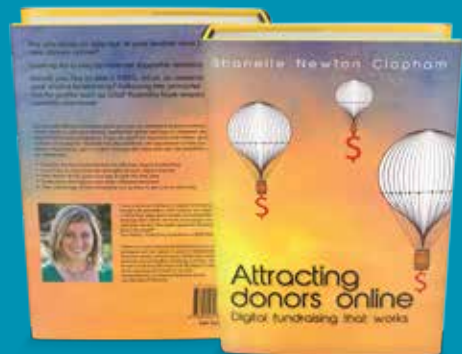


# Integrating digital into the overall fundraising mix

by Shanelle Newton Clapham

This chapter is an extract from Shanelle's book about online fundraising, *Attracting Donors Online*.

Let Shanelle Newton Clapham show you how to implement digital fundraising that really works. Put your donors' needs first online and learn how to integrate digital into your fundraising strategies and be rewarded with better quality, and a greater number of prospects.



# Integration

Integration is the final fundamental in my approach to digital fundraising. While digital can be successful as a stand-alone fundraising channel, it generates far greater results if you integrate it into your overall fundraising strategy.

For some strange reason, many not-for-profits and charities still run their fundraising team independently of their digital team, who are usually part of IT or operations. This is problematic in so many ways, especially if the lack of integration results in two different messages (one online, the other offline) for the same appeal. This does not make a great donor experience, especially for those donors exposed to both messages.

One of the most common roadblocks I come up against when I work with fundraising teams is the belief that 'it won't work online'. Fundraisers generally say this because they have tried to add a digital element, usually a donation page on their website, to a long-ago appeal, and because they didn't push to it from their offline fundraising materials the results were poor. Of course the results are going to be bad if you create a webpage and expect people to come! Like any campaign or appeal, you have to drive supporters to your cause if you want them to know about it and respond.

## Is it hard to integrate your channels?

Integrating digital channels into your fundraising strategy is not as difficult as it may first appear. There are many direct correlations between digital fundraising strategies and traditional fundraising strategies, and I'll cover these in subsequent chapters. The donor journey you use successfully in your direct mail, telemarketing and face-to-face fundraising programs will translate quite well into your digital channels.

The fundamental fundraising principles still apply: you need to acquire a prospect, then engage that prospect through a low-risk, non-financial ask. Let's assume this is done through direct mail. For those prospects that respond to your non-threatening ask, you follow up with a small, one-off, financial ask. To the group of people who make a donation, you follow up with a second ask for a related campaign that has proven appealing to most donors in the past. When a prospect has made it through your prospecting criteria and given two gifts, you roll them into your regular appeal program. From there, you may try to engage them through telemarketing, to see if you're able to get a higher gift than through direct mail. You may or may not ask the donor if they want to give a small monthly donation.

This process can be replicated through digital channels as well. The method of acquiring the prospect may differ, but the prospecting cycle, on-boarding and upgrading process doesn't have to be much different. In the above example, telemarketing was integrated into the process at a later stage and the same may work for digital prospects and donors. Your digital fundraising strategy will be most effective if you link it in with your offline fundraising.

At first, integrating your online and offline fundraising strategies may be as simple as putting a call to action in your direct mail piece that gives donors the option to donate online and provides a website address. Another small integration point may be to reference a video that the supporter can go online

to view to get a deeper understanding of the issue.

Once your organisation is more comfortable fundraising in the digital space, you may choose to take greater advantage of the first action engagement. Because a supporter is most engaged at the point of first action, it makes sense to use digital channels to prolong the period of inspiration. Digital channels can be automated to operate in real time and specific channels, such as mobile, give you the opportunity to reach donors directly, at any point in their journey.

Remember the example I gave you from the Wesley Mission? They used SMS and email to follow up a new regular giver.

## Expand your narrative

Digital fundraising tactics allow you to create face-to-face video content as a ‘leave behind’ gift for new regular givers. This video could be a simple triggered email or SMS action that sends once the first payment has been processed, right there on the street, using a mobile payment gateway.

The new donor walks away from your organisation’s face-to-face team feeling one of two things: either they feel good about their contribution to a cause bigger than themselves; or they are suffering from buyer’s remorse. Ten minutes later as they’re sitting on the train, at a coffee shop or back at their desk, they receive your SMS or email. It thanks them for their generous donation and provides a link to see more about the plight they are contributing to. The donor clicks on the link and watches a video that continues the story they have just been told, which inspired them to give. The video shows them the further pain that would have been caused had they not donated.

This simple video strengthens your new donor’s resolve that they have done a good thing and reduces the chance of them cancelling their regular donation later that week. You need to send subsequent, follow-up communications to keep their resolve strong, but this first, real-time connection followed by regular, relevant communications has been proven to reduce face-to-face drop off rates by 10 per cent<sup>1</sup>.

Multi-channel fundraising can expand your narrative and give supporters a deeper understanding of the cause you’re fundraising for, or it can simply trigger the next action. Use it strategically to contact supporters and prospects in a pre-determined sequence, rather than just a scatter-gun affect. Avoid the sense of overkill that comes from sending the same message, at the same time, to the same supporter via multiple channels. The scatter-gun approach can work – the advertising industry has been using this strategy of reach and frequency for years – but it can also saturate the supporter and end up alienating them.

It is better to take your time and connect with your donor in fewer channels, in more meaningful ways. Each communication should be unique and add a new element of the story. Each channel and communication should add value and build rapport. Bombarding your donor with multiple, desperate asks for money, telling them the same thing over and over again in a short period, will not yield the long-term results you’re looking for.

Choose an integrated, multi-channel fundraising strategy that includes digital. It will allow you to talk to each donor in the way they respond to best. Some people are more visual and respond to emotional

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<sup>1</sup> An onboarding strategy of Email and SMS, implemented for non-profit clients in Australia by Flat Earth Direct, has reported a 10% reduction in attrition over 6 months. Source Jonothan Grapsas, Director.

images. Other people are more auditory and will be more motivated by a story told through video interviews and documentaries. Some people still prefer the written word and are moved by a story told in prose.

A multi-channel fundraising strategy, which includes digital, also gives your donors options to donate. I was told early in my fundraising career to always give multiple options, and let the donor choose what works best for them. I still heed this advice. You are unlikely to lose an engaged donor because you offered them the choice to donate online in your direct mail piece. Likewise, it is unlikely that you will alienate an online supporter by sending them a direct mail message. So long as each communication the donor receives feels new and adds value to their journey, they will stay with you.

## Convert your prospects

The most compelling aspect of digital fundraising is the way online channels can help convert your prospects. In the private sector, online is well understood as a retention and conversion channel. That's not to say that you can't build trust online, you absolutely can through content as I mentioned in the last chapter, and I'll show you how later, but what online does incredibly well is facilitate tasks and actions.

Social media is proving incredibly effective at alerting new audiences to causes that they previously hadn't been aware of. Social media users are about engaging with their friends and seeing what they're thinking, feeling and doing. If my friend is participating in an ocean swim to raise money for cancer, I hear about their training in the months leading up to the swim date and then I see their results as they achieve their goal. I am interested in my friend and the effort she has put in for a cause she believes in, so by default, I am exposed to this cause, and be moved to might care about and donate to this cause.

Email is the strongest retention tool in your digital portfolio. As you well know, your database is your organisation's most valuable asset. This is echoed online –, your email database is incredibly valuable. The 40 per cent% year-on-year revenue growth that I was able to achieve in my first year at WWF was through utilising their existing email database. I segmented the database and talked to each subscriber about the things they cared about, and the results speak for themselves.

For donors who are already aware of your organisation's brand and cause, online can simply allow them to find you. It may be Christmas and a prospect wants to make some donations to charity. They already know who they want to donate to, they just can't remember the organisations' website address. Or perhaps they've seen something on the news about a natural disaster and they want to support the recovery effort. Your prospect turns to Google to help them find who is raising money for this cause. In these instances, online fills an immediate need and facilitates the process of donating.

The above donations were going to be made anyway. In the first example, the donor knew who they wanted to donate to. In the second example, the donor knew what they wanted to donate to. Having digital fundraising capabilities allows people who want to donate online to find you, and to complete their intended task. Including search engine optimisation in your digital strategy is probably the most important long-term digital strategy you can employ. I'll show you how to in the 'Search' chapter of Maximise Your Channels.

## Leverage multi-layered content for action

As you now know, my philosophy on digital fundraising, and digital marketing for that matter, is to always put the donor's needs first. I believe that if you create content and an online experience that speaks to the basic human needs, the donor will respond positively and you will meet and exceed your organisation's goals as well.

In the digital space, you have the opportunity to tell richer, multi-layered stories. For decades television has been the hero of the advertising and fundraising world, for being able to quickly tell a story that can tap into multiple senses at once (sight and sound). With the advance of technology we can now watch television on our computers and mobile devices. And better than the 30-second ad, we can now tell stories that last two minutes, 10 minutes or in some unorthodox cases, 30 minutes.

Online video, like television, only explicitly uses two senses. But if the story is told well, video can capture the donor's attention in a way that elicits further senses. The power of the mind and our emotions is so great that we can imagine what an experience may feel like, and with that conjure up those tastes and smells. This mix of engaged senses can create a moment of inspiration, or truth, that compels donors to take action.

Not only does digital fundraising allow us to tell more compelling stories, but it also allows us to quickly and easily act on them. If you add clickable buttons into your videos, donors can click and donate right there and then. Likewise for a mobile device: a donor may receive an email with a link to a video; click on the link; watch the video and cry tears of inspiration. They click on the 'donate' button and give from their mobile phone. This combination of story and facilitation illustrates yet again why content and user experience should be the fundamental philosophy behind your digital fundraising strategy.

When digital content is integrated with other fundraising channels, it creates a multi-layered experience. Each new piece of communication the donor receives should add another element to the story. As should each channel.

## Imagine what a multi-channel, multi-layered appeal feels like as a supporter

You receive a direct mail letter with a story telling you about the plight of child soldiers in Africa. The story is told with words and text. Next, you see a direct response TV ad asking people to call, SMS or go online to donate. You remember the letter you received the previous week and make a mental note to donate tomorrow.

Three days later you see a video about child soldiers in Africa that one of your friends has posted on Facebook. You watch the two-minute video and are disgusted by the people who kidnap children and enslave them to a life of rape, murder and pillaging. There is a message at the end with a web address to donate, but you can't click on it and you get distracted before deciding to donate later online.

A week later you get an email from 'Organisation X', telling you about child soldiers in Africa. The email has a link to an appeal page and video on Organisation X's website, with links to donate. You open the email on your mobile phone during your bus commute home from work. Because you have

the time, you watch the full seven-minute video documentary with interviews between Organisation X humanitarian workers and the child soldiers, told with sub-titles.

The children sit there with semi-automatic weapons in their hands, smoking and drinking alcohol at the age of 11. You feel both moved and angry. This time you click the 'donate' button and make a donation of \$200 to contribute to Organisation X's efforts to stop children being forced to become mercenaries. It took you one minute and 11 seconds to complete the donation via your phone.

The sequencing of channels and the layering of content to expand the story – allowing the donor to explore the issue at their own pace, in their own time – are extremely important here. Each communication further educates the donor about the issues faced. Each channel is on message and supports the messages the donor has already been exposed to. There may be some crossover in the story. The donor may have watched some elements out of order. But it doesn't matter because each communication is unique and adds value. There is a call to action with every communication, although not all are as easy to immediately action as the online response.

Digital fundraising is by no means the hero of this imagined campaign. It is simply one element of an integrated fundraising strategy and in this instance it facilitated payment. This is often the reality – in many cases your digital channels will be the easiest way for donors to make a gift at the moment of inspiration. So, why not make it as compelling and as easy as possible for them to give?

**Are you ready to step out of your comfort zone to reach new donors online?**

**Looking for a way to increase supporter retention?**

**Would you like to see a 530% return on investment from your digital fundraising? Following the principles in this book, not-for-profits such as WWF Australia have reaped these benefits and more!**

Let Shanelle Newton Clapham show you how to implement digital fundraising that really works. Learn to put your donors' needs first online and how to integrate digital into your overall fundraising strategies. If you do, you'll be rewarded with better quality and a greater number of prospects. Shanelle has the evidence and experience to help you increase your donor acquisitions, gain a higher average gift value and see the possibility of a 5:1 return on investment.

- Discover the four fundamentals for effective digital fundraising
- Learn how to maximise the strengths of each digital channel
- Get ahead of the game and get it right the first time
- Understand the metrics and make informed decisions
- Take advantage of free templates and guides to get you on your way



**“I’m so excited that other great causes can harness Shanelle’s knowledge to leverage their online channels and engage more effectively with their donors. The results speak for themselves. Bring on the brave new world!”**  
Toni Ashley, Fundraising Consultant at WWF Australia

**“Online is a great channel for fundraising, but in the NFP sector strategies are not always in place or implemented effectively. This book clearly outlines great digital best practice and offers charities and non-profits a roadmap to follow. I’m looking forward to sharing this book with Blackbaud customers, to use these strategies and tools for success.”**  
Lianne McGrory, Fundraising Solutions Expert, with Blackbaud Australia.



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