Beloit Health System Foundation Launches Innovative Programs to Engage Donors; Uses Target Analytics® To Drive Growth

Beloit Health System Foundation is an independent nonprofit that raises money in support of Beloit Memorial Hospital, a 124-bed community hospital in Wisconsin, which serves a local population of approximately 200,000.

The Foundation’s mission is to develop, manage, and distribute gifts to assist the hospital in providing excellent healthcare. The money it raises helps pay for facility renovation and expansion, hospital programs and services, and continuing education for staff.

During the past decade, as funding sources shifted and the economy embarked on a downward spiral, Beloit Health System Foundation realigned its strategies to better focus on individual donors and their connection to the hospital’s mission. ProspectPoint™, Target Analytics’ fundraising modeling service which analyzes database of donors and provides a targeted plan for cultivating support, became important to the organization (Beloit has regularly used many types of ProspectPoint models, including: Annual Giving Likelihood, Major Giving Likelihood, Planned Giving Likelihood, and Target Gift Range).

The New Challenge: Move all Constituents up the Donor Pyramid

In her 15 years at the Foundation, executive director Ann Sitrick has faced some big challenges. During that time, donor demographics have changed substantially, and the economy has risen and fallen and refused to stabilize, so when the hospital president related his vision of a brand new, $11.6 million state-of-the-art Emergency Center, she had to use all of her creativity and resources.

“To make his vision a reality, we had to raise more money. To raise more money, we had to better understand the donors in our database and develop cultivation plans,” Sitrick said. “The truth is a small organization often needs fundraising modeling even more than a larger one.”

Sitrick—basically a one-person shop—understood what modeling could do for her, so she turned to her Target Analytics account manager for help. Together, they used the Foundation’s gift and demographic data to develop a custom model that would identify those people most likely to support Beloit Health System Foundation.

During this time, Sitrick was particularly concerned with understanding who her donors were and what their potential was. She was also spending a lot of time thinking about how to link her donors more tightly to the hospital’s mission. In the past, the Foundation had relied on direct mail, special events,
and local corporate donations to fund the majority of its programs. As local businesses were taken over by corporations located outside the region, the Foundation recognized that, not only did they need to diversify their fundraising efforts, but they had to think beyond past methods and really focus on relationship building.

The Solution: Use Custom Modeling to Identify and Target the Hospital’s Top Prospects and Implement Engaging Programs to Secure Donors

By applying the custom model to a broader set of records, Target Analytics® increased the quantity of high-quality prospects on the Foundation’s prospect list to five times its original size! “As well as we thought we knew our donors and our community, we learned something new. As the economy changed, so did the profile of our donor base; Communication strategies and solicitation strategies we used three years ago don’t apply today because our donor population changed. My top prospects today are much better informed about healthcare, and they need different information from us to make gift decisions. Target Analytics told us not only who those donors were, it also told us where the information was obtained. That allows us to be much better prepared for each solicitation.” Equipped with this valuable information on top prospects, Sitrick was able to begin cultivating new relationships.

“The results we received from Target Analytics were very solid, very well organized, and very insightful. They have improved our organization’s ability to raise the money we need to support the hospital,” she said.

Sitrick’s confidence in Target Analytics began when she received the results of her first ProspectPoint™ screening at the beginning of the final quarter of 2001. She immediately applied the key findings to an end-of-year mailing, realizing a 17 percent increase in donations over the previous year. In addition, the results helped her better understand giving trends and validate that the organization’s cultivation techniques were working. The results obtained with the help of that first study laid the foundation for solid fundraising success, and Sitrick continues to update her study results every three years.

The Foundation has enjoyed particular success with stewardship events that give donors access to the hospital staff. The bonding and storytelling that take place at these events have produced loyal donors who were largely identified by fundraising models. In fact, these events, coupled with more detailed information about each donor, have contributed to the Foundation exceeding its support of the hospital’s new Emergency Center project by 68 percent over goal.

Sitrick called out two specific programs that have been aided by modeling from Target Analytics.

“We used modeling scores and giving history to develop invitation lists to two personalized fundraising events that are very successful,” she said.
An annual event, “Dinner with the Docs” provides an opportunity for major and planned gift donors to meet hospital physicians in a relaxed social atmosphere. Somewhat surprisingly, the doctors are enthusiastic about the event and happy to attend so they can take the opportunity to express their gratitude to donors for their support while explaining what their donations allow the medical team to accomplish.

“The impact is huge,” said Sitrick. “Our donors feel a sense of ownership and it really builds our community. An additional benefit is that it identifies for our physicians those community members who have a genuine interest in helping them deliver the best possible healthcare to their patients.”

Sitrick’s other brainchild, “Pie with the President,” is an event that addresses a different level of donors and gives their annual fund donors the opportunity to meet informally with the president to talk about the needs of the community and learn first-hand about the hospital’s programs and services, while scoring some fine pie.

“I can tell you that every single person who comes to Pie with the President has increased his or her annual giving,” she said. “I can also tell you that it is very important that I have the statistics to back up the time and money we spend on these events to the president — I have to show results.”

One example Sitrick offered is this: a hospital volunteer and her husband made a first year gift of $250. By identifying them early, inviting them to personalized events, the couple increased their annual giving to $1,000 in less than four years — and they began to designate the Foundation as a recipient of an employer’s matching gift.

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**It All Comes Around**

Before she purchased Target Analytics, Sitrick called references. Today, she provides references.

“I tell everyone who calls me, it’s a great product. I love it. The information generated by the study is worth a full 1.0 full time equivalent (FTE) to me. But, I also tell them to invest in a consultant who will show you how to make it work for you. You can’t take a back seat, you have to understand what the numbers mean and you have to show your Board why you can trust the numbers. Using the information well provides great results for your organization.”

Beloit is now totally committed to screening every three years — and Sitrick honestly can’t imagine why everyone doesn’t do the same.

“For more information about Target Analytics, contact us at solutions@blackbaud.com.”

— Ann Sitrick, CFRE
Executive Director
Beloit Health System Foundation

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