



Fundraising in Economic and Social Change

APRIL 2020

Nonprofits Serve A Critical Role

- They bring communities together for a common purpose in response
- In times of crisis, nonprofits are often the voice of a community
- Communities often look to key nonprofits for an action plan to guide them through and bring needed help
- As frontline responders, nonprofits instill trust and help a community know that help is on the ground
- Nonprofits stand as guardians of culture, conscience and the future
- Here's a nice summary, and a little bit of historical perspective, from another colleague: <https://sharpenet.com/give-take/go/?highlight=great%20depression>

What If You Are Not A Frontliner?

- Don't disappear from your supporter's view
 - They want to know how you are affected
 - They have interest and concern and curiosity about how you are doing and what you are doing
 - Let them know how you are planning to adapt your organization's work in a solid, creative and forthright way as you respond to a present change
 - This is the time to be practical, not over-reactive, and full of plans that will adjust the organization to respond as a solid community member, just as they will be doing. "You're in this together is never a more important message."
 - Remember, that this will be over and share with them how your plans will accommodate this in you planning
 - Change is inevitable. It's how you lead through it that people will remember

As Importantly.....

- If you can showcase ways that your organization did extraordinary things in a crisis, especially this Covid-19 crisis, supporters and the community will remember the gesture as highly positive, inventive and a calming factor and will line up behind you as a thoughtful leader. Make them proud.
 - For instance can you –
 - Offer unused open interior space in your building(s) for emergency housing for COVID-19 patients
 - Shelter unhoused members of the community
 - Provide a place for medical staff to sleep and refresh/eat
 - Provide medical treatment areas
 - Store needed supplies of food, water and medical supplies
 - Shift some of your employees to have them volunteer to assist with setting up foodbanks, gathering or making supplies (masks), distributing needed items, caring for people
 - Make your team proud of their part in this COVID-19 crisis. Don't sit on the sidelines and wait for it to be over. It's time to gather energy, ideas and good press about what the organization did to help

Recently –

- “A group of art handlers and preparators at the Whitney Museum in New York City have gathered some of the art installation equipment that can also be used by medical workers and are distributing them to Columbia’s medical center.”
Hyperallergic podcast
- And just today, the MET posted this Instagram: “This week, inspired by the work of our colleagues at museums and others around the country, a dedicated team of textile conservators from The Met—many of whom are, not surprisingly, skilled with a needle and thread—volunteered to produce masks for health workers. 🧵🧵🧵
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Representatives from the team (all maintaining social distancing) prepared materials on-site, many donated by [@metobjectsconservation](#), and mailed packages to 15 volunteers who are working from home to sew masks that will be donated to healthcare workers. 📷
📷
We are so appreciative of and inspired by the generosity of our colleagues. Thank you [@mettextileconservation](#), [@metrattitextilecenter](#), and [@metcostumeinstitute](#) for supporting those on the front lines!”
- And so on.

Resiliency is King – Managing Our Fears

What We Fear

- ✓ The financial markets will spiral down and down
- ✓ Everyone we know will lose everything
- ✓ This financial unrest will never go away
- ✓ Covid-19 will become insidious and we will never be outside the same again

What We Can Be Assured Of

- ✓ The US is a country of generous people; internationally, philanthropy is growing
- ✓ People give when they have been asked
- ✓ People connect to people and give because of that
- ✓ Donors often give for impact
- ✓ Donors stop giving when they are disconnected
- ✓ If your needs are clear and valued major donors, especially, will step up

What We Likely Won't Know

- A donor's particular emotional response to a crisis
- How COVID-19 might affect a particular donor or their family
- How secured they are financially
- Where their organizational loyalties truly lie
- What organization might capture their attention that is on the horizon and making an impact; garnering attention
- How long economic and social uncertainty will last

What We Do Know Already

- US Foundations have stepped up in a major way to relax their guidelines and provide new support to a multitude of organizations affected by COVID-19 and are continuing to discuss where their impact can be effective; European conversations are coming forward
- Already innumerable funds have been established to help target groups e.g.
 - Bartenders
 - Hotel workers
 - Musicians, Actors and Artists
- Major Corporations have pledged many multi millions to fight COVID-19
- Museums/cultural institutions have joined forces to lobby for specific help

We've Had A Crisis Before

1

Reassuringly, history has shown that philanthropy does not swing as widely as the markets do

2

Finding new donors at entry levels and retaining donors at mid levels will be very difficult for 18-24 months

3

We know that major donors indicate that their top reason for ceasing to give is that they feel uninformed

Fundraising Teams Have a Great Responsibility

- To reach out and maintain major donor connections to reassure, to share plans/approaches during the crisis and after
- Oftentimes, a crisis situation, like we are experiencing now, provides an opportunity to develop more personal and open relationships with major donors as shared experiences are expressed
- We do know that organizations that have done a good job of keeping in touch with their donors, particularly their major donors, have had an easier time recovering their overall donor base

Some Differences in Donor Groups

Individuals

- Major donors will stick with you if are connected and staying close
- Smaller donors at the lowest levels will continue to support if they feel you are helping fill an important need
- You will lose many donors in the middle who are less committed and over-stretched

Foundations

-Foundations, as they are now, will step up and spend more of their resources

Board

-Board giving and large Challenge Gifts are among the most valued in a crisis.

Corporations

-Charitable giving is among the first to be cut in companies

-For the Covid-19 crisis major companies are pledging which provides substantial marketing for them. They will pull back giving and sponsorships, post the crisis, until their profit levels are regained

And now...

- Forbes reports that more than 180 museums in China have re-opened and begun welcoming visitors, albeit with capped visitor numbers and restrictions
- The Getty has compiled a trove of art books, online exhibitions, podcasts, and videos on its blog. Highlights include a didactic video on how illuminated manuscripts are made and drawings by Michelangelo to explore
- The National Portrait Gallery in DC has open studio workshops led by Jill Galloway on their Facebook page, every Friday at 11 a.m
- The Met Opera offers free virtual concerts and the Berlin Philharmonic made a digital concert platform that was completely free through March 31 and many, many more ideas for a virtual world
- And, other creative ideas are emerging to engage organizations with their community

Going Forward

How to weather storms?

- Diversify your funding stream. Some ideas:
 - Make sure you are operating a regular program of capturing new donors, at entry level amounts and grow their interest over time
 - Move more and more to a **monthly retainer program** for regular donors (meaning not your major donors). Give them activity/ reasons to engage with your website/options for gift levels/and reasons to become a monthly donor. They will. It's the Netflix model. Check out Oxfam America at [https://www.](https://www.oxfamamerica.org/)
 - And Heifer International at <https://www.heifer.org/campaign/goat-tote-monthly.html>

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- Focus on personal stories and ways to bring people “inside” what you do
 - Customize your messages to different audiences
 - If you are a membership organization, make sure members are also regularly asked to become “donors”
 - Install a yearly wall of donors (above a bottom amount like \$100), in a prominent place in your entrance, lobby etc.; alpha listed by gift categories and make sure that annual listing is prominently on your website and in publications
 - Develop a variety of options for donors to give to
 - Feature spotlights on members and who they are and why they support your organization

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- Find ways to involve corporate sponsors (who will want to promote their brand) and get comfortable with what that relationship will require from your organization's team
 - Build upper-end donor programs – what are the special things they receive, keeping in mind what it costs you to deliver that. Costs should not exceed 10-15%.
 - Create an annual goal and promote the progress on the website. Take the goal seriously and be prepared to call donors the last week before the end of the year and ask for donations to meet the goal
 - And, here's a great blog regarding some of the same ideas specifically for museums. Plenty of tips and ideas: <https://donorbox.org/nonprofit-blog/museum-fundraising/>
 - To also help review what the Nonprofit Finance Fund has to offer: nff.org. It's a great partner.

Think About What Can You Do? Some Quick Ideas:

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- Start a blog on the website and write a weekly summary of what is going on, including plans in place for virtual experiences etc. Communicate, reflect and share. Send press releases of new activity etc.

- Send the above as an email with an intro of a more personal nature that shares your realistic scenario and how you are planning to move forward to every contact in the database.

- Contact your closest donors/board and look for those that will step up to offer a Matching Gift Challenge. The Challenge must be for a critical and specific need (for annual giving/this is not the capital strategy.) Post the challenge as a special box linking to donation page on the website. Tell the story of the donor(s) that came together and why they chose to do that. Strong photos of them/quotes etc. Why would this make a difference message. Compelling.

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- Continue to work on and communicate scenario planning.

- Keep the donors who supported the special Matching Gift Challenge fully informed of how the fund was implemented and the results.

- Keep the blog going but move to every other week as you move back into a heartbeat again
- Continue VIP updates with the blog to that inner list. You will open doors to communication and they will have innumerable ideas and suggestions which will keep them feeling that they see what's going on and ways to help you.

OCT-DEC 2020

- Build out the annual program so that it reflects many levels of giving and reasons to give.

- Keep the blog going. Post at least every three weeks. Have guest bloggers as well. Keep the blog very active. Share, share, share what's going on.

- Follow/join other associations in your field and learn from what they are trying. Communicate with a wide network of development colleagues regularly. Build relationships.

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- Divide the personal email list (with the blog attached) into the VIP level that receive your note with blog and the others that receive only as an emailed blog to them with your personal "Dear Frances..." greeting so they feel that you are sending directly to them. Not "Dear Friend." Use Mail Chimp or Constant Contact or your database format to do that.

- Mail the Matching Gift Challenge to the entire database as an appeal. Follow up every other week with an update of progress against goal and what is left. Create enthusiasm and excitement about getting to the goal. Post updates on the website. Post immediate names on the website of who has given.

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- Host a virtual town meeting to share current thinking and upcoming activities

- Post video interviews with those that stepped up to help support the Matching Gift Fund and why they chose to do that

- Send a press release once the fund has been completed telling the story of what the donors did and what the impact was

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- Continue to use virtual format online to have live guest sessions with important visiting scholars, artists, professors, health leaders etc etc.
- Announce widely to entire database

- Have employee engagement *Lunch with the CEO* virtual sessions once a month. Move to once a quarter after awhile. Let them ask any questions they want. No agenda. Casual.

- Plan an early fall "BYO" (Bring Your Own) lawn picnic for all staff. Provide refreshment (work to get the sodas, water etc provided by a corporate entity. Staff will not want to see funds used by your organization to pay for a big party) Staff bring a bag lunch and hold a staff Talent Contest for fun.