

Top 10 Things Donors Want from Your Website

Are you giving people what they want when they visit your website?

By Gail Perry

Most donors check out your website before they make a gift. And they do this whether they're giving online or through the mail. Are you giving them easy access to what they want? Be sure you include all of the following:

1. Easy navigation

When someone comes to your site, don't make them have to think too hard or hunt too much for what they want. Make everything clear, plain, and easy to read and understand. Use a startling headline or a vivid image to engage your donor quickly. If your navigation is confusing, you'll probably lose your donor.

2. Lots of pictures and fewer words

Terrific photos tell your story visually. And on your website, images are more compelling than words.

Your donors are skimming, skimming – quickly, quickly. Lots of words, cumbersome phrasing, and crowded text will drive them away. Verbosity can kill you on a website. Let great pictures do the talking.

3. Links to your Guidestar and Charity Navigator profiles

Donors today want to check out an organization's overhead costs before they donate. They're obsessing over administrative expenses.

Yes, it's crazy. How can you run a nonprofit without admin costs? And we do need to educate donors on the importance of investing in infrastructure – it keeps the lights on, pays for staff and computers – so we can run our programs. We shouldn't apologize for our admin costs. Instead we need to re-define the words "overhead costs" into "investing in infrastructure." Once we explain this to donors, they do understand.

But they still want to know how much of the money you take in goes to programs and how much goes to infrastructure, and you need to give them direct access to this information. Doing so will build trust.

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4. Credibility

Since donors are more mistrustful of institutions and organizations these days, convey credibility by sharing:

- measurable numbers about your impact (how many people did you serve, and how much did it cost you to do it?)
- your track record – successes
- endorsements
- your board members' names (who's standing behind this organization, and who's accountable?)
- testimonials.

5. A clear call to action

Donors are in a hurry. If they come to visit, by all means tell them what you need them to do! You should have a call to action in everything you do, everything you send out, and on every web page.

6. An easy way to donate

Don't make your donors work to find out how to give. Don't make them search. Put the "Donate Now" button clearly where they can find it. Show them it's easy. Or you may lose them.

7. A simple donation form

Research shows that a large majority of people abandon donation pages. As many as 96% of people visit the page but never complete the form, according to studies.

Just think how many times you've loaded up a shopping cart in an online store and never completed the checkout process. What made you change your mind? What might change the minds of visitors to your website?

Consider this: Every box donors have to fill in increases their impatience with the process. And if they get to the point of frustration, you've probably lost them.

8. A page titled "Your Gifts At Work"

Donors have changed. They're much more focused on the impact of their gifts. They want to know exactly where their money is going and how it's being used.

Use pie charts to show where your funding comes from and where it goes. This is what transparency means: sharing the details of how much money you're raising and what you do with it. And transparency is what every donor wants.




9. Interaction

Donors want to have a dialogue with you. Give them the chance to comment, discuss, learn more about you, and tell you about themselves. Ask them to take brief surveys, post their opinions, volunteer for your organization, or take some action.

Always ask for more than money. Treat prospects like real people, not like they are wallets.

10. Physical address and phone

It's startling how hard it often is to find a darned phone number or street address. What's with it when a nonprofit doesn't include this essential info?

Give your donors easy access to you. Be welcoming. And they will reward you. 

Gail Perry inspires nonprofits around the world with cutting-edge fundraising strategies and new tools to make fundraising more successful and more fun. Find smart strategies to help you raise tons of money at Fired-Up Fundraising (gailperry.com).



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