

# 11c

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## Using new media to grow engagement and loyalty with donors

### Project 11c. Digital

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## For senior management and trustee boards, this project will:

- Show how it will pay to invest in digital fundraising and show the need for a digital engagement strategy.
- Remind them that the fundamentals of fundraising digitally are the same as other forms of fundraising.
- Emphasise the importance of usability and accessibility. In particular, senior management should know that over 50% of traffic comes from mobile phones and tablets. Content must display well on these devices.

## For donors, this project will:

- Reduce frustration when they can't find information about a charity online or the content is not in an accessible format.
- Reassure donors that the experience they have giving online will equal to, or better than, the experience they have offline.
- Make it easy for donors to contact digitally the causes they care about.

## Summary guidance

This guidance is intended to help fundraisers, supporter engagement staff and the organisation you work for to design better online supporter experiences that engage and delight them. If you follow these steps:

- your supporters will learn more about your cause and how they can help
- you will increase supporter engagement with your cause online
- you will grow the loyalty of your supporters to your organisation through obtaining up-to-date, compliant permission for future marketing
- loyal and engaged supporters may go on to advocate for you through digital and mobile channels and take on an ambassadorial role

## Executive summary

Fundraising and engagement via digital and mobile communications channels offer numerous ways to speak to supporters and prospective supporters about the great work your charity does. Through rich and interactive content, you can tell stories directly to the people that matter, who sustain your organisation and beneficiaries. There are a number of low-cost, practical steps you can take detailed in this paper to drastically improve your supporter's experience of your organisation online. The possibilities of fundraising through online engagement change rapidly, so you should constantly review and improve your objectives, goals and infrastructure in this area. Learn from your supporters, peers and the world around you.

## Top-level guidance

The following guidance is intended to provide highly practical steps you can take within your organisation to improve your supporters, online experience and to increase your reach to prospective audiences. Very few require major financial investment.

Below is a summary of the main steps. Further details and examples can be found after this summary.

## 1. Strategic steps

1. Create a digital engagement strategy for supporters and prospective supporters. This should set out a vision and some high level goals for online engagement that is supporter centric and will create interesting stories about the work you do.
2. Take time to find out and understand the interests and motivations of donors. You can then design the optimum online experience from there. This will help you create content and assets (such as video and pictures) that can play a role in their life and address a need they may have. Without that information you are guessing and hoping.
3. Review new technologies and hardware/software as it is released. Ask: can this add to the supporter experience? Don't be seduced by new things. Think always: how can this improve the supporter experience. If you can't answer this, then don't do it. See page six for a checklist.
4. Consider if your hardware and back end setup enable an enhanced supporter experience? Are your systems integrated so that data flows allow a single supporter view?
5. Have a clear Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Pay Per Click (PPC) plan. This will allow supporters and prospects to find you online and discover information about you. If you don't have any budget for PPC, concentrate on improving your SEO.

## 2. Implementation

These steps will bring your strategy to life and help you plan your future work online.

1. Physically map the full and various journeys for supporters through all your communication streams. This should be done for online and offline channels together. Do not separate journeys by channel as increasingly messages are seen across multiple channels within integrated campaigns. You can do this at low cost with sticky notes and a large room. See CDE project 5 – *The supporter's journey*.
2. This will help you understand the online experience from the supporters' view and consider if the journey is something that you would consider to be positive, rewarding and inspiring.
3. Ask for consent for online marketing in a compliant way. If you can't communicate to supporters through email, mobile or app, then any communication plan is flawed from the start. The Direct Marketing Association or NCVO websites are good starting points to establish how to do this.
4. Test the best frequency of communication for each supporter. Some will prefer lots of regular contact; others less so. You can use measures, such as unsubscribe rates, open rates, bounce rates, time and spent on page, to judge engagement with your content. The data can inform the optimum frequency – and test different approaches constantly. See CDE project 13 – *Giving donors choices and managing preferences*.
5. Focus on accessibility This includes language, design, legibility of fonts and font size on web pages and in emails.
6. Test your content in multiple browsers before you launch something new. If supporters can't read or work the asset you build, it won't satisfy them.
7. Focus on telling stories. Supporters want to know the stories of the people or issue they are helping. Using emotions, real stories, and strong photos and graphics is key. See CDE project 1 – *The use and misuse of language*.
8. Test usability regularly – 47% of donors trying to make a donation online don't finish. Publish statistics and graphics showing exactly how donations are used.

9. Use social media to have conversations with supporters and to tell stories in a human way.
10. Plan your email marketing. Well-targeted email communications can keep supporters up-to-date with what your organisation does. You should segment your email lists as much as possible to tailor content to the specific interests of the cohort. This will increase engagement and the number of people taking positive calls to action

### 3. Best practice

These steps can be considered best practice. If you have limited resources available, they are less crucial than the steps above but should still be considered:

1. Design mobile first, since website visits from mobile devices overtook traffic from desktops in the UK in 2015 . Your supporters use mobile devices and therefore your content must display well on those devices
2. Use surveys on your website – to understand more about motivations, interests and how the supporter learned about the page/work. This will allow you to design better content and journeys
3. Use warm, conversational, short sentences and non corporate language online. People have limited time – they will only scan sentences.
4. Encourage your staff to attend cross-sector events and network with other people engaged in producing online content for supporters. You can pick up many tips and low cost ideas from such activity.

If you follow this approach – we are confident you will have happier and more engaged supporters – who know more about your charity and the work you do. This will create greater value to your organisation in the form of enhanced levels of engagement, campaigning, volunteering and advocacy within peer groups.