

Wait. . . We Forgot the Donor?

**Fundraising Mistakes That Cost You
Donors - And How to Fix Them**



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Do you do this?

Nonprofits work hard to make the world better. But in the middle of that good work, they often make one big mistake: they forget the donor.

When donors feel like an afterthought instead of a vital part of the impact, they pull away.

Here are the most common fundraising mistakes that push donors away - and simple ways to bring them back and make them feel valued.

1. Making the Story About the Organization, Not the Donor

The Oversight: Many fundraising appeals focus on the nonprofit's achievements, staff efforts, or programs rather than the donor's role in making those things possible.

The Fix: Shift the language from "Our organization helped 500 families this year" to "Because of you, 500 families received help this year." Make the donor the hero of the story.

2. Burying the Ask (or Forgetting It Altogether)

The Oversight: Some nonprofits dance around the ask, hide it in dense text, or even assume donors will give without being asked.

The Fix: Be clear, direct, and compelling. Instead of "Your support makes programs like this possible," say "Your gift of \$50 today will provide a week's worth of food for a hungry child. Will you help?"

3. Talking Like a Corporation Instead of a Human

The Oversight: Using formal, jargon-heavy language makes fundraising appeals feel cold and impersonal.

The Fix: Write like you're talking to a friend. Replace "We appreciate your continued commitment to our initiatives" with "You're making such a difference, and we're so grateful."

4. Failing to Close the Loop with Donors

The Oversight: Many nonprofits secure donations but fail to follow up with updates on how the donor's gift made an impact.

The Fix: Send thank-you notes, impact stories, and follow-up emails that clearly show how their gift changed a life. For example, "You gave Maria the chance to go to school. Here's a photo of her first day!"

5. Making Donors Feel Like ATMs

The Oversight: Only reaching out when you need money makes donors feel transactional rather than valued.

The Fix: Engage donors beyond fundraising. Share inspiring stories, invite them to events, ask for their opinions, and celebrate their role in your mission. Build a relationship, not just a giving cycle.

6. Ignoring the Power of Personalization

The Oversight: Sending generic, one-size-fits-all messages makes donors feel like just another name on a list.

The Fix: Use their name, reference their past giving, and segment your communications to align with their interests. "Jessica, your generosity last year helped provide clean water - will you help again?"

7. Overwhelming Donors with Too Much Information

The Oversight: Some appeals are overloaded with stats, reports, and technical details, making it hard for donors to connect emotionally.

The Fix: Keep messaging simple and story-driven. One powerful story with a single, clear call to action is more effective than an overwhelming data dump.

8. Not Offering a Clear, Easy Way to Give

The Oversight: Complicated donation forms, too many steps, or lack of mobile-friendly options create barriers to giving.

The Fix: Make giving seamless with a one-click donation button, mobile-friendly pages, and multiple payment options.

9. Forgetting to Say 'Thank You' (Properly)

The Oversight: A generic receipt email isn't enough. Donors want to feel appreciated.

The Fix: Send heartfelt thank-you messages, handwritten notes, or even a quick video from someone they helped. A simple "You made this possible" goes a long way.

10. Assuming Donors Understand the Problem as Well as You Do

The Oversight: Insiders know the issue deeply, but donors may not fully grasp why their help is needed.

The Fix: Clearly explain the urgency and impact of their gift in simple, relatable terms. Instead of "We advocate for food security," say "Right now, a child in our community is going to bed hungry - but your \$25 gift can provide a warm meal."

Final Thoughts: Bring Donors Back to the Center

Fundraising isn't just about raising money.

Fundraising is about building real relationships with people who care.

When you put the donor at the center of your message, they feel seen, appreciated, and inspired to keep giving.

Want to go deeper? You'll learn how to tell better stories and raise more money at the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference. Join us and discover what happens when you bring the donor back to the center of it all.

Visit <https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com> to learn more and secure your spot!

If you found this guide helpful, please forward it to a friend.

Get help raising more money. Come to the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference. For more information, go to:

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