GENERATIONAL FUNDRAISING TIPS
A COMPANION TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICAN GIVING

by Andrew Shoaff

Identifying and appealing to the unique sensitivities and behavioral trends of donors in different generational groups has long been a challenge for the nonprofit fundraiser. And the proliferation of new communication channels and rapid evolution of digital technologies have made interpreting the generational landscape more confusing today than ever before.

The Next Generation of American Giving is designed to help answer tough questions about generational giving habits. Understanding how and where to apply the information in the study is no small task, but there is a lot you can do to incorporate generational giving principals into your organization's fundraising strategy.
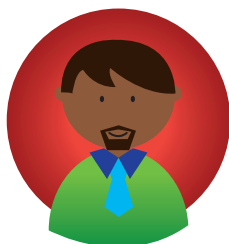
THE GENERATIONS

Generation Y

- Born 1981 – 1995
  (age 18-32 as of 2013)
- Represent 11% of total giving
- 32.8 million donors in the U.S.
- 60% give
- $481 average annual gift
- 3.3 charities supported

Boomers

- Born 1946 – 1964
  (age 49-67 as of 2013)
- Represent 43% of total giving
- 51.0 million donors in the U.S.
- 72% give
- $1,212 average annual gift
- 4.5 charities supported

Generation X

- Born 1965 – 1980
  (age 33-48 as of 2013)
- Represent 20% of total giving
- 39.5 million donors in the U.S.
- 59% give
- $732 average annual gift
- 3.9 charities supported

Matures

- Born 1945 and earlier
  (age 68+ as of 2013)
- Represent 26% of total giving
- 27.1 million donors in the U.S.
- 88% give
- $1,367 average annual gift
- 6.2 charities supported

Of particular significance to any fundraising effort are Baby Boomers. With 51 million individuals, Boomers are the largest donor group numerically, contributing 43% percent of total giving. Although the tips below are intended to strengthen relationships with all generations, organizations would be wise to take their own greatest givers into consideration.

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✔ **COLLECT DONOR BIRTHDAYS.**
Understanding generational differences and messaging uniquely by age bracket will be critical to fundraising success. But this requires knowing your donors well enough to be able to segment along generational lines. Prioritize donor information, especially information that will allow you to segment by generation. As both this paper and Blackbaud's *Online Marketing Benchmark Study for Nonprofits™* reported email appeal rates are declining precipitously. Undifferentiated "one size fits all" email campaigns will continue to lose ground to highly targeted messaging. The more you know about your donors, including into which generational bracket they fall, the greater your ability to appeal to the topics and sensitivities that drive engagement and donations.

✔ **ASK DONORS WHAT THEY WANT.**
Our for-profit colleagues have long recognized the importance of customer satisfaction mechanisms. Call your bank, book a rental car, or make an online purchase and you are likely to be asked to complete a customer satisfaction survey. Understanding how constituents view your organization is just as critical in the nonprofit space, as it provides key insights into how we can engage them in our mission. Asking constituents

what information they want and how your organization could service them better doesn't have to be an onerous process. Consider adding a link to a survey on email autoresponders or in a welcome series email. Events are also an ideal venue to poll constituents about what's important to them. The more organizations invest in finding ways to deliver the information and engagement opportunities constituents want, the more money and commitment they will derive from those relationships.

✔ **FACILITATE PEER-TO-PEER FUNDRAISING.**
As *The Next Generation of American Giving* points out, every organization can attract younger donors and a share of the $16 billion they give annually. Peer-to-peer fundraising represents big opportunity to reach all donors, but Generations X and Y are particularly receptive to this channel. Even if your organization doesn't have a formal event program, you can still get into the peer-to-peer game through do-it-yourself (DIY) fundraising programs. DIY fundraising allows anyone to raise money on an organization's behalf while incorporating the value of crowdsourcing and personal networks.

✔ **ELIMINATE BARRIERS.**
It's a tall order, one that will take a lot of time, and in all likelihood cause no small amount of organization frustration, but eliminating internal barriers to cross-functional marketing and communication efforts will help organizations better realize multigenerational engagement. Be prepared for shifts in the kind of organizational transparency younger donors expect, and think about how every side of the organization can contribute to a new model of information sharing.

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✔ **TARGET BY CHANNEL.**
It's a multichannel world and every generational cohort engages in each channel. But just like email, there is no "one size fits all" strategy. Consider what asks are appropriate for each channel and to what cohort. Fundraising through social media may still be in its infancy, but using social media purely as an engagement tool is now considered Fundraising 101. Use social media to promote your website and capture email. Ask donors for feedback on what information they want and how well they think your organization is serving its mission. This will provide valuable information about who your constituents are, the generational cohorts to which they belong, and how to build stronger relationships with each group.

✔ **BUILD YOUR SUSTAINER PROGRAM.**
Sustainer donation programs are gaining traction across the nonprofit space. According to Blackbaud's *Online Marketing Benchmark Study for Nonprofits,* the total value of sustainer donations rose 27% in 2012. Sandwiched between caring for aging parents and raising children, Boomers are an ideal target for sustained giving programs, which

are a convenient and time-saving way to support charities. Twenty-one percent of Boomers say they are already sustainers. Tailoring the ask to those constituents most likely to support an already growing trend will help improve fundraising performance and build confidence that your organization understands the unique needs of each audience.

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