

Are charities focusing too heavily on donor acquisition?



Paul Stein, director of fundraising & marketing communications at World Jewish Relief

www.wjr.org.uk

In short, no. To stand still is tantamount to commercial suicide and we cannot cease carrying out our business just because of the economic downturn. In fact, those that continue to invest now will undoubtedly reap the rewards in better times.

However, money must be spent wisely, utilising the proven acquisition routes while testing and monitoring others effectively. Clear donor development plans should be in place

before any acquisition activity commences. And equal (if not more) effort and resources should be invested in retention.

It will always be cheaper to retain donors than to acquire them. We must work harder to effectively segment and communicate with supporters via the preferred means, at the most opportune time and with the most appropriate engagement opportunities.



Daryl Upsall, fundraising consultant

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"Ask, thank, thank again and again, engage, involve, ask for more, then thank again." This is my donor mantra, and it works in fundraising all over the world.

In my opinion, we still need to ask BIG and BOLD and without fear or hesitation for that first (and hopefully regular) gift to our cause. But we still need to invest more

attention, love and care in thanking, engaging, involving, motivating and listening to our donors than we do currently.

Attrition looms large over all public fundraising today. If we only focused more attention on real 'relationship fundraising', the world would truly be a better place.



Danielle Atkinson, head of digital & individual giving at Merlin

www.merlin.org.uk

Absolute rubbish. Without donor acquisition there would be no donor retention. Where do donors come from otherwise? It's a fallacy that people will seek out charities of their own accord; the majority will support a charity because they are asked to.

If you want to deliver the most money possible for your cause so that you can grow and deliver the best services

possible, you need to invest in donor acquisition. These donors will be the lifeblood of your fundraising.

That said, donor retention is of equal importance. But it doesn't need to be expensive. It needs to be relevant, targeted and delivered in a way that is right for the recipient.



Matt Goody, head of individual marketing at Age UK

www.ageuk.org.uk

Retention and development of existing donors is vital, and Age UK has placed great emphasis on customer care and supporter satisfaction to improve retention.

However, to significantly grow income and our base of supporters in the long term, donor acquisition is key. Over the last couple of years we have opened up new channels, such as premium SMS, through train

panels, TV and press ads, as well as integrated campaigns such as Spread the Warmth, which runs through the winter months.

This, coupled with engaging new products, means we've attracted new audiences and Age UK's regular giving income is increasing as a result, providing vital funds to help more older people.



Reuben Turner, creative director at The Good Agency

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Acquisition is fun, exciting, measurable and people notice it. But it's also hugely risky and, with some charities settling for a 10-year payback, it can be very unprofitable.

Retention? Upgrade? These things are less fun, and less easy to measure. They won't make you famous. But they are far more profitable.

We all want to grow, yet we're all competing for the same donors in a media landscape that's smaller, busier and less stable than ever. And we settle for attrition levels that would get us fired in any other sector.

Get your retention right, and your acquisition will suddenly become a lot more profitable.



Ted Gladdish, CEO of Noah's Ark Children's Hospice

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The acquisition of new donors is an ongoing process and one that charities cannot ignore, but retaining donors is equally important.

Securing a new donor, when there are so many good causes available to support, is a very difficult ask. Having secured that donor, you have to ask the

question: do we use them as a one-off donation and try to constantly secure new ones, or do we give donor satisfaction?

My view is a simple one: spend time on researching quality donors (a scattergun approach does not work) and then spend money retaining them.