

NonProfit Fundraising Concept Test

Table of Contents

Overall Highlights	1
They Connect to Conservation Needs through Local Concerns.	2
They Respond to Effective Communications.	2
They Initiate the Financial Relationship with The NonProfit.	3
They Want to Think Through the Eyes of The NonProfit.	4
They Want to Get Involved.	5
They Want to Get the Word Out.	6
They Want to Learn.	6
They Want to Share.	6
They Want to Interact.	7
They Want to Use E-Mail.	8
They Want Choices.	9
They Want to Use the Internet to Raise Funds.	9
Conclusions	10

NonProfit Fundraising Website

Key Findings

This report represents the key findings of the focus groups with members and prospective members of the non-profit. Discussions pivoted on how to motivate fundraising among membership via the website. Specific user experience recommendations will be disclosed in a confidential presentation.

OVERALL HIGHLIGHTS

Contributions are more satisfying when they contribute toward a specific goal.

Members are more likely to give if a specific goal is described and if they can believe their help will accomplish part of that effort. To recover a sense of accomplishment, some asked to see the history of their giving in terms of sites they helped The NonProfit to buy since their membership began.

Personal communication is essential to feeling involved. Giving to a general fund eliminates any uniqueness of a gift, and leaves communications feeling anonymous. Personalized responses put faces on the donors and the organization, thereby solidifying the relationship.

Local chapters are in a unique position to reinforce relationships with members.

Among those preferring local beneficiaries, all reasoned that local groups get immediate impact from the gift, and offer in return access to like-minded people. To this end, members asked repeatedly for better access to preserves, hands-on opportunities to help and meet other members at the same time. To them, "local" means "hands-on, results, connection, and personal meaning".

Donors want to recognize the character of The NonProfit. They asked in multiple ways to put a face on the organization, to give it a human touch. The experiences and perspectives of all NonProfit donors, members, scientists, volunteers and employees reflect the diversity of faces that make up this community they believe in.

Giving money is not as rewarding as giving time. Participants declared that they give money because they do not have time. Most say they would like to spend time with other members, especially if it meant being outdoors or using their talents. One member said that, although he donates funds now, "I would like to participate more in a practical way." To members, spending time on behalf of The NonProfit is the sine qua non of membership. Giving time spreads the word about nature conservation, rewards their connection through helping others, and expands their sense of belonging to The NonProfit overall.

THEY WANT TO THINK THROUGH THE EYES OF THE NONPROFIT.

Good writing is a requirement shared by all NonProfit members. Elegance, wit and keen insights improve the pleasure of reading, a value demonstrated by members' favorite subscriptions: *The Smithsonian*, *Outside*, *Orion*, *Science News*, *Utne Reader*, *The New Yorker* and *Harper's*. Although the writing should appeal to college-aged readers, they prefer complex issues like biodiversity and genetic pollution to be treated with respect to detail and analysis.

Members read as much for the voice of the writer as for the content. The tone of the writing in the magazine helps members establish "who is behind the group." Again, members want to recognize a face behind the mask of The NonProfit, and the voice taken in the writing can give them that feeling of connection.

The first-person perspective -- in stories, narratives, first-person accounts or journal entries -- appeals to all members as a way of relating to the community. Members want to be touched by the human experience of nature as much as they want to learn facts, agendas and partnership practices. They asked to read travel accounts of visits to a range of preserves, or of daily life as a preserve manager. Specific requests were made to learn about the people responsible for planning the strategy for each project. Several want to read about the ethics of conservation.

Detailed storytelling of public radio and television inspires support for nature conservation. Some members said that visual media have the most influence on them, while others said that they were deeply affected by the stories on NPR. The Discovery Channel, National Geographic and major newspapers also impact members' sense of responsibility to and awareness of the need for conserving natural beauty. Communicating the richness of nature sparks their visceral connection to nature, and taps an emotional thread of deeper commitment to the cause far better than a written plea.

THEY WANT TO GET INVOLVED.

Members want to enjoy their membership actively. They want NonProfit preserves to be more accessible locally for volunteer work and internationally for volunteer work and/or eco-tourism. They asked for annual fund-raising dinners to meet local members. They want to get involved with members who share their social conscience and priorities. "Help me to get outdoors," one participant said, "and remind me why I love the earth."

Members echoed a strong and constant theme: "When you meet people with similar interests, it helps energize a person." Several said it was the people they had met who belonged to or worked for The NonProfit that had the greatest bearing on their decision to give money. "I feel person-to-person communication is more important than media efforts; it's the quality of individuals involved in The NonProfit that makes it so special." Another said: "Local events and concrete things to do to help are essential. Everyone needs to be a part of or feel part of something bigger, not isolated and alone. Organizations and newsletters can do this."

Members want to feel that their support is needed. Volunteer opportunities with The Nature NonProfit are already sought out. Members asked repeatedly for the chance to get involved, volunteer and otherwise, on a local basis. They ask The NonProfit to, "tell me what you need from members, what's immediate where I can make a difference."

THEY WANT TO LEARN.

The membership is excited to learn about The NonProfit's success stories. They ask to read about goals, the agenda driving choices, the scientific process. Donors are interested in the people making the choices, and how they are protecting it once purchased. Members ask for details on projects they can identify with, saying "I'm not impressed with articles, pictures of safaris."

Facts describe the goals and achievements of The NonProfit. Acres saved, percentages of species protected, and dollar amounts applied are figures that members say they remember and share with others.

The NonProfit process interests members as a source of values in action. Members want to learn from The NonProfit's consensus-building, partnerships and management practices. They ask to learn how The NonProfit pursues collaborative partnerships and works to resolve conflict in different locations. They seek to use The NonProfit's process as an exemplary model for personal and social action.

THEY WANT TO INTERACT.

An interactive site appeals to all members. Several said that they would not visit a site if it were "static. I'll go there only if I can interact." Those with web experience asked to "make it a personalized, localized organization, for a hands-on experience. I want to interact with people."

The magazine online permits multiple desirable uses. As an archive, articles could be searched for personal research or homework. A web site affords the space for expanded detail than what is contained in a printed magazine. Members also liked the potential for the site to connect articles based on subjects and themes, with the exploration itself illustrating the interrelation of ecology. Members would give feedback to articles at the site, and read others' comments. The best part, they agree, is that putting the magazine online would save paper and reduce mailed solicitations.

Sharing articles increases the value of the magazine. Some members say that they would share this information with more people if it were easy to do online. Printable articles assist members who make copies to share in the classroom. One participant said, "You would reach more of my college students in science if the magazine was online."

Members want visual information on the NonProfit's work. Most said that a map of the world, showing all the NonProfit's work past and future, would be a perfect way to begin the exploration of a site. They requested multimedia on preserves and volunteers on location, and before/after photos of NonProfit preserves now protected and recovered.

Maps would help members “drill-down” to information they can use. Maps of local areas would be, according to members, linked to related information. Some thought a map might tie a local area to a distant one by connecting similar themes. Examples include the process for protecting it, the reasons for choosing that site, the people behind that process, and what members can do to enjoy and support it. Members said they would use a worldwide directory and asked for a guide to American Wetlands.

Several asked for the chance to interact with and learn from experts online. Members want to access reports from scientists, and several asked to chat with politicians or scientists. Others want to search and retrieve from the storehouse of knowledge The NonProfit has on wildlife and ecology. One participant asked for a database of flora and fauna, "so I can figure out what I saw on my nature walks." Tips on seeing wildlife and understanding natural preserves and practical information, like managing particular invasive species, seem particularly interesting and valuable to members.

Some members enjoy travel planning using The NonProfit web site, and want more options. Experience visiting wildlife refuges and the desire to do something meaningful on vacations led a few to encourage more access to trips and tours. One participant said, "Work weekends on larger preserves so you can go camp and volunteer regionally once a year/quarter/month would be great."

THEY WANT TO USE THE INTERNET TO RAISE FUNDS.

Many members would take advantage of online giving opportunities. Those with web purchasing experience treat online giving as the philanthropic equivalent. Others prefer to pledge, renew or buy related gifts and gift memberships. One member suggested saying, "If you donated \$50 right now, here is where it will go tomorrow."

Addressing security concerns comforts those most wary of online transactions. Some feel insecure about sharing credit card information online, and want to read privacy and security claims. A few members wisely noted that credit card companies charge the recipient a small fee, such that the entire donation would not reach The NonProfit. Members also said that using a check gives them a record of expenses, and would like the site to track their personal giving profile and/or provide a record for use with tax returns.

Members want to buy products or services to benefit The NonProfit. Several think people bid more when a worthy cause is involved. Many showed enthusiasm for donating their services or products so that the purchase amount would go to The NonProfit. Some examples included donating a week at a guest house to raise money for a specific piece of land, and list who helped buy it. Several have personal experience with charity auctions,

service auctions and service learning, saying “Meeting people in the organization would be very rewarding. Doing something with them that is hands-on and in nature would make me feel closer to the organization that brought us together.”

Members' concerns protect the value of alternative fundraising ideas from scrutiny.

For example, members felt it necessary to have a legitimate minimum of products and services; large items and some services would have to stay local; and price services and items appropriately. Others thought that participants should be members, or at least “screened.” Services posted would ensure environmentally sound practices, as in resourceful water usage at a car wash. Members believe that this opportunity would reinforce their sense of purpose, but The NonProfit must present it as obviously and directly connected to member needs for a fundraising community.

Some members expressed misgivings about alternative fundraising ideas. Those expressing reluctance to any other fundraising besides direct solicitations said that they did not need any other incentive. One participant said, “It's not necessary to get my money. Feels like a sideline project to what they're supposed to be doing.”

CONCLUSIONS

The NonProfit inspires the deepest values and highest ideals in its membership.

Members are proud to belong. They show the complete confidence essential to forge a lasting relationship. Furthermore, members demonstrate a pent-up demand for specific giving opportunities that reinforce the rewards of association.

Members share key attributes that mirror their real-world motivations for giving: they rely on "elite" media and they have a strong social conscience.

Their media consumption alone shows they are a sophisticated group. They treat their media choices as an extension of their identity and relate to others with like sensibilities. Similarly, their social conscience is bubbling over with energy. By offering their time to benefit The NonProfit's goals, they extend an extraordinary opportunity to integrate fundraising tools into the relationship-building experience.

In sum, satisfying the members' needs will achieve the goals of raising funds and building relationships.

The values binding members to The NonProfit are as strong as those of a church or temple congregation. The more specific a member's experience of belonging, the closer the connection they will feel to The NonProfit. All want to make The NonProfit a visible part of their lives, and they offer their time, talent and passion in exchange for access to the community.