



10 Tips for Identifying New Donors

By Stephanie Schwartz

Organizations, schools, synagogues and institutions are dealing with harsh budget realities as the COVID-19 pandemic persists. Fundraising is more important than ever but is also difficult. The demand for donations is huge, donors are fatigued and the economic predictions are ominous. How do we continue to grow a pipeline and raise new dollars? Here are 10 tips for finding new donors:

1) **Review your website from a prospect's eye:** Within 30 seconds of looking at your organization's homepage, a prospect should know your institution's name, mission and how to support you. The donation button should be on the top half of the website ("above the fold"). Create a pop-up box so site visitors can instantly sign up to receive communications. Make sure that every page on your site has a prominent signup option. Embed a sign-up link into website copy when appropriate. Every new visitor to your site and new sign-up for communications is a prospect.

2) **Lapsed donors are prospects:** Review every single donor who has ever given to your organization, even if they gave 15 years ago. Move all those names onto your prospect lists and begin to reach out. Thank them for their past support, ask what initially brought them to your organization and develop a reengagement plan. Organizations with large lists can automate this process through a CRM, but a personalized approach is always best.

3) **Check out your local business journal:** There are many types of lists in business journals that note high net worth individuals in your community. Comb those lists to identify individuals who have an affinity for your organization's mission, then develop an outreach strategy. Your board is an incredibly valuable resource during this process. Use them in your outreach plan.

4) **Survey your competitors:** Donors often give to multiple organizations in the same space. Review the board lists of organizations whose work is similar to yours. Ask your staff and board members to identify anyone they know and cross reference all with your database. You will likely find past interaction, engagement, or even a gift or two.

Add those names to the top of your prospect list.

5) **Review RSVP and attendee lists:** Remember in-person events? Look at people who RSVP'd to your events and those who actually showed up. Both groups are prospects and it's worth spending time reviewing names, running a wealth screening and adding those names to lists for your board to review.

6) **Ask your board, again:** Yes, you have likely asked them. But ask them again. People may be open to supporting new organizations given the state of the world and it can be an opportune time to engage new prospects in your work. Additionally, utilize tips #2, #3, and #4 to present board members with a list of prospects and ask them to identify people they know. It is easier to work off of a list of names rather than to come up with new ones.

7) **Ask your supporters:** One of the easiest ways for a donor to help your organization, in addition to giving, is to identify others who may be interested in supporting organization the mission. This can be an easy lift, but sometimes we don't think to ask. You can ask during a one-on-one meeting or include an ask in an email update that goes out to supporters.

8) **Run a wealth screening:** Wealth screening data should be kept current and screenings should be performed regularly to make sure that new names are captured. But make sure you are being intentional. Spend time planning out what you want to achieve through a screening: What information do you want to achieve? Which records will be sent? How will you segment them? Realistically, how many returned records can you manage? Is there a certain group you want to know more about?

9) **Leverage your volunteer pipeline:** Volunteers are often overlooked as potential donors. Engage them meaningfully in your mission and make the case. Then ask for a gift. Volunteers see your work firsthand and can become some of your most loyal donors.

10) **Create a strong social media presence:** Create a content calendar using all digital platforms to push out information about your organization. Offer opportunities to engage with content and sign up to learn more. In addition to website signups, every new follower on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter is a potential prospect as well. Capture follower information regularly and review. Look for new names and research them before adding to your prospect lists.

In addition to finding new potential donors, engagement with current donors is critical. Ask donors how they are faring and what you can do to help. One of the very few upsides of the current situation is the opportunity to strengthen relationships with donors through regular and open communication.

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