



World Society for the Protection of Animals

# Fundraising from individuals

**Aim:** This document provides an overview of how to engage potential donors, introduce them to your organisation and offer them a rewarding supporter experience with your organisation.

[www.wspa-international.org](http://www.wspa-international.org)

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# Introduction

## Fundraising from Individuals

Generally, individuals will give to organisations that are known to them. This goes back to building trust in the potential donor and the credibility of your organisation. People are less likely to drop their change into the collection box of an organisation they have never heard of, or worse, have heard negative reports about.

Individual supporters are motivated to give for many different reasons and are hooked by as many different appeals or mechanisms.

### Sources of potential individual supporters

- Your members
- Your volunteers, ex-volunteers and international volunteers
- Your customers or clients
- Tourists
- The people that make up your local community
- Your friends and family
- Visitors to your website
- Visitors to your project or site
- Individuals who are concerned about the welfare of animals and who are interested in the type of work you do

### Methods to approach and recruit your individual supporters

- Through your direct marketing appeals (letters, emails, newsletters etc)
- Through your events
- Through face to face or telephone appeals
- Through your website
- Through SMS texting and social networking sites
- Through broadcast media, television ads, radio appeals, adverts in newspapers or publications
- Through the services of your organisation
- Through your sponsorship or adoption schemes
- Through word of mouth

### Enable your individual supporters to give through

- Attending your events
- Taking part in sponsored events
- Taking part in auctions, sales or raffles. Note that for raffles you need to abide by local gambling laws
- Through legacy giving - pledging to leave a gift in their will
- Donating 'in lieu' of, i.e. asking for a donation to your organisation rather than a birthday or wedding present
- Supporting in memoriam, i.e. remembering someone who has passed away by sponsoring a kennel in their name. In memoriam gifts are often requested by the family of the deceased at or after the funeral in lieu of flowers.
- Payroll giving - giving directly through your salary.
- Collections

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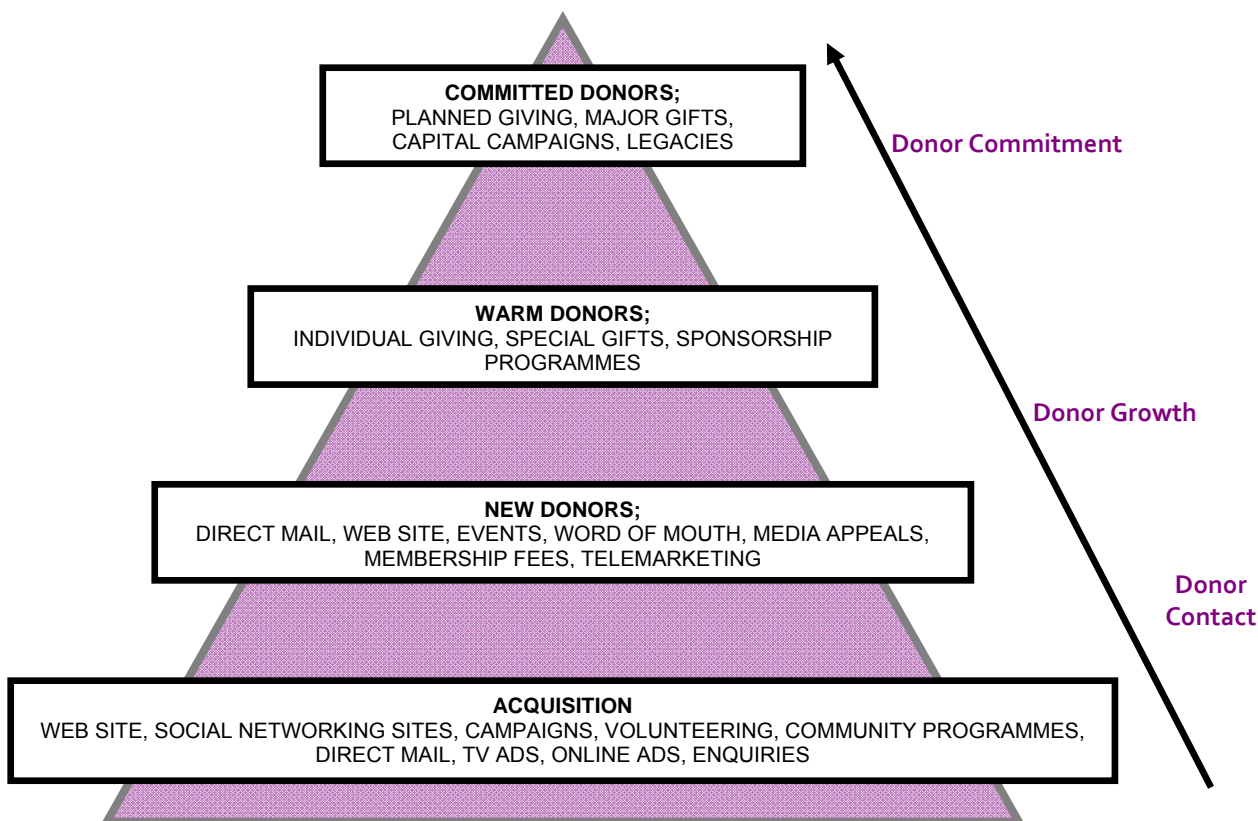
**COMMITTED DONORS**

- Regular or committed gifts - by direct debit, standing order, continuous credit card
- Ad hoc donations - these may be unsolicited or in response to a piece of direct marketing
- Payment for services or merchandise
- Special or Major gifts
- Tax efficient giving (e.g. Gift Aid in the UK)

# Section 1

## The Donor Pyramid

This pyramid outlines the individual supporter's journey with your organisation:



The first stage is how the donor initially engages with your organisation or your cause. For example this could be through a social networking site such as Facebook or MySpace, they could have seen a video clip on You Tube, or signed one of your on-line petitions. They may also have volunteered at your organisation, joined in one of your community programmes, or simply chatted to you at a stand at a local event. These people may not yet actually have made a donation to your organisation, but by showing interest in your work they are also showing potential to grow as a supporter. They may never donate, but they could still become extremely valuable to your organisation through their campaigning work or their network.

The next stage of the pyramid, the new donors, shows how you can engage with new supporters and other potential new donors to encourage and enable them to make their first donations. This could be through buying a ticket for an event, responding to a direct mailing letter or an appeal, hearing about your work through one of your outreach activities and being motivated to donate, adopting an animal or becoming a member.

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If you build solid relationships with these people they will move up the pyramid not off it. You can try to secure their longer term commitment by engaging them in sponsorship programmes, individual monthly giving, or special gifts.

Ultimately, your supporter’s journey should reach the stage of committed donor; someone who has remained inspired, passionate and committed to your cause. These donors can become high net worth donors, and can become important investors in your organisation.

A donor’s own circumstances will most likely change significantly over the years that they support you, and it is important to recognise this, and adjust your relationship and your approach according to their wishes, and behaviour.

Not all individuals will move up the donor pyramid. Some will stay on the first rung, others will start their relationship with you as a committed supporter. Sometimes, your first, and only gift from an individual may be a legacy.

## Section 2

### Acquisition

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Acquisition is the process of getting potential supporters engaged with your organisation and onto the donor pyramid. They could come across your website, read a leaflet or sign one of your petitions. Obviously the broader your donor base, the more potential exists for your future development and financial security.

#### Campaigns, Volunteering and Community Programmes

Recruiting and engaging potential supporters through your outreach, community, or campaigning work is a great way to introduce people to your organisation.

Your campaigns and community programmes may reach large numbers of people in your local communities. Make sure that the programmes are well organised, the messages are clear, and what you are appealing for meets your own objectives and vision. It is really important to communicate that you need funds to carry out your work, to suggest appropriate levels of gift and to make it easy for people to give to you. Give them instructions for payment methods you accept and where to send their gift.

Members of the public who join you in your campaigning work or help you out by volunteering, are already showing a big commitment to your work, whatever their motivation for doing so. Similarly, those who get involved with your community programmes, or sign a petition are also showing that they care about what you are doing. Involve these people and also try to get their personal information too, for example by asking for e-mail addresses on a petition. It is vital that you know and adhere to data protection law. There is no point having someone's email or home address if you are not legally entitled to contact them. You can then offer to keep them updated on your work and your appeals. You do not need to bury them in every piece of information about your organisation, work out what they are interested in and keep in touch. If you do one thing, make sure you thank them for their gift and "welcome" them to your organisation. They may not know much about you and this is your opportunity to engage their interest and start to develop their commitment.

#### Social Networking Websites

There is now a number of social networking and user controlled content sites that can be used by your organisation to raise awareness of your work, and potentially recruit large numbers of supporters, without too much effort or expense!

A few of the most popular sites are listed below, with their pros and cons, to give you an idea of what is out there. One huge advantage of all these sites is that they are free to join.

#### MySpace

[MySpace](#) is a social networking website offering an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, blogs (journals), groups, photos, music and videos internationally. It's

a chance for you to talk about your organisation and work and get in touch with like-minded people. An example, the most popular group in the pet and animal section is a public group against animal cruelty. Founded in July 2005, it now has nearly **90,000** members.

- MySpace is very easy
- It does not take long to set up, and takes hardly any time to update it
- There are millions of users on MySpace
- MySpace is fantastic for smaller organisations, because the PR you generate is down to you and how much time you spend updating and communicating with new supporters, not the size of your budget
- You can view other organisations such as WWF and see what they are doing
- You can see their 'friends' and you can even recruit their friends
- These potential donors put detailed profiles up, so you can see what causes they support, what skills they have and their interests. This will obviously help in determining how you might ask them for their support or a donation
- MySpace can be used to invite people to an event or sign a petition
- MySpace is a great alternative if you cannot afford to invest in a website

### Facebook

[Facebook](#) is a social networking website that allows people to communicate with their friends and exchange information. Facebook is the second largest social network on the web, behind only MySpace in terms of traffic. One million people are actively on Facebook every day.

Facebook is not designed for organisations to grow their supporter bases. However there are ways, once you are set up, to benefit from the millions of users of Facebook worldwide. For starters you could upload video clips, and photos illustrating your work, you can invite other users to be your friend, you can then invite their friends to be your friends, and so build up whole networks. You can also use Facebook to publicise and recruit for your events, campaigns, or petitions. It is a great way to give your supporters the feeling of being part of a movement or community.

Like MySpace, you can gain valuable information about your new supporters, which will help your organisation work out how best to engage their ongoing support. MySpace has now launched a UK charity channel, MySpace Impact, designed to act as a hub for campaigning, charity and social action in the UK. Users can raise money for causes directly from their profile. This is similar to existing channels in the US, Australia and Canada.

### YouTube

[YouTube](#) is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. Unregistered users can watch most videos on the site, while registered users are permitted to upload an unlimited number of videos. This would be a great place to showcase your materials.

Like the other the sites you need to be aware that the content of these sites does have the potential to go viral. This means that content gets spread outside of the website you posted the information on. For example you could upload a fantastic video clip of your organisations work, someone loves this and sends it to a friend, or tells everyone about it, they send it on to their networks, and it can spread nationally.

Other social networking sites include Twitter, Bebo and Flickr. Although popular these do not have the sheer volume of users as the profiled sites above.

## Section 3

### New donors

Acquiring new donors, whether engaging non-donating supporters, or attracting a new audience to donate, is a long term investment. You will need to bear in mind that often the costs of acquiring a new donor can equal or exceed the donations received. This means that this fundraising method should not be used as a quick fix funding solution, but as part of your longer term fundraising strategy.

Before you start, work out how much it will cost against how much you think that you will receive. For example; you send out 200 letters at \$1.00 per letter. You may expect one in five to respond with a donation and the average donation to be \$3.00.

Letters = \$200

Responses = 40

Total raised = \$120

Obviously your *return on investment* here is a negative. This does not mean however that you shouldn't do it. Those 40 people that gave you \$3, will now be part of your donor development programme, and in time may be converted to regular givers and move up the pyramid.

*It can cost around 3 times as much money to find a new donor as it does to keep an existing one, and it costs around 30 times as much to attract a new donor yourself as to have an existing donor find a new one for you.*

#### Direct Marketing

Direct marketing is a method of fundraising by communicating directly with individuals to 'sell' your cause. The method of communication could be a mailing, a telephone call, or an email – the common factor is that it allows the recipient to make a direct response, i.e. to make a gift there and then. The letter is one of the most common direct marketing approaches and especially useful if you are hoping to engage with a large audience, using five simple rules:

##### 1. Know your audience

It is essential to identify broadly the people from whom you intend to receive money. If they're mostly donors who have given to you a number of times and have received a lot of information from you, you probably want to say less about your organisation, and more about the particular project or appeal you are asking for money for. Be careful to assume too much knowledge though, even of your long-term supporters. You may be one of a number of organisations they support and they may get them muddled, if they do similar work. For those that have never donated or haven't even heard of your organisation, they will need to know a bit more about what it does and why they should trust you to tackle the problem that you are asking them to support you on. Regardless, considering these issues will help you to tailor the appeal and will substantially increase your chances of success. If you have a list of potential donors, you should also ensure that their personal details are up to date.

##### 2. Tailor your content

It's important to remember why individuals generally choose to donate, and who they tend to donate to. In brief, people give to charity because they want to make the world a better place, and tend to give to those who show passion, energy and commitment. If you communicate a genuine belief in your organisation and its work, then potential donors will be inspired and far more likely to engage with the appeal.

Provide your organisation's credentials. This will help the reader to see that you are genuine and will spend their money on what you claim you will. You need to communicate the problem, tell them what the solution is and convince them that you are the organisation to deliver that solution (because you have the expertise and experience) and, most importantly, that their support is needed to help fund the solution. For people who are not able to give large sums, you need to reassure them that their gift can help make a difference rather than being too small to make any impact. To make the problem more meaningful, it can be useful to talk about an individual animal that your organisation helped. It's often helpful to provide the reader with a tangible idea of what their money will be used for. Create a shopping list, providing a range of things that the reader might like to give money for.

Try to keep your writing style consistent throughout the letter and in line with your other communications. Not everyone will read your letter (or letter and leaflet) from start to finish so cater for the impatient, skim reader by using emboldening to pick out a few key sentences that, on their own, communicate the problem, solution and ask for funds. The ask should be made early on, in the first few paragraphs, and repeated a few times. It should be simple and direct and focus on the appeal at hand. Add a PS at the end of the letter, briefly reminding them how much you are asking them to give and why. It is often said that this is the most-read part of your appeal. Finally, finish with a polite and friendly thank you, leaving the reader feeling positive about your appeal.

### 3. Make it visually appealing

Remember that there are hundreds of thousands of not-for-profit organisations out there, many of whom will have similar appeals to you. You need to ensure, therefore, that your appeal grabs the reader's attention. Although many not-for-profit organisations may not be able to afford a designer, there are a number of things that you can do to make your appeal pleasing to the eye. Make sure that you don't squash your content on to one side of paper. If you need to, use both sides of the paper. Get your appeal noticed by highlighting or underlining your key points. Perhaps use a picture to help the reader visualize the issue. Be careful with your photo selection here. While a cute, cuddly animal may appeal to some donors, some might find it off-putting. The same applies for graphic images of animal cruelty.

### 4. Help the reader to make a donation

Don't forget to make it as easy as possible for the reader to donate. This might be a self-addressed form or envelope, an online form or even a telephone contact. Perhaps you could provide a range of donation methods – by post, by phone and online are ideal.

### 5. Proofread

Last but not least, you need to make sure that there are no spelling or grammatical mistakes and that the letter is consistent and to the point. Make sure that all legal requirements are met, for example data protection and fundraising law (and gambling law if it is a prize draw or competition).

## Broadcast media appeals

Research the audience of the media channel you are thinking of using. Will your organisation appeal to the young, or do you want to appeal to a certain group in your community or country? You will need to tailor your appeal to the anticipated audience and media. There are a number of broadcast media channels that you can use. Some are more costly than others; some are more targeted than others. Broadcast media channels include:

- Radio (interviews or adverts)
- TV (interviews or adverts)
- Newspapers and magazines (editorial, adverts or advertorials – paid for ads that are designed to look like editorial)
- Outdoor posters
- Websites (social networking listings, search listings (e.g. Google), website content and online adverts)

Do not forget to make it clear what your organisation does and what the appeal is about. What are you hoping to achieve? Also make it clear what difference the audiences' donations will make; show the potential solution. And finally remember to clearly show the audience how they can find out more about your work and most importantly how they can easily make a donation to your cause.

The advantages of media appeals are:

- They have the potential to reach large audiences
- Interviews on radio and TV are free and a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of your organisation and highlight your need for funds
- Press releases (in order to gain editorial coverage in newspapers and magazines) are free but the information in it may not be replicated in the press as you would like or may not be used at all
- You can reach people outside your usual demographic and create a whole new audience for your work
- You can reach people within your usual demographic who are more likely to support your work
- The response will be pretty immediate, this is particularly useful for emergency aid work for example

However the disadvantages are:

- Your message can be altered by the medium used. You may not have ultimate control of the content.
- Competition for the audience's attention is fierce. You will need to be creative with your appeal.

As with any appeal that you make to the general public, make sure that you have a mechanism in place to actually handle the potential response. There is no point in getting hundreds of people interested in your work, if when they call to ask a question or make a donation no-one is there to respond or your website doesn't allow them to make a donation online (or at least tell them where to send a donation).

Make sure you get the details of everyone who responds (following data protection law) and don't forget to thank them, not only at the point of contact, but later in a letter. Remember this is all part of engaging with your potential donors and giving them the best possible experience of supporting your organisation.

## Web Site

Your web site is vital to your organisation, particularly if you are hoping to attract overseas donors or volunteers. If someone looks up your organisation on the internet, how easy would it be to find? Will it be up to date? Will you have a dynamic list of events, appeals and campaigns that you are working on? Will it be clear who you are, what you do, and what you exist to achieve? Would it be easy to find out how to make a donation?

These questions are so important for your organisation. Many organisations are severely pushed for time, and simply don't have the resources to update a website. However there is no point in directing people to a website, where the last update was an event three years, ago, and it looks like you haven't implemented any projects since a successful campaign in 2003.

Your website can reinforce to a potential supporter your credibility, your transparency and your accountability. Moreover it can be a valuable tool not only to promote your appeals and expand your donor base, but also to promote your work, the condition of animal welfare in your country, and help you make links with important NGOs and agencies working in similar fields.

There are some useful websites you can use to guide you through the pitfalls of updating your website:

- For someone who won't mind familiarizing themselves with the simple code that places objects on pages, makes text bold, creates line breaks etc.: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/HTML-World-Visual-QuickStart-Guides/dp/0201696967/>
- For someone who wants a more visual approach to building and uploading web pages. You'll need to buy software (dreamweaver 2004), but it can be bought cheaply and second hand on ebay: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dreamweaver-MX-2004-Dummies/dp/0764543423/>
- Same as above, dreamweaver based, but probably quicker to get to grips with <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Creating-Web-Pages-Dummies-sup/dp/0470080302/>

Online resource: There are literally thousands of resource available online for example:

- Beginner: <http://www.htmldog.com/guides/htmlbeginner/>
- Intermediate: <http://www.htmldog.com/guides/htmlintermediate/>
- Serious tutorial, but all the basics clearly explained: <http://www.w3schools.com/html/default.asp>

## Events

There is a separate document about raising funds through events, however you can invite potential new donors to events. When you present your organisation publicly through an event you need to ensure that anyone representing your organisation is clearly briefed about what they are doing. Ensure that your volunteers and staff are committed to their work and passionate about your organisation. They could be the first contact that a potential new donor has with your organisation. You need to ensure that it is a positive encounter!

## Word of mouth

This may seem very obvious, but word of mouth can have a big impact on your donor recruitment. As with your events, you need to ensure transparency and openness at every level, to ensure that you don't receive negative feedback that could detrimentally impact upon your appeals. Make sure that your supporters are treated well, that donors and volunteers are not in any way ignored or under appreciated. Again this goes back to making the supporter journey with your organisation the best experience possible.

# Section 4

## The Donor Journey

The donor journey describes the relationship that the donor has with your organisation. You need to ensure that this journey is managed in such a way that maximises the value for both the donor and your organisation.

Just after a donor has given you their first gift is the time to start developing your donor relationship with them. Send them a thank you letter with a welcome pack. Make it clear how much their gift is appreciated. Also send them a list of ways that they can become further involved in your organisation. If possible include a reply slip, where they can outline how they would like to be involved with your organisation in the future, give them some options of the sorts of activities you do.

Keep your warm (current) donors engaged with regular mailings, ask for an extra donation or to sign up to a regular donation scheme – this is far more cost-effective than repeatedly asking for one-off gifts. You will need to tailor this ask as much as possible, refer back to any information the donor has given you about their preferences, how they originally donated, what they responded to. Tell a story about your organisation's work. You need to get an emotional response to the communication, and again make it clear what a difference their next, and hopefully regular, donations will make.

Establish a regular calendar of appeals, maybe 3 or 4 times a year with an actual financial ask. Ensure that you communicate with these donors in between the requests for funding – send them an update of your work, examples of good news and achievements that your organisation has made, a newsletter etc. Keep the donor engaged. Basically get the balance right. Do not inundate your warm supporters or direct every appeal to them, but obviously don't ignore them in your efforts to constantly recruit new donors. Try and reactivate people on your database who gave to you in the past but haven't in recent times. It is cheaper to reactivate them than to recruit new supporters.

### **Individual Giving or Sponsorship Programmes**

Encourage your donors to give a small amount regularly, for example monthly on their pay day, or quarterly. It is easier for most people to manage small monthly gifts rather than a larger gift each year.

This does not mean that you no longer need to communicate with these donors, they should still receive updates and newsletters, and you can still write to them about increasing their monthly gift, or getting involved in other ways by attending events, participating in a campaign, volunteering etc.

Take care with your regular givers, those donating by direct debit or similar payment method. Try to establish the ideal number of times to ask them for additional, one-off gifts (you could test this or simply ask them) as the most important thing is to retain their regular gift. It is not usually advisable to ask new, regular gift supporters to make additional donations until around 6 months into their giving. You could consider asking these people to increase the value of their

committed gift once a year, but do not ask until they have been giving for at least 9 months, perhaps 12.

Asking for a regular gift will help your return on investment. Not everyone will choose to become a regular giver, but for those that do, your fundraising will be more effective because you do not have the cost of asking them for subsequent gifts.

An example:

Letters = \$200 Responses = 20 Average gift: \$5 per month

In this example it would be a mistake to calculate your income over a year to be  $20 \times \$5$  per month as not everyone who starts a monthly gift will continue to give. You need to take your attrition and retention rate into account:

- The rate of regular givers you lose in a period is known as the attrition rate.
- The proportion that you keep is known as your retention rate.

If you can estimate your attrition rate you can then more accurately calculate the amount of income you would receive in a year by reducing the expected number of gifts by the attrition rate.

Monitor what your attrition rate is (the proportion of committed givers who cancel their gift each month or year) and focus your efforts on reducing this. You can do this through donor communications, reducing the number of appeals for one-off donations you send and improving your customer service. It is pointless investing in recruiting supporters if you do not put as much effort into keeping them – you wouldn't keep on pouring water into a leaking bucket and the same is true for fundraising from individuals!

### Special Gifts or One-off Gifts

Special gifts refer to one-off donations for a specific project. As you develop your relationship with your donor, and find out more about their motivations, you will be able to identify projects that you are implementing, that will appeal to specific donors. Do not be afraid of asking one of your regular givers for a one-off donation from time to time.

# Section 5

## Committed Donors

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This is the group at the top of your pyramid. They have proven that they are committed to your work, and have grown as supporters. How you work with them is very important. You need to keep up the relationship. Some of these very important supporters could provide you with a large gift (if they have the resources), play a major role in a capital appeal, donate a leadership gift, and ultimately remember your organisation in their will.

### Capital Campaign Gifts

Your capital campaign would usually be for a major one-off project such as extending your shelter. Wealthy, committed givers on your pyramid may be encouraged to contribute a one-off large donation towards such an appeal. You will most likely appeal to various sources of funding for your capital appeal but major individual donors could make up a fair proportion of your total.

### Leadership Gift

A leadership gift is a donation that due to its source or size can transform the future of an organisation, a new educational centre or a vet clinic. It can be the first or one of the main donations in a capital campaign. These are very important not least because of the worth but because they demonstrate a belief in your project or organisation and can mobilise a capital appeal.

### Legacy fundraising

This is when an individual supports your organisation by leaving it funds or property in their wills. Clearly this is a sensitive subject that will need to be approached appropriately. In order to carry out a successful legacy or bequest programme you will need to;

- Understand why people leave money in their wills to organisations - usually because they want to make a difference after they have gone
- Have appropriate staff members in place who can advise on how to leave a legacy in a will and then can deal with executors to obtain the legacy
- Research potential prospects - look at the characteristics of those who have previously left you a legacy and then look for those on your database who are similar
- Understand your regional or country legalities around soliciting legacy funding
- Produce appropriate information to help potential legacy givers to leave your organisation a donation
- Build and develop relationships and deliver excellent customer service - you can get written out of a will as well as into it
- Record and keep up to date information about each prospective donor
- Evaluate

Legacy fundraising is unique in that your largest gifts may come from people who do not have high disposable income. Many older people are living on a small pension and find they have little left to give to organisations such as yours. They may however live in a large house with no mortgage and have few or no surviving friends or relatives to leave their assets to. A legacy to your organisation could mean that these assets pass onto you.

Legacy fundraising often has the highest return on investment of all types of fundraising. It also has the longest potential gap between the intention of a gift and realising that gift as it is dependent on someone dying. Do not appear eager for this to happen!

### The shopping list

Your individual donors will most likely not know how much to give. Help them out by providing a list of prices for the work that you carry out e.g. \$10 will/could provide vaccinations for 30 dogs, \$25 will/could feed a cat in our shelter for a month, \$50 will/could enable us to produce 1000 education leaflets about the illegal wildlife trade. Tailor these lists for the donor and their personal interests as much as possible. E.g. if their last donation was \$20 don't start the shopping list at \$1,000. If they have expressed a particular interest in your education programme then include that, or make it varied enough for a general mailing appeal.

Whether you use the word "will" or "could" is important. \$25 "will" feed a cat in our shelter for a month means exactly that and you must restrict that gift to only paying for cat food. \$25 "could" feed a cat in our shelter for a month means you are giving an example of the sort of help a donation could offer, not that you will only spend your donation on this. Consider whether or not you need unrestricted funds that you can spend on your work as you need, or restricted funds that you will only spend on a particular project or activity. Those giving large gifts will usually expect their gift to be restricted. If you wish to ask for unrestricted funds then you must not mislead the supporter into thinking otherwise, though you should still apply a theme to your appeal and give related examples of the type of work their donation could help support but your appeal must state that their support will benefit all your work, not just work related to the appeal theme.

### Output

Make sure that you are actually telling the donor the impact that their donation has had. Telling them what you have done is not enough, you also need to tell them what difference that has made – impact rather than output. A case study can be more effective than statistics. So for example talk about a specific animal that you have helped as an example of your achievements.

### Future Development

As your individual supporter base grows it will become more important to 'segment' your supporters, that is to separate them into meaningful groups - which will in turn direct how you will communicate with them in the future. Meaningful groupings might be the type of work they are interested in which will dictate what you ask them for funds for or the level and nature of their giving, which will dictate how much and how often you ask them to give as well as how you ask them to give, i.e. increase their direct debit, make a one-off gift.

As far as possible you need to tailor your future fundraising asks to a specific audience. There would be no point in sending a general mailing letter asking for support to someone who would clearly rather attend events, or be directly involved with your organisation. And it is likewise less likely for someone who would rather donate online to attend a local event.

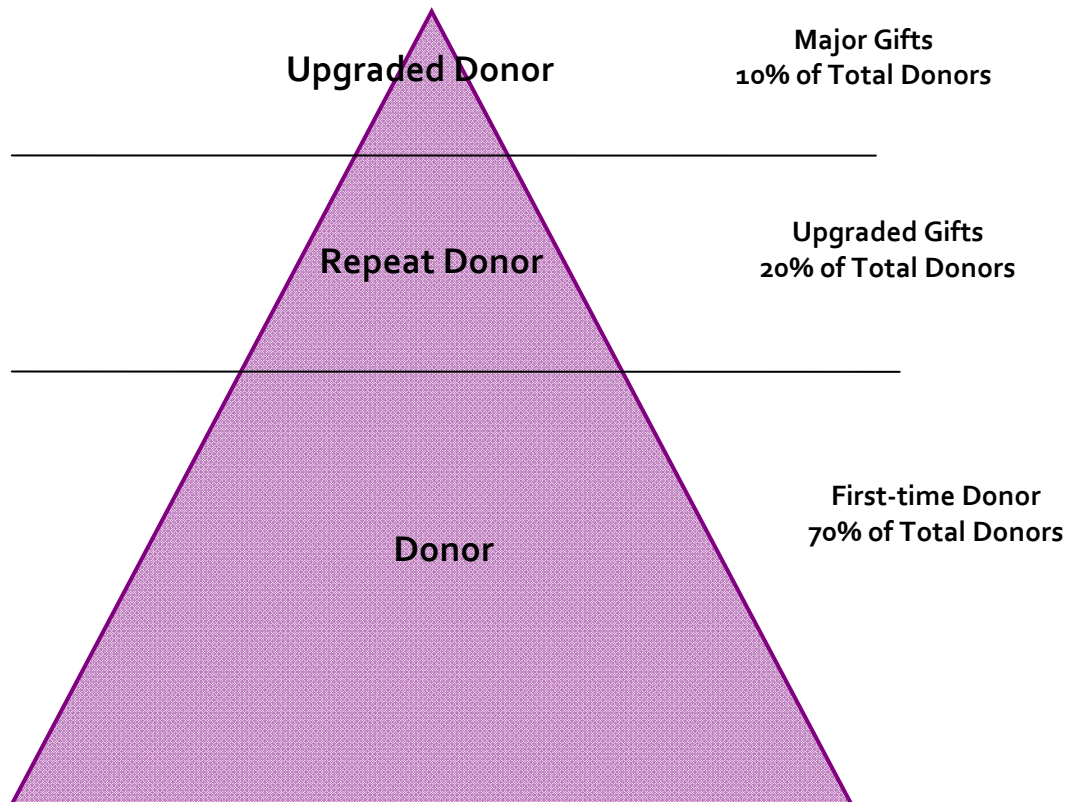
Try to get to know your supporters so your communications are tailored to the type of person they are (or to the particular individual in the case of major donor fundraising) and their giving history and future capability. For example, do they like to receive information by email or post, are they wealthy or living on a limited income, how were they recruited to your organisation, was it through a particular activity or event?

### Major donor fundraising

Major donor fundraising is a separate investment of your fundraisers time and resources, but can be a great source of long term revenue for smaller organisations, as it does not initially require a large budget or numerous staff. It is however a long term funding opportunity and should not be rushed or used as a quick funding fix. Some tips:

- High level donors require individual relationship building and a higher, more intensive time and resource investment than other donors.
- Major donors tend to be project driven and demand their funds are restricted to a particular project.
- Communicating your message is less important than listening to what they are interested in supporting.
- You need to approach the donor face-to-face.
- Again before you start you need to research exhaustively. You will spend a long time, maybe up to three years, cultivating this gift so make sure that you are not going to waste time by going after someone who is unlikely to eventually support you.
- Board members can be extremely effective not only in identifying potential funders, but identifying potentially high level donors.
- Your board members will also be important when developing relationships with existing potentially high level donors.
- You should also try brainstorming with your colleagues from volunteers through to trustees. List every single potential funder that you know between you.
- When it comes to approaching these potential funders, decide amongst yourselves how to approach them. You know them so you will know the most effective and potentially successful ways to ask them for a donation.
- You can also try press, rich lists, the internet, and word of mouth. Also find out their giving history, what causes have appealed to them in the past and why?
- In order to get to know them invite them to your project, a special event or open meetings. Show off your work in the best possible way, and keep in touch with them.
- Remember do not rush 'the ask'.
- To sum up: make sure that the right person is making 'the ask', for the right amount at the right time.
- Make sure you give full information on what has been achieved, the impact you have made on the problem, as a result of their gift.
- Major donors may expect to play a pivotal role in the project they are supporting, as well as giving funds to it.

This donor pyramid illustrates the average breakdown of donations for many organisations:



This basically means that on average 70% of your donations are from first time donors. This is why investing your time and resources to develop your existing donor relationships is so important. You do not want to spend time and money getting that 70% to donate, and then start all over again with a whole new audience. Move that 70% up the pyramid and what you'll then have is a much larger proportion giving more or giving regularly or even both.

What you are aiming for is the ideal donation pyramid which is that 70% of your individual donations are repeat donors and only 10% first time or ad hoc donors.

Always remember to evaluate your individual fundraiser appeals. Measure your return on investment (ROI) - the amount you raised versus the amount you spent. Also measure the numbers of donors and check them against your original targets.

Don't forget to say Thank you!

**"Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone." Gladys Browyn Stern**

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