

# WHAT DO I FOCUS ON NEXT? PRIORITIZING YOUR FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

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**As fundraisers, we are all feeling incredibly overwhelmed. Every day seems like a non-stop fire drill; all we can do is react to whatever situations unfold throughout the day. With so many distractions, it's no wonder we ask ourselves, "What should I focus on first?"**

Given the enormity of what's happening in the world, it is understandable that you might not even know where to start. If this sounds a little too familiar, I have three suggestions to help you prioritize your fundraising. There is nothing magical here; instead, these suggestions are based on my experience raising money over the past three decades.

## **Annual Fund First**

Start by focusing on your annual fund. On its surface, this might sound overly simplistic, but recurring giving is key to your success. Start by focusing on **retention**. Do everything you can right now to make sure you don't lose donors.

Even if a donor gives less than they did last year, their support will make an exponential difference in the long run. On average, it costs \$0.25 for every dollar raised to retain a donor. To reacquire that same donor once they have stopped giving to you, the cost per dollar raised exceeds \$3.00.

Your original annual fund plan is going to need to change, and that is ok.

Donors need and want to see that you are adapting to new realities. With many fiscal year-ends coming up in June, now is the time to start tweaking your plan. Segmentation based on giving amounts, along with personalization to even your smallest donors, will have a tremendous impact on your retention rates.

Your messaging will be the linchpin that holds your annual giving together. **Don't decide for your donors what they want to support. If you are not asking your donors for their support, there are plenty of other organizations that will.** In your messaging, acknowledge the changing realities, but don't apologize for your new realities either. Show them how you are helping solve problems and that by working together with you, they can be part of the solution.

## **Consider Micro-Appeals**

The next area to focus on should be micro-appeals or giving initiatives for real needs over the next 90 days.



Your donors and your community want to see that your organization is being responsive.

Creative micro-appeals provide the platform for innovative problem solving while providing the opportunity to keep donors engaged.

While a micro-appeal encourages donors of all sizes to feel as if they are making a difference, they are particularly helpful at engaging major gift donors. In our practice right now, we are seeing major gift donors survey the market to see what they can do to help. They've initiated challenge gifts. Others are funding recovery plans for organizations. Look for creative strategies that enable donors to be a part of the solution.

### **Don't Stay Silent**

**Your communication strategy will impact how much money you raise over the next ninety days.** Most organizations need to adapt and change their methods of communication. The virtual world has taken on new meaning and relevance over the past thirty days. Nonprofits need to adapt too.

Digital and social media are playing more prominent roles. For many of us, our social media presence has room for improvement. Those who aren't adapting or paying attention to social media are going to be left behind—and not just for the next 90 days. Today's communications landscape will likely become the new norm.

Digital and social media is crucial, but don't forget the personal touch. We have said this before, and it's worth repeating, "Pick up the phone and call your key stakeholders." Be vulnerable and transparent. Let them know your plans to get through this and genuinely ask for the opinions. Make a plan. Who will be called? Who will make the calls? Assign a call schedule (include your board or key staff) and designate a person or file to collect the feedback.

Obviously, there is much more beyond these three suggestions that we can, and should, be doing to fundraise effectively. However, as so many things clamor for our attention, if we don't focus on core activities we will stay busy being busy with nothing to show for our efforts. We will be left behind and face the risk of becoming irrelevant.

We are here to help you in two ways. First, we are offering a complimentary strategy session with one of our consultants. Reach out to Sarah Sprinkle ([ssprinkle@winklergroup.com](mailto:ssprinkle@winklergroup.com)) to schedule your session. Second, we've developed short-term emergency services to provide you with the extra bandwidth and expertise to help you get through the next few months. These offerings are described [here](#).

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