundraising efforts — in part because of the more compelling presentation, but also due to much lower duplication and mailing costs. The Foundation estimates that it cost approximately \$18 each to assemble and mail the bulky information kits that it previously used, which included printed materials, photocopies of news clippings, and a video tape. With the CD-ROMs, the cost for responding to a request for information has now dropped to under \$1.75, including postage. At the same time, the high storage capacity of the CD-ROM lets the Foundation include much more information and video footage than could be contained in the previous kits, in a much more compact and compelling format.

Lower duplication and mailing costs let nonprofits send their best materials to a larger pool of prospects, instead of having to weigh mailing costs against the amount likely to be donated. It should be noted that duplication costs continue to go down as the number of CD-ROMs produced in a single run increases.

Bringing It Together

CD-ROMs work well as a way to tie together the media that nonprofit organizations use, including print, Web, and video, elevating them to a comprehensive, integrated, and engaging presentation that is portable and accessible for the majority of donors. Multimedia presentations such as the one used by Sharp HealthCare continue to have a pdf (portable document format) version of the campaign's brochure as part of the CD-ROM. Similarly, pledge forms can be printed from the CD-ROM to be filled out and sent through regular mail.

While there are many packaging options, a protective cardboard "wallet" is typical for CD-ROMs and may also represent the next evolution of print-based handouts or mailers. These covers can be very simple or quite sophisticated, produced in four-color print with illustrations and text. Of course, the wallet's actual dimensions, weight, and other factors will affect duplication and mailing costs.

Many nonprofit organizations will wish to engage a partner to help develop a CD-ROM multimedia presentation. Advertising firms excel in managing such projects but tend to outsource many of the underlying requirements; as a result, costs can be higher. Conversely, video production houses usually can support only the video aspect of the presentation. Web site design companies are a frequent choice, especially

since many are expanding to multimedia as an offshoot of other services. However, many of these firms use the Web development tools with which they're familiar to create the presentation. This may require the disc content to launch through a Web browser, creating concerns about recipients having the latest software updates, browser plug-ins, and an Internet connection fast enough to view the presentation. Ideally, CD-ROM presentations should be fully self-contained so that nothing is required of recipients except to insert the disc.

In contrast, an integrated multimedia-services firm offers the full realm of creative resources, as well as the technical knowledge and tools to design and produce multimedia presentations specific to CD-ROM. These days, anyone can put up a shingle touting multimedia services. Before choosing a vendor, nonprofits should learn about the range of in-house capabilities of each candidate and the number of relevant projects that have been successfully completed. ■

Footnotes

¹Cambridge Associates, Inc., "Analysis of the Use of CDs/DVDs for Marketing, Providing Instruction/Information, Communications and Premiums" for International Recording Media Association.

²See these *Nonprofit World* articles, available free at www.snpo.org/members: "Using E-Mail & the Web to Acquire & Cultivate Donors" (Vol. 21, No. 1), "Online Advocacy: Mobilize Supporters to Take Action" (Vol. 21, No. 6), and "The New Marketing Model for Nonprofits" (Vol. 22, No. 6).

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