

Post-Recession Donors Have Changed

If you want your fundraising to be successful, you've got to make some changes.

If there's one thing you need to know about donors, it's this: They've just plain changed. Post-recession donors are different. Old strategies won't work any more. We're seeing major changes in what donors want, what they expect, and — most important — what they respond to. This goes for large and small donors alike. Here's why:

They Don't Trust You as Much as They Once Did

Donors are less trustful of everything: the government, financial institutions, the news media — and your organization. The loss of confidence in institutions is global.

People have simply lost faith. They're skeptical.

How Does Your Organization Show Up as Credible and Trustworthy?

If donors are less trusting, how do you get them to believe in you and your cause? You can rebuild donors' trust by being very explicit about where the money is going and how you're spending it.

One of the most important pieces of information you ever give your donors is a chart that says: "Your Gifts at Work." It should be a prominent part of your Web site. It should be a stand-alone page that details exactly where donors' money is going.

Here's How to Get Donors to Give More

The great Penelope Burk said it at a presentation recently: "Donors will give more if you let them restrict their gifts."

She said it's a shame that so many nonprofits are beating the drum for unrestricted gifts. The truth is: Most donors don't *want* to make unrestricted gifts.

You're saying to yourself, "But we need unrestricted funds!" Of course you do. But see if you can't shape your unrestricted funds into projects. Instead of trying to raise money to keep the lights on, try asking for funds for technology or some current program that has sizzle. If you raise funds for the sizzle program, then that frees up money for the lights and overhead, correct?

Today's donors mistrust unrestricted giving. They're thinking: Will this organization waste my money? I wonder what their fundraising costs are. Where does the unrestricted money really go? I don't want to pay for somebody's inflated salary.

“We're seeing major changes in what donors want.”



By Gail Perry

Put their minds at ease. You can raise much more from donors if you let them target their gifts for specific projects.

Try Some New Approaches

Focus on being as transparent as possible with your donors. Show them you're making an effort to use their money wisely. Keep them up to date on what you're doing. Here are some steps to take:

- **Be creative** about the purpose of your fundraising appeals.
- **Construct some “projects,”** and let donors fund these.
- **Tell donors** where the money is going and why your programs cost so much.
- **Be up-front** about your finances.

Your donors will pay attention. They'll thank you with renewed investments. 

Gail Perry, MBA, CFRE, is the best-selling author of Fired-Up Fundraising: Turn Board Passion into Action. This article is adapted from her blog at gailperry.com.

Build Trust with Your Donors

For more on forging trusting donor relationships, see these articles in the Society for Nonprofits' Library at www.NonprofitWorld.org/members:

How to Build a Framework for Strategic Alliances: A Framework of Trust (Vol. 26, No. 6)

Five Simple Ideas for Developing Fundraising Results (Vol. 29, No. 3)

Reducing Donor Fatigue Syndrome (Vol. 24, No. 2)

33 Top Tips for Building Donor Bonds (Vol. 26, No. 1)

Top 10 Trends: How Major Donors are Changing & What To Do About It (Vol. 31, No. 4)

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

Also see Learning Institute programs on-line: Resource Development and O for Opportunity: Exploring New Revenue Opportunities for Nonprofits (NonprofitWorld.org/LearningInstitute).