

Fundraising in the new economy: Start **thinking like your donors**

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The **UK Giving 2010** survey conducted by CAF and NCVO showed that an estimated £10.6 billion was given to charities in 2009/10. This represented a £400 million increase compared to the previous year. However, the overall giving was less than £11.3 billion donated in 2007/08.

13% of donations in 2009/10 went to religious charities including many Christian ones. There's no doubt that many Christians are continuing to give generously even in these tough times. But, the future of giving doesn't look very optimistic. **Future fundraising forecasts are suggesting that charitable giving is likely to remain flat as recession continues to bite.**

The economic landscape of the UK is in upheaval. In 2012 we are likely to see average household incomes shrink further due to increased inflation, higher taxes and growing unemployment. In this new economy Christian donors will continue to struggle with the effects of recession. And, they will continue to evaluate their giving, keeping the charities they have a connection with and dropping those they don't feel connected to.

The fundraising landscape is in upheaval too. New donor acquisition rates are declining. For many charities, donor retention rates are dropping also. Bigger annual donations are no longer making up for the decline in the numbers of active donors.

What's more, as our [Why Christians Give](#) report revealed, a new type of donor is emerging in the Christian marketplace. Today's Christian donor is looking for meaningful engagement with the charities they support. They are no longer satisfied with just a heart-warming story about how the charity is making a difference. They are asking questions about a charity's effectiveness, about how the money is being spent and the impact it is making. **They have expectations and preferences – they want to be 'listened to' and not treated as a 'walking wallet.'**

This new type of donor is already spending a considerable portion of their daily lives online, reading blogs, connecting on *facebook* or *LinkedIn*. So, they expect nothing less than to be able to engage socially online with their favourite causes.

In this new economy and rapidly changing social and economic landscape, many of the traditional approaches to fundraising no longer apply. Yet, most charities keep using the same communication methods and tactics they did five or ten years ago, completely oblivious of the fact that **today's donors want to engage with charities in ways that are personally fulfilling to them.**

The big questions for Christian charity fundraisers and marketers today are:

- *What would it take for your charity to remain in the giving list of your current donors?*
- *How is your charity going to create meaningful donor experiences for online and offline supporters?*
- *What will you be doing in 2012 to transform passive database contacts into active supporters, advocates or volunteers?*

McConkey • Johnston international UK can help your charity to reflect on the answers that are bubbling just below the surface of your plans and giving trends so that you can respond to these questions in clear and authentic ways.

Making the changes required to succeed in the new economy will not be easy. A new way of thinking is required. **Thinking like your charity's donors**, examining your charity's communications from their perspective, discovering their expectations, meeting them where they are, answering their questions, easing their anxieties, delighting them and keeping them for life.

A Fundraising Fitness Test® can help you to see reality clearly

According to Max Depre, the first job of a leader is to accurately describe reality. This is especially true at times of great change.

- *Can you accurately describe the reality of donor movements in the last few years?*
- *Do you know how many individuals, major donors or churches have stopped supporting your charity last year? In the last three months?*
- *What are the most profitable sources of new donor acquisition for your charity?*
- *How many new donors did you acquire last year to replace the multi-year donors who went away?*
- *How many of these new donors have already left?*

Fundraising is not just about asking for money or the amounts raised at the end of the year. It is about building long terms relationships and connections.

Our **Fundraising Fitness Test®** can help you to see donor reality clearly, to challenge assumptions about your donors, to monitor trends and to strengthen supporter lifecycles so that more donors stay connected with your work for life.

Deepen donor satisfaction & loyalty with **DonorValue Mapping®**

At a time of fundraising budget squeezes it is important to know the reasons that motivate donors to give, what they think about your charity's activities, how they want to communicate with your charity and much more.

Our **Donor Value Mapping®** is a research tool that can help your charity to discover valuable insights about the key drivers of donor satisfaction, loyalty and long-term value. Furthermore, it can uncover the top factors that impact donors' giving which you can incorporate in fundraising appeals and major donor 'asks' to secure future donations.

Finding out about donors' demographics and communications preferences can enable you to cultivate stronger relationships with them. Individual donor data derived from this research can be used for improved segmentation and effective fundraising communications.

Without a deeper understanding of donor's motives for giving to your charity you will not be able to significantly improve your fundraising performance or raise more money for your cause. **Can you afford to work in the dark in these uncertain times?**

Engage with donors through **multi-channel campaigns**

Weak and isolated fundraising messages are already failing to attract donor's attention in the new fundraising landscape. You can no longer simply put your logo and a tagline in a direct mail piece or an e-mail, send the same message to everyone and expect great results.

Instead, successful fundraising today, depends on launching integrated campaigns that use various online and offline channels, appeal to donor motivation, strengthen multi-level donor/charity relationships as well as ask for continued support.

This kind of **messaging synergy** can be achieved only by breaking down the silos that compartmentalise donor 'touchpoints' and fail to deliver your charity's messages through comprehensive, multi-channel campaigns.

Some of our clients who are using integrated campaigns – *where the same fundraising message is communicated through appeals, newsletters, e-mails, text*

messages and social media networks - are already reaping the benefits of such strategies.

They are seeing an increase in donations as multi-channel donors (*e.g. those who give via direct mail and online*) are giving up to 2 times more than supporters who are approached only through one giving channel. Moreover, some multi-channel donors are contributing more often as they receive a variety of messages to support causes they care about.

Through **Signs Communications**, our creative services agency we can help your charity to develop fundraising and marketing concepts for your campaigns, write copy, provide creative design and coordination for your multi-channel campaigns.

Contact us at: info@signscommunications.com to find out how we can help your charity.

Our Digital Marketing Intelligence can help your charity to respond to new opportunities in the e-world.

Just a few years ago, marketers expected readers, listeners and onlookers to receive their messages passively. The new, e-world has done away with all that. Today, we live in what my 12 years old niece accurately described as the 'WFT era'. (Wikipedia/ Facebook/ Twitter).

In this new era news, knowledge and entertainment are collaborative – born and developed through open and continuous dialogue between the producers and consumers. Today's consumers are accurately described by Jay Rosen (American researcher and journalist) as, "*The people formerly known as the audience.*"

The same phenomenon is happening in the charity sector too. The Internet revolution is enabling donors to interact with charities in new ways.

Having a charity website, a *facebook* page, or a twitter account is no longer enough – using these tools frequently and creatively to engage with your online audiences, make friends and turn them into prayer partners or supporters is what matters.

Here at **McConkey • Johnston international UK** we spend time gathering insights and intelligence on aspirations, motivations and behaviour trends of online donors and consumers. We evaluate hundreds of charity websites and campaigns, monitoring their progress and learning from their success or failure.

We share our knowledge and expertise with our clients through tailor-made in-house training programmes focused on understanding digital giving trends and helping charities like yours to develop robust strategies to make new friends and generate more money online.

Contact redina@mconkey-johnson.co.uk for more information about our in-house training and marketing intelligence sharing opportunities.

The future might look challenging – but fundraising success is possible

Just a few years ago, a Christian donor was likely to donate to 10 charities annually. Today, our research shows that they are likely to give to five charities annually.

Looking ahead to 2012, it seems to us that Christian charities which would be willing to develop donor-centric, multi-channel fundraising strategies that embrace donors' views and expectations will continue to stay connected with their supporters and meet their funding goals.

On the other hand, charities that fail to listen to their donors, who don't understand how and why donors support their cause and are unwilling to give up their communications silos will lag behind and struggle to succeed.