



Nonprofit Donor Retention A-Z Guide + Checklist



BY: CLAIRE AXELRAD

I call donor retention your “easy money” strategy.

Current donors are warm leads. When a donor has given to you once, you at least know they have some sort of linkage, interest or connection to what you do. They’re not with you for the long term yet, but getting them to give again isn’t like making a “cold call.”

Too many nonprofits focus on the expensive money — donor acquisition and special events. These strategies do bring in new supporters, but the lion’s share of them are fly-by-night donors. They won’t stick with you — unless you prioritize donor retention.

Do you even know what percentage of donors you’re retaining? According to Jay Love, founder of Bloomerang, less than 5% of fundraising offices know the answer to this question! So, you’re not alone. But you can do better.

Knowing your retention rate enables you to move it to something better. And [research from the Fundraising Effectiveness Project](#) shows the average nonprofit is losing 8 out of 10 new donors! Overall average retention is only 44.5%. These numbers are simply not sustainable for most organizations. By the time you’ve added a new donor, the lion’s share of your previous new donors are out the door.

Did you know a 10% increase in donor retention can increase the lifetime value (in dollars) of your donors by as much as 200%? To get here requires a focus not on new donors, but on the [lifetime value](#) of these donors. And lifetime value translates to donor commitment over time. Plus, [research from Dr. Adrian Sargeant](#) outlines additional benefits from increasing donor retention, including more legacy gifts, more volunteers and more referrals of new donors.

Your job is to inspire your donor's enduring passion for your cause, and loyalty to your organization. This doesn't simply happen. It's work. What are you doing to inspire? Attrition rates are sky high and have been for more than a decade. I happen to think this isn't inevitable. I just think the lion's share of nonprofits don't have a clue what to do. So ... they wing it. What about you? Do you have a donor retention program? A donor retention budget?

If you're not focusing seriously on increasing donor retention, be afraid. Be very afraid. And use your fear to scare your leadership straight! If you're not adding resources to build relationships with your donors — and keep them over time — you're being pound wise and penny foolish. Show your leaders the data from the [Fundraising Effectiveness Project](#). Then go over this checklist with them. See where you're doing a good job, and where you might improve. Then create a plan and ... ***Just Do It!***



Nonprofit donor retention is not as hard as you think. At least it shouldn't be so hard. After all, the commercial sector manages to retain more than 90% of their customers. Then why does the nonprofit sector only manage to retain half that amount? What's going on? Why are our for-profit brethren beating the pants off of us when it comes to retention? While it's tempting to say "Oh, they have lots of money to throw into research, advertising and all sorts of technology," that's not where their competitive edge lies. No. What they understand (that most folks in the social benefit sector seem to misunderstand) are the A – Z concepts outlined in the following pages.

All that is required is a shift in thinking. Then you need to develop an action plan that follows your new thought paradigm. Consider giving your plan a catchy name if that helps to get everyone on board (e.g., *"We Love Our Donors Plan,"* *"Donor-Centered Policies & Procedures,"* *"Retention Intention Plan,"*





"Donor Engagement Plan" or, my favorite, "Donor Love and Loyalty Plan".

Nonprofit Donor Retention A – Z

Which of the words below describe the way your organization thinks and behaves towards you donors?

APPRECIATION

Appreciation is a wonderful word with which to begin our donor retention checklist. It means saying “Thank you,” of course. Yet it’s richer than that because it has empathy wrapped into it. “I appreciate how you feel.” “I appreciate your situation.” “I appreciate your values.” “I appreciate the thought and care you put into making this philanthropic investment.”

Appreciation means recognition — and that’s the foundation of showing your donors you know them. According to [Penelope Burk’s research](#), 46% of donors decide to stop giving for reasons tied to lack of meaningful information or to a feeling that their giving is not appreciated. About 93% of donors would definitely or probably give again if you communicated with them more effectively, And 74% of donors reported they would continue giving and 64% would give more. All they want from you are a few things: (1) prompt, personal acknowledgment; (2) an indication their gift is being used for the intended purpose, and (3) some additional communication about the gift’s impact. Expressing appreciation in a prompt, personal and creative way might be the [single most important tool you have in your fundraising toolbox](#).



BELIEFS SHARED

Philanthropy is based on shared values. Tapping into a donor's generosity and sense of providing for the common good requires you to consciously express the values you enact that may align with the donor's values. Do your values come across in your donor communications? Are your values evident whenever anyone walks into your place of business? Are your values an integral part of your nonprofit brand?

Donors care about your essence — *why* you exist. How do you see yourself? How do others see you? How do people see themselves when they affiliate with you? Are you a Harley Davidson tribe, or a Mercedes crowd? One is instantly known for freedom and power; the other for luxury and power. Do you make it clear what a donor will stand for if they join your community?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Ever hear the old adage: “The customer is always right?” Of course! But is “The donor is always right” a central tenet of nonprofit business? I would say, all too often, it’s not even close. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Nonprofit leaders still persist in the notion that folks should give to us out of some altruistic impulse. They should give to us because our mission is important. They should ... because it is the right thing to do.

Well ... that’s nice wishful thinking. But if you’re running your business on wishing and hoping, you’re not going to be in business very long.

Nonprofits today have a lot of competition for donor investments. You can no longer afford to sit idly by, assuming folks will stick with you just because you’re “good.” Or just because they’ve given before. Today’s one-time donors are not sticking around. [You can’t afford to rest on your laurels](#) just because you did an effective job with donor acquisition (once) and now believe you have “captured” this donor in your database.

You haven’t captured anyone. Your prison is the opposite of maximum security. No donor is really captured, unless by free will. To truly capture, you must captivate. And keep on captivating. And that takes an organization-wide commitment to service. One disgruntled receptionist, volunteer coordinator or program staffer who ignores or misdirects a call can destroy a year’s hard work by a development professional.



DONOR CENTRICITY

This is perhaps the greatest key to both donor acquisition and retention. Always step into your donors' shoes and ask yourself this question: "How will a donor perceive this?" The best way to achieve donor centrality as an organization is through the development of a "culture of philanthropy" or "gratitude culture." I suggest three great reads.

1. [Donor-Centered Fundraising](#) by Penelope Burk. When I read this groundbreaking book, it completely changed my approach to fundraising and nonprofit marketing. It's that good!
2. [The Donor-Centric Pledge](#) by Simone Joyaux. She recommends formalizing your commitment to a donor-centered practice into written policies and procedures.
3. [Keep Your Donors: The Guide to Better Communications & Stronger Relationships](#) by Tom Ahern and Simone Joyaux, in which you can find the following "donor-centric pledge" and lots of other great stuff.



ACTION TIP: Simone recommends engaging all staff and board in conversations that ultimately lead to commitment to the donor-centric pledge. She asks folks to consider 23 donor-centered principles and then respond on how well they understand them, believe in them and enact them. You can read all 23 [here](#). Below, I'm highlighting my top "lucky 7." If you truly commit to these 7 principles, you'll soon find donor retention becomes a whole lot easier:

THE DONOR-CENTERED PLEDGE

We, [fill in the name of your nonprofit organization here], believe that...

Gifts are not "cash transactions." Donors are not merely a bunch of interchangeable, easily replaceable credit cards, checkbooks and wallets.

Having a program for developing a relationship with that donor is how organizations tap that enormous potential.

"Lifetime value of a donor" is the best (though often overlooked) way to evaluate "return on investment" in fundraising.

Many first-time gifts are no more than "impulse purchases" or "first dates."

A prerequisite for above-average donor retention is a well-planned donor-centric communications program that begins with a welcome.

Donors are investors. They invest in doing good. They expect their investment to prosper, or they'll invest somewhere else.

A prime goal of fundraising communications is to satisfy basic human needs, such as the donor's need to feel important and worthwhile.

EMPATHY

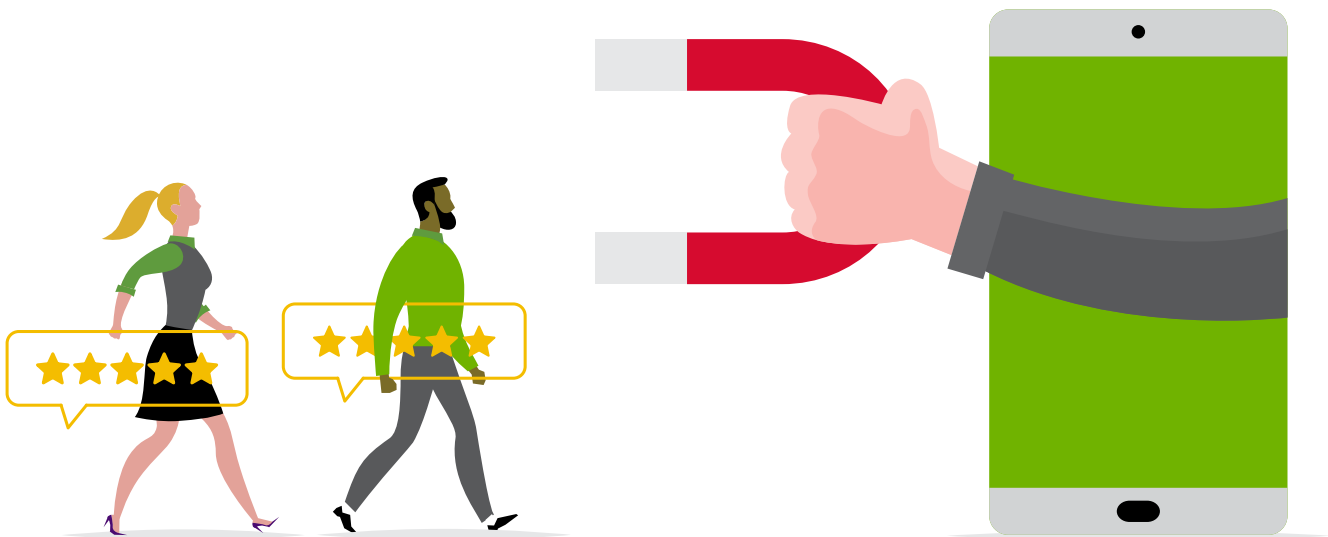
Get inside your donor's head. Stand in their shoes. Use whatever empathy you can muster. This is the key to donor-centered fundraising and retention. Let's face it: Sometimes your donor doesn't want to give what you asked them for. Or they don't want to continue giving at all. Do you just give up? No! Obviously they cared about what you do at some point, so what's making them feel differently now? Maybe it's something you can fix. Maybe not. You want to find out. In a caring, understanding way.

Don't argue with donors. You don't even want to think in argumentative terms. Trust me; it will come out in the tone of your voice or your body language even if you never say a word. *"What do you mean you can't afford to do this right now? I know you just took a very expensive vacation! You've clearly got the resources. You're just being stingy."* Don't set up your conversation as a finger pointing session. Don't make your donor feel bad. Your job is to make your donor feel honored. And use the words "feel" and "felt" and "found." These words are all about [demonstrating empathy](#). "I feel your pain." "I've felt that way myself." "I've found that ..." Then you offer your donor an alternative way to think about the situation. In other words, whenever your donor raises an objection to giving at any particular point in time you show them empathy.

FEEDBACK

You can't improve donor retention without first understanding why donors fail to renew. So plan ahead to incorporate feedback loops into your fundraising and marketing communications. Don't hold an event without sending an email afterwards asking for feedback. Periodically send brief [donor surveys](#) indicating to your supporters you value their opinions and care about their preferences. Don't simply put this data away in a drawer!

The [voice of the donor](#) is a powerful retention tool — so use it. There's no point collecting feedback if you don't share it with others on your team, discuss it, and figure out what you might change to make supporters happier. Consider building in a system to use feedback, such as a weekly email summarizing trends you're seeing and/or hearing. Include people on the email who don't always interact directly with donors as a way to help them understand the donor experience.



GIFTS GIVEN

I often say “if you want gifts you must give them.” There are all sorts of gifts you can give to donors, and the best ones are intangible. I call them [“gifts of content.”](#) These gifts should strive to be helpful or beautiful or emotionally inspiring.

The very first gift should be a prompt, personal thank you. This shows appreciation, of course. It also instills trust. The donor knows you received their gift, you valued it enough to let them know right away, and you’ll put it to work as they intended. Consider whether you’re really doing this effectively. A study conducted by Charity Dynamics and NTEN shows that 21% of donors say they were never thanked for their support. Don’t be one of the bad guys. Get everyone in your organization to buy in to [the 48-hour rule](#). Donor etiquette is not like wedding etiquette. You don’t have a year to send the thank you note. This is perhaps the most important thing you can do to sustain donor relationships. But if anyone doesn’t take this seriously, it won’t happen. And if you can’t make this happen, you’re going to leave money on the table. You’re going to lose donors. Period.

HELP

If you want to connect with someone, find a way to help them. This philosophy should undergird everything else you do. Do unto your donors as you would have them do unto you. Adopt an overarching attitude of customer service — [an attitude of gratitude](#). Come from a place of generosity of spirit. Don't treat donors as wallets — or a means to an end. Helping donors should be a central part of your mission!

Figure out what your constituents want and need. Then give it to them. It doesn't have to be expensive or tangible. It can simply be an article you've written with answers to frequently asked questions. Or a "How-to" guide. Or "Top 10 tips" to keep your aging parents safe, go a little greener, get your kids to finish their homework, communicate your concerns to your legislator, etc. Share what you know and be helpful now to promote longer and more lasting interactions later.





IMPACT

Ah, another important word to keep your donor's ears open. I've talked to some fundraising pros who believe this word is even more important than "relationship" because "it doesn't matter how great the relationship is now ... if you can't show the donor their money is creating an impact, there won't be much relationship for long. They will stop funding you, even if they like you." This is a terrific point!

Assure you have a plan in place to demonstrate impact continually. Every donor communication should be centered around some sort of proof the donor's gift is having its intended effect. The best way to accomplish this is by telling stories, sharing testimonials and otherwise using the voice and narrative of others to make the case as to why your organization is worthy of support. Donors won't give again just because you suggest they should. They'll do so only when they can visualize the impact their giving will achieve.

JOYFUL

“Fundraising is the gentle art of teaching the joy of giving.” So said [Hank Rosso](#), a personal mentor who was Founder of The Fundraising School. Donors will not give again unless you [facilitate a joyful experience](#). That’s why my personal motto is “philanthropy, not fundraising.” I advocate coming from a place of love (philanthropy translates from the Greek to “love of humankind”), rather than from a less joyful stance where you “hit people up” or “twist their arms” to get them to give you money. For donors, it’s not about money. It’s about impact and personal fulfillment.

Your job, as a philanthropy facilitator, is to make giving pure joy. This takes active listening, empathy, emotional intelligence and other skills central to connecting with donors, understanding their motivations and figuring out what will bring them joy.





KIND

Do you have a culture of philanthropy? Unless you're kind, you don't. Kindness is defined as "the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate." And kindness must be practiced both externally and internally. It comes from a feeling of generosity and abundance. It dies in a culture of scarcity.

In a culture of philanthropy, everyone shares in everyone else's success. People don't segregate themselves in silos. They don't try to take credit for other people's work. They don't feel oppressed, overworked or undervalued. They don't complain daily, sometimes with a smidgen of pride, about how "lean and mean" their culture is. Without a culture of kindness, you're not going to achieve anything near to what you could. Seth Godin expressed it well when he said *"It turns out that while people like to have their problems fixed, what they most want is to be seen and to be cared about."*



LISTENING

The flip side of asking for feedback is listening. There's no point asking for feedback if you're merely paying lip service to the idea. If you simply check "sent a survey" off your list as an accomplished task, you've not really accomplished anything other than "make work." The same holds true when you meet a donor for coffee and a chat. Nothing meaningful will come out of this per se. You may feel you've done your job, but you haven't. Not until you incorporate the feedback you've received into follow-up.

When donors tell you how they feel, you have to show you noticed. In fact, you must go one further and show donors you care. [Pay attention](#). Follow up. Thank them. Engage with them. Find out more. Offer to take their feedback into account. Follow up again to show you did exactly that. Nothing should go without saying. Otherwise the donor will imagine you didn't care much about what they had to say. When your donor puts in time, you have to put in time as well.

MUTUALITY

Both the organization and the donor benefit from the relationship. It's symbiotic. Without your donor, you can't fulfill your mission. Without you, the donor can't [find meaning and reward](#). Interestingly, there are symbiotic relationships where this is not the case. Parasites, for example, have a symbiotic relationship with their hosts, but only the parasite benefits. Don't become a parasite. [If you want gifts, you must give them](#).

If your relationship is not mutually beneficial, donors will not renew. Do you know why your donors leave you? [Find out!](#) It's become exceedingly rare for donors to continue giving to any particular charity simply because it does "good work" or "it's the right thing to do." There's just too much competition for your donor's dollar. If you don't offer them something of benefit, someone else will.



NEEDS MET

Donors have them; it's your job to meet them. Not the other way around. Donors don't give because you have needs. They give because you meet them. If you want to retain and upgrade a donor, it's essential you understand and meet their needs. Don't send a bunch of messaging and/or appeals that are all about you and what you need. Donors don't care about that. They care about getting their own needs met (even though most won't admit it). Ever hear a donor or volunteer say *"I get way more out of this than I give?"* It's true. Don't forget this.

Remember not every donor has the same needs. Some want simply to "belong" to a community of like-minded folks. Others feel compelled to give back. Others want to fulfill a moral or religious obligation. Others want to simply feel better about themselves when they look in the mirror. Others want others to look more kindly on them (e.g., they want to see their name on a building or listed as a member of a giving society). No motivation to give is better than another. You just want to match your cultivation and, ultimately, your solicitation to the particular motivations of your donor.



OPPORTUNITY FOR TRANSFORMATION

What better gift to offer your donor than an opportunity to make a transformative difference? Generally, by working together with others, charities are able to accomplish things individuals could not accomplish on their own. People are yearning for this type of opportunity. They want to help the homeless, but don't feel the handout they give to a panhandler really moves the needle. Then you come along with a big, bold solution and offer them the chance to be a part of it!

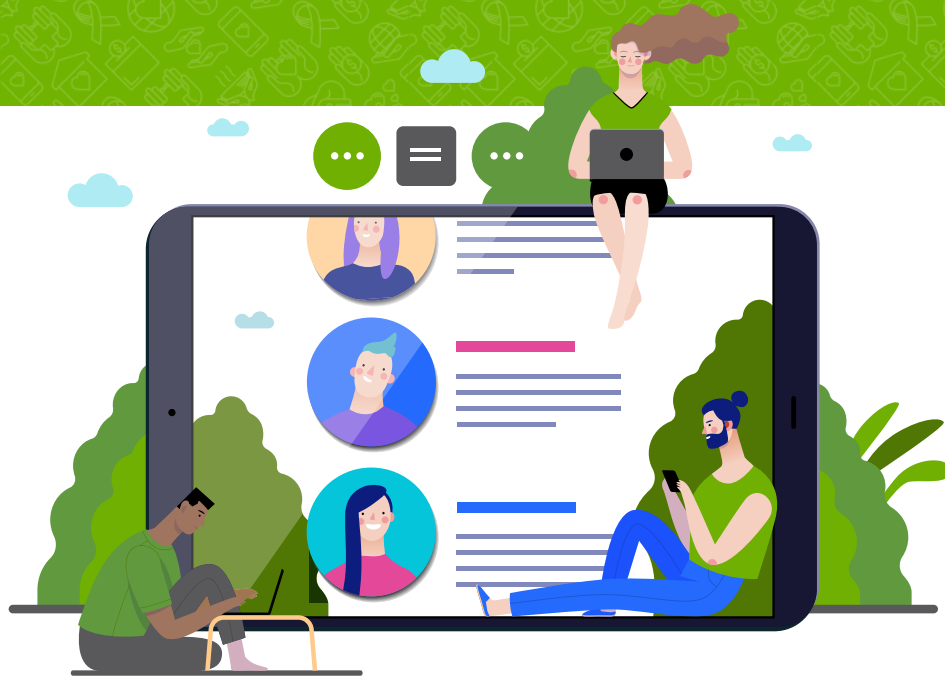
I always tell reluctant fundraisers this: Why wouldn't you offer others an opportunity to join you in doing something that makes you feel so wonderful? You'd share the opportunity to see a mind-blowing new movie or dine at a trendy new restaurant, wouldn't you? You'd probably tell your friend the meal or film will be transformative – that's why they have to go. Stop being so stingy with the philanthropic opportunities, already! Remember to keep you focus on transformation; not transaction. Your donor's first gift is the latter. It's only a beginning. The meaty part of the development process starts with the second gift. It's just like when you meet someone new. They're not really a friend yet. But if you share common interests and values, they may become a true friend over time. It won't happen all by itself, however. You've got to work to build the relationship.



PLAN

Donor retention won't happen on its own. You absolutely must develop a [strategic donor retention plan](#). A [real plan](#), with goals, measurable objectives, strategies, assignment of responsibilities and timelines. Donor retention can't be an after-thought. It's the heart of any successful fundraising strategy.

You really don't begin to see a return on your investment until after the second or third gift. Donor acquisition costs a lot of money! [Lifetime donor value](#) is what really matters. If all you focus on is a single transaction (i.e., one newly acquired donation), you're fooling yourself that you're a savvy fundraiser. You're simply living from paycheck to paycheck, if you're lucky. Generally, this is a treadmill strategy. Two steps forward, three steps back. It's called [donor churn](#), and it isn't pretty. The lion's share of first-time donors will never give to you again — unless you have a plan.



QUEST

Are you on a continual quest to do things better? Not just you personally, but as part of your organizational culture. Everything, of course, could be done better. The real question is “What will you do about it?” If you rest on your laurels, you’re effectively stating you’d prefer not to put in the effort. You’re comfortable. Or “good enough.” [Status quo](#) won’t get you anywhere in a rapidly changing environment. What worked yesterday won’t necessarily work today. What your constituents wanted yesterday isn’t necessarily what they want today.

The digital revolution has amplified the need to adapt to change. Even though you still do major gifts fundraising very much the same as a decade or two ago, your donors now expect a level of service they wouldn’t have dreamed of before the advent of the internet, mobile technology, searchable databases and social media. They expect answers and reports. Quickly. Are you on a quest to improve your systems so that you can respond effectively to donor needs?

RELATIONSHIP

This is a central tenet of exceptional donor retention. The stronger the relationship you're able to build with a donor, the more likely they are to stick with you through thick and thin. Treat every donor like a member of your family. Support them. Care for them. Meet their needs. Ask for their feedback and advice. Don't just talk to them when you want something from them. Think about the best relationships you have with people in your life — family, friends, neighbors and colleagues — and treat donors as you would wish to be treated. Embrace the 'Golden Rule.' Make donors feel special by extending a warm, human and personal touch.

If you want to build loyalty, you've got to build relationships. Building loyalty is important at all levels of giving because your repeat donors are the ones who make major and legacy gifts. Having them can make a HUGE difference to your bottom line.



STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is something you do with your donor's investment, rather than to your donor. The word is often confused with “cultivation” and/or “relationship building.” As a steward, you assure the donor's gift is invested wisely and put to use as they intended. Related to good stewardship is the notion of transparency. Showing your donor you're not hiding anything is the beginning of getting them to trust you and want to build a relationship with you.

If you want to define stewardship more broadly, as donor cultivation/relationship-building, go right ahead. The goal is the same: to create a sense of partnership and confidence that the donor's gifts are making the impact they intend. The objective of donor stewardship is to build engagement and a commitment to ongoing support that increases over time.

TRUST

You begin to instill trust when you follow through on your promises. Generally, the first act of demonstrating your trustworthiness is sending a prompt, personal thank you. Prompt means [within 48 hours](#). Personal means you address the donor by name and, ideally, say something that pertains specifically to this donor's identification with you (e.g., as a volunteer, client, student, patient, patron, monthly supporter, member, donor to a particular campaign, etc.). Good stewardship of the donor's gift is the next component of trust, as is follow-through reporting and a strong donor-centered communications strategy (["Love and Loyalty Plan"](#)).

Remember that some promises are implied, and these are critically important to donors. When you meet and talk to them, they expect you to remember their names. They want you to get back to them to let them know you enjoyed your conversation. Or that you're sending the material you promised. Keeping promises means keeping notes. Enter data confirming your donor conversations into your donor database, and look it up before your next planned encounter with that donor.



UNDERSTANDING

Donors want to be known and understood. This is a key element of any lasting relationship. So you've got to figure out ways to (1) get to know your donors better, and (2) show them you know them. Learn everything you can about your supporters. It will make it much easier for you to provide them with the value they desire and/or need. Don't just guess. [Do your research](#). It's not that difficult given all the tools at your disposal today, and it will put you way ahead of the game.

“Understanding how donors feel about your organization and what role they want you to play in their lives is the starting point for your keeping them for years.” So says nonprofit guru [Roger Craver](#). Your cause cannot be viewed separate from the customers (aka donors) you serve. If you misunderstand what attracts donors to your vision, mission and values, you'll move forward with fundraising and communication strategies destined to fail. Learn what donors want and believe. Then match your messaging to what donors care about.

VISIT

Wrap engagement opportunities into your donor-retention strategic plan. I like using the word “visit” because it implies you’re engaging in a way that enables your donor and you to get to know each other better. Here’s the definition: “*Go to see and spend time with (someone) socially.*” And that’s the goal. To learn more about your donor, and to reveal more of yourself to them. This is what’s called a relationship, and it requires an investment of your time. And the donor’s time.

You can offer to visit your donor, or invite them to visit you. If you’re not nearby, do this virtually. Have a Zoom coffee chat, get them on a town hall conference meeting, or send them a behind-the-scenes video. Always follow up to get feedback. That’s how you engage, even when you’re not in someone’s physical presence. And once a donor becomes engaged, they’re much more likely to become invested further. Learn how to recognize your donor’s signals too. If they make a comment on a blog post, respond. If they like, favorite or share your content, thank them. If they offer up a complaint or criticism, address it head on (and be nice!). Most often your critics are those who care the most — and they have the potential to become your leading supporters and influencers moving forward.



WELCOME

Donors are looking for connection and meaning. That's why when you warmly welcome them to your family, tribe or community they begin to feel part of something purposeful. Creating a strong donor welcome program can fulfill this goal. It's very similar in purpose to the old "Welcome Wagon" that greeted neighbors to a new community.

Your welcome materials should make first-time donors feel so good they'll tell other people about your organization. Don't send a bunch of old newsletters, annual reports and materials filled with facts and figures proclaiming how great you are. A good read on this topic is [Keep Your Donors: The Guide to Better Communications & Stronger Relationships](#) by Tom Ahern and Simone Joyaux. It includes a sample of a D-I-Y welcome kit you can create from existing materials.



XCELLENCE

Convey excellence in all you do. Donors want to help keep your powerful force for good afloat; they don't want to stay on a sinking ship. Stay proactive to assure you don't give your donors a reason to jump overboard.

Strive for ethical behavior and accountability in accordance with the standards of your profession and industry. Take a look at the following:

[AFP Code of Ethical Standards](#)

[ADRP Ethics Statement](#)

[AHFP Statement of Professional Standards and Conduct](#)

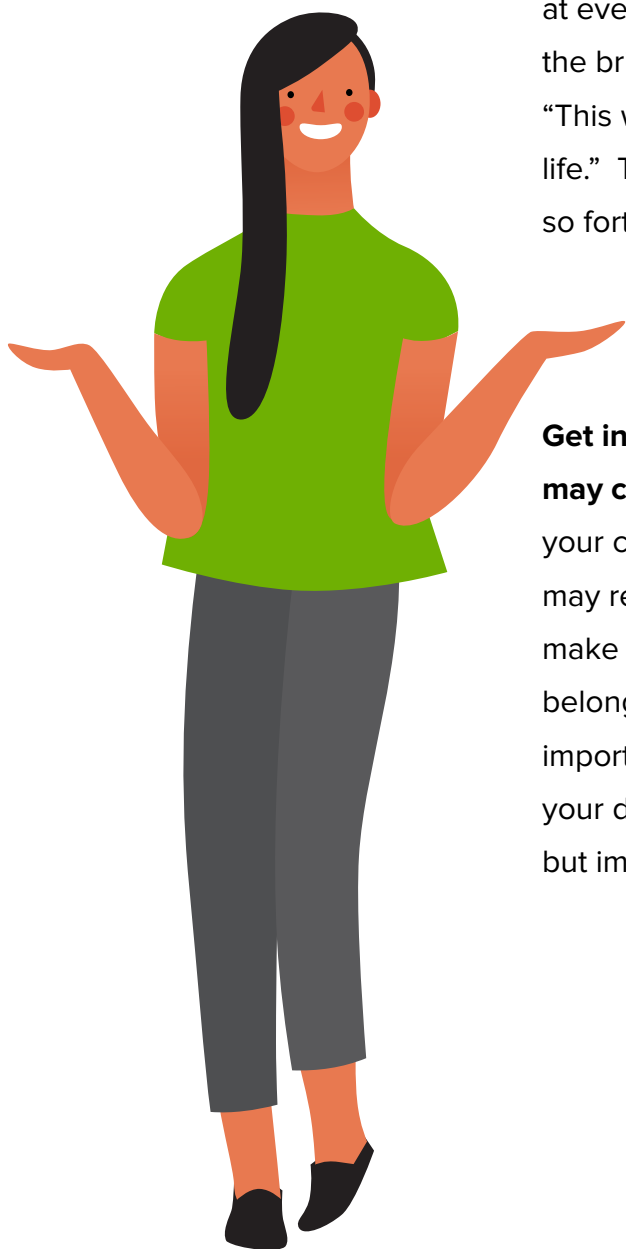
[NCVO Charity Ethical Principles](#)

[Standards for Excellence Institute](#)

YOU

“You is the glue.” [So says veteran nonprofit guru Tom Ahern](#). Look at every communication before you send it; make sure it is filled to the brim with the words “you” and “your.” “You made this possible.” “This wouldn’t have happened without you.” “Your support saved a life.” Take out all the “I,” “we,” “our organization,” “ABC charity” and so forth.

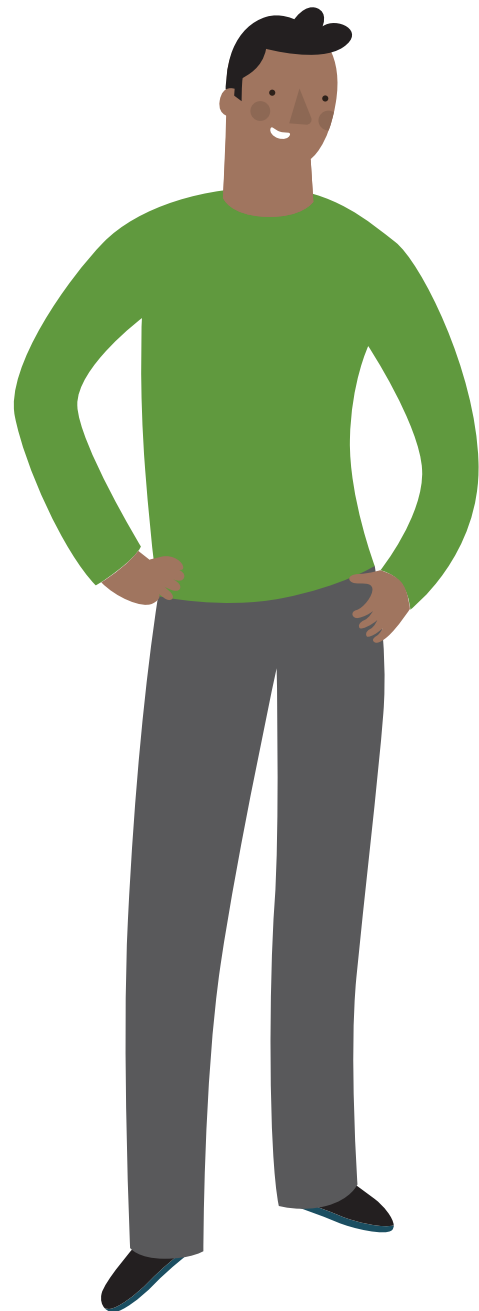
Get inside your donor’s head, and think consciously about what may connect with them. What does this particular “you” want from your charity? What may be relevant and meaningful to them? What may reward them for their incredibly important support? What may make them feel special? What may make them feel like they belong? What may make them feel they’re part of something important — something larger than themselves? If you can stand in your donor’s shoes, and show them you know them, you can’t help but improve your results.



ZESTFUL

This is another reminder of the importance of incorporating passion in all you do. Passion is the key to effective fundraising and donor retention. You dig deep to find what you're passionate about. You boldly enact your passion. You ask someone to share in that passion by enacting their own.

Enthusiastically remind donors, over and over again, of the passion that drew them to you and keeps them ardently connected. Tell inspiring stories. Invite your donors in. Help them be the hero who gives the story a happy ending. When you do this, your nonprofit's vision, mission and values will have become a part of their lives, and you of theirs.



CONCLUSION

Donor loyalty is your holy grail. It's the key to sustainability. If you don't plan to appreciate and retain your donors, other nonprofits will.

Bottom-of-the-pyramid donors are becoming top-of-the-pyramid donors — elsewhere. The trend is for donors to give larger gifts to fewer charities. That means all the 'bridesmaids' (the charities to which your donor is not engaged — the ones that don't make your donor's "Top 5-10" list) are going to be bleeding. Don't be a bridesmaid!

Get engaged and work towards cementing your marriage with your donor. The fact your competition has a super-duper donor retention plan — which they're rocking! — is going to hurt you more than it did in the past (when fewer charities bothered with robust cultivation and stewardship). In other words, the fact many nonprofits today are actually paying attention to retention could be resulting in more attrition for you (their competitor).

Embrace the fact the digital revolution ended business as you knew it. What worked before doesn't work as well anymore. You've got to layer on new strategies that meet folks where they are. Yet, you've got the same number of hours in the day, and a lot more things to do with that time.

How to handle this increased workload effectively so that you stay competitive?

Allocate more resources to fundraising, marketing and retention. [Dan Palotta](#) has been preaching for years that nonprofits need to get more comfortable with higher overheads. [Spend more on fundraising](#). Put enough boots on the ground to become effective at building relationships. In the long run, your investment will pay off in higher lifetime donor value.

The easiest thing for you to do is to develop a culture of philanthropy. Or call it gratitude. Or customer service. Or generosity. Make this an institution-wide culture. Everyone can, and should, get into the game. Program staff. Volunteers. Reception staff. You name it. After all, your work is made possible due to a team effort, donors included!

Do unto your donors as you would have them do unto you. Get to know them. Become friends. Give them something of value. Not just once a year, but regularly. Stay in touch. Become a part of the family. Then, and only then, will they decide to become part of yours.

About the Author



Claire Axelrad, J.D., CFRE, is a fundraising visionary with 30 years of frontline development work helping organizations raise millions in support.

Her award-winning blog showcases her practical approach, which earned her the AFP “Outstanding Fundraising Professional of the Year” award.

Claire, who teaches the CFRE course that certifies professional fundraisers, is a regular contributor to Guidestar, Nonprofit Pro, Network for Good and Maximize Social Business. Her passion is coaching nonprofits to address 21st century challenges and overcome barriers to sustainable funding.

Claire also serves as [Bloomerang’s](#) Fundraising Coach. In that role, she provides regular advice and guidance exclusively to the Bloomerang [blog](#) and [webinar](#) series.

[Find out more >](#)

About Bloomerang

We believe in the value of life with a mission, and we applaud the choices nonprofit organizations make to improve the world.

We exist because they exist. We take great pleasure in creating tools and teaching principles that help passionate nonprofit organizations make smart decisions that are proven to help them reach out, grow and thrive.

Our Strategic Vision: to be the world's best developer and deliverer of tools and perspectives that generate value for nonprofit donor relationships.

Our Core Purpose: to improve donor retention in the nonprofit world.

At [Bloomerang](#), we're helping nonprofits become more successful at increasing revenue. Our user-friendly software is designed to help organizations naturally boost donor engagement, fundraising and retention through best practices and a user-friendly donor database interface.

Take a look at why [Bloomerang](#) has been rated “The Best Donor Management Software” based on user feedback. Explore a demo of our software [here](#).

[Visit our website for a video demo >](#)



5724 Birtz Road,
Indianapolis, Indiana 46216
317.296.8100 | bloomerang.co

