



## Donor acquisition paper.

Donor acquisition strategy is becoming increasingly diverse. This paper is aimed at providing a beginners digestible guide on optimising your donor base and increasing awareness of your cause through the various channels that are now available.

### Data cleansing

Ensuring that your database is in the most pristine state possible is of course the first stage of any acquisition drive, as correct names and addresses and screening against suppression files for deceased and gone away records could mean the difference between a new donor or not.

**TIP:** If you are using the national change of address (NCOA) file then anyone who cannot be traced to a new address, can still be sent the communication if you change their name to Dear Occupier, as their geo-demographic profile (where they are, what their profile may be like) could also be the same.

**NOTE:** Point of entry is the most important element of data integrity so please ensure that your data is accurate from the outset so that you will optimise your return on investment later on.

### Data review/Profiling

The second stage of the process would ideally begin with a review of your database to gain an understanding of the demographic profile (age, wealth, etc) of your donors and any insights that you may already have spotted.

### ↳ **Data mapping**

The next stage would be to map out current marketing channels available to you and how they are fed into the database, to gain a clear understanding of the current structure.

### ↳ **Segmentation**

After you have gained an understanding of the demographic profile of your donors, possibly their geo-demographic information (where they are, what their criteria are) and also mapped the marketing channels that are currently being used and how this data gets onto the database, it is time to think about segmentation. Segmentation can split the database into cold, warm, lapsed, regular givers, age and so on. Segmentation can also identify those donors who have Email, mobile numbers and so on. This can determine which channel you use for each possible segment.

### ↳ **Cold data list acquisition**

After you have analysed what your database of supporter's looks like, then one way to create a larger database to market to is to look for people that fit the same profile. This can be done via cold (people that are unknown to your organisation) list acquisition. The process is normally to look for a list broker and brief them on your requirements, and on your database. The list broker will normally put together a proposal based on your requirements and what data is available and specifically why they have chosen each of the possible cold lists. It is then a matter of choosing which ones you would like and the list broker will then acquire the data on your behalf.

### ↳ **Deduplication**

An important part of building up your data file for the acquisition process is to dedupe any names that are already part of your donor base so they do not receive any marketing communications twice. This process can be done in many cases by your list broker. Within deduplication you can have an hierarchical process, your house file (main database) could be set at 1, a well performing list can be set at 2, then the next performing list being set at 3 and so on, this means that any people who appear in list 1 will be chosen as a master over anyone who also appears within list 2 and so on.

## **Marketing channels.**

There are many marketing channels that can be used. Below is a list of which channels are Available and some considerations on utilising them.

### **Direct mail**

Direct mail still remains the largest marketing channel that is used for donor acquisition. Direct mail provides you the ability to include a great deal of information into the same communication. The mail pack can include a letter, response/donation mechanism, leaflet, business reply envelope, booklet etc. The cost for the mail pack can be largely reduced if you use mail Sortation.

### **WEB**

Using the World Wide Web for acquisition is essential. All digital channels should have a mechanism to link to your donation pages and your donations pages should have a single and regular donation option. The website should act as a hub for supporters to access via related digital media like, banners/skyscrapers, Email, SMS, micro sites and affiliated links.

### **Email**

Email marketing is a cost effective method for donor acquisition; the creative can link to your donations pages within your website. Business to consumer cold marketing lists are available but you can encounter delivery issues as some content can be seen as spam. There are a few pointers for this channel you will need to be aware of.

#### **TIP:**

- Do not use your domain to send Email from. Create a separate related domain for the campaign; this will protect your main domain from possible black listing.
- Dual send. Always send HTML and plain text, this helps with delivery as some Email browsers which block HTML will often let through a plain text Email.
- Plain text Email will not allow you to use formatting, so keep the Email simple
- Keep the length of the text to 75 characters across. This helps readability on smaller digital devices.
- If possible use VDP (variable data production) to tailor the Email to the recipient. See VDP on page 6.

### ▸ **Telemarketing**

Telemarketing can be a very effective way to engage with a supporter and help them to understand the needs and challenges of the charity or campaign. Outbound telemarketing can be used for ongoing appeals, welcome calls, up selling calls for regular donations or emergency appeals. It is also effective in creating genuine rapport with the supporter so they can also be kept up to date with projects they are supporting.

### ▸ **SMS (Short Message Service)**

SMS is most effective as a compliment to using other marketing channels, for example before or after an Email broadcast or as part of a Direct Marketing mailing follow up. SMS is limited in how much information you can use, but is very cheap to administer. You should however have a mechanism to be able to receive the SMS back also.

### ▸ **Face 2 Face**

Face to Face fundraising can be a good way to engage with possible supporters and motivate them to support the charity through a regular gift in the first instance. As with telemarketing it also gives the charity the opportunity to build rapport with the supporter so they gain a real understanding of the charity or campaign. There are many elements with regard to engaging with the supporter that can only be achieved via face to face dialogue.

### ▸ **WEB Banners/ Skyscrapers**

Banners and skyscrapers can be a valuable acquisition tool. They work best by using affiliate corporate partners who agree to have your banner or skyscraper on their site; this can drive traffic into your own website donation pages. Be aware that this approach can become viral by partners passing on the code to their partners and so on.

## ➤ **SEO (search engine optimisation)**

Search engine optimisation is an important tool to increase traffic to the donation pages of your website. Techniques for increasing your listing within a search engine for free include.

- **Appropriate use of Page Titles** or (meta titles)  
Page titles are very important consideration for a Search Engine, if your search for a keyword and the webpage title has the same keyword it is very likely that the page will be displayed in the search listing.
- **Using the keywords in the page text and links.**  
This helps search engines find relevant content in a similar way to page titles.
- **Using keywords in URL's.** (personalised Uniform Resource Locator's)  
Changing Filenames to the keywords you wish to catch in search engine Searches). It is also effective to change the file name to reflect the content of the page.
- **Making Search-Engine Friendly website and hierarchy**  
Search engines consider the Home page (the default page which opens) to a website to be of prime importance when it comes to rating. Make sure that you have links within the home page that are relevant to the services, campaigns that you are trying to drive traffic to.
- **Linking from other site**  
One of the important factors which search engines consider for placing links higher in order is the Page Rank. In simple terms, the more pages which link to your website the higher the placement in Google.

## ➤ **Social Media**

With two thirds of internet use being related to social media, this is a space that is essential for raising awareness and acquiring donors. As an acquisition tool it is free!

Each post should have a link to your donation pages within your website. New companies are emerging who offer services that allow you to update various social media sites using content management systems, so content can be administered centrally.

## ➤ **DRTV (Direct Response Television)**

For DRTV projects the most effective way is to work with a DRTV expert contact centre agency. It is best to work with a contact centre that can have a 24 hour service for effective campaign management. It is essential that the contact centre has expertise and scope to deal with call peaks effectively.

### ➤ **Raffles/Lottery**

Raffles and lotteries are proving to be excellent acquisitions tools currently; they can now be delivered via online or via traditional direct mail raffle books or even a hybrid approach where the donor can choose to respond via mail or via Email/WEB.

### ➤ **Events**

Events can be a fantastic way to not only acquire donors but to raise brand awareness and also engage with the public. Everything from charity cake bake days to large scale charity marathons can help acquire a large set of new donors quickly. The best model is where the event is self serviced, so that the donor downloads or requests a pack and completes the donations forms and related stationery, completes the event, collects the money either online or physically, then sends in the money. Make sure you collect all the credentials of everyone who takes part. You will need an opt-in mechanism within the event response form. Use an event to gain a strong rapport with the new donor by thanking them quickly after completing the event.

### ➤ **New Media / Cross Media.**

Cross media tends to be delivered via technology driven media. For example you can have an acquisition campaign that starts with a SMS, if people respond to the SMS, then they will be sent a link to a pURL (see below) this pURL or micro site will then ask some basic questions to the donor, at this stage the donor could choose to receive a call, receive a mail pack or ask to be contacted at a later date. The idea is that all the offline and online channels are intelligently integrated and are not delivered generically, but tailored to the recipient. Even though they can have a higher set up cost and rely on digital print for some of the offline communications, they perform very well indeed and are a very successful way of acquiring new donors.

### ➤ **VDP**

VDP stands for variable data production, it is sometimes referred to as variable data print, but as the output can be delivered via Email, pURL (see below) and print, then the term variable data production is more relevant. This channel allows you to create tailored bespoke communications where not only the text is variable but the entire creative, across thousands of records, also all the colours, images, graphs; tables are all tailored to the individual. As this approach is produced digitally then pURL's and Emails can be delivered as well as traditional print. Because the communication is tailored to the individual then the response rates are very much enhanced.

## ↳ **pURL.**

pURL's (Personalised Uniform Resource Locator's) are personalised micro sites. pURL's are created via technology driven techniques and can be completely bespoke to the individual (See VDP) these can really optimise supporter engagement and can also be used to create reports as well as tailored communications. This channel will prove to be a growing area on donor acquisition in the coming years. This channel puts the control of the next stage in the hands of the supporter, so they get to choose the channel they would like to be communicated from and also which campaign they could be interested in supporting, this is all part of the migration from the generic marketing that we are used to.

## ↳ **Smart phone apps**

There are new tools that can be used for donor acquisition via smart phones. These can be free to upload and people can donate via their PayPal account easily and securely, in fact the beta version of one mobile application is PCI-DSS level 1 compliant. (Please see PCI information paper within our knowledge base for more details on PCI-DSS rules)

## **Online response handling**

Online response handling requires you have to a section of your website that can capture new donor details or even be able to look up existing donor details. You will then need to incorporate payment processing screens to process the donations. The best approach is not only to have the capability to receive one off donations but also to have the capability to process regular direct debits too. For card payments you will need to work with a payment processing provider who will in most cases require a merchant number from you, this can be acquired from your bank. For regular payments or direct debits you will need a direct debit provider who will require in most cases a service user number. You can acquire a service user number from your bank.

## **Offline response handling**

For offline response handling the most cost effective approach is to outsource, as this means you can not only save costs but also increase efficiency. It is important that any response handling provider has PCI-DSS and related ISO accreditations. It is also best practice to choose a supplier that has a transparent approach to reporting via real time extranets (reporting websites) and automated web services.

## **Conclusions / recommendations.**

The main point to think about when planning an acquisition campaign is to ensure that your data is as cleansed as possible and that your communications are joined up. It is important that you have strong mechanisms for keeping the dialog open between your organisation and your donors. Where possible use each communication to engage with the donor allowing your strategy to be a two way communication.

New marketing channels allow you to use data to actually drive the creative and text and this helps with engagement and in turn acquisition.

There are ways to ask the donor how they would like to respond. By having online and offline response channels available this gives the possible donor the best opportunity to support you in the way that they choose.

With social media taking up two thirds of internet use, it is essential that you have presence in this space. Joined up acquisition marketing approaches do not have to be any more expensive than your current activity, in some cases it is free. Some marketing channels allow you to step back from generic marketing and use data to drive the channel and communication piece.

For the response handling element it is recommended that you choose a supplier that can handle offline/online or hybrid responses. It is also important to choose a supplier that has the ability to scale up the service and add in new technologies easily and effectively.

It is not recommended to use a supplier that has any element of their solution offshored (having an overseas solution) as the only protection for data we have within the UK is via the Data Protection Act and between the UK and USA there is a Safe Harbour agreement that protects data. Overseas there is very little protection.

Make sure the channels you use provide the donor with the best possible opportunity to respond to your campaign in the way that they choose.

Good luck with your project!!

If you would like any more information about any of the above, then please do drop us a line.