

The 7 Habits of Effective Personal Fundraisers

Become your non-profit's best fundraiser by following seven proven habits

Dearest Fundraiser,

You love your non-profit and the work that they do. Many of you want to raise funds for your non-profit or cause, but don't know how to approach it. We know it seems like a real struggle to fundraise effectively when you're not a professional fundraiser. We've seen lots of people spin their wheels to figure out how to get more donations on their online fundraising page.

We're with you and want to help you become the best fundraiser possible.

To do that, we combed through the thousands of individuals that used our platform and selected some of the most successful to study. We examined what and how much they raised, and identified seven habits that they all had in common; a few experts weighed in also.

Your non-profit needs you. They need you to become the best fundraiser possible so they can further their social impact. We can't guarantee that you will raise a ton in donations easily, but if you follow these habits, you'll be on the right track.

We hope you enjoy our e-book; please don't hesitate to reach out to us at hello@causevox.com if you have any questions. We hope to hear about your fundraising journey soon!

- CauseVox Team

Overview of the Seven Habits

1. Personalize your fundraising

The most effective online fundraising campaign is a personal one. The most effective fundraisers use their personalities to promote their campaign as well as personal stories. Your relationships with your friends, family and coworkers are compelling enough reasons for your network to give to your cause. Read more on page 3.

2. Use multiple ways to raise awareness

Reach out to your personal network of friends, family, and co-workers. A personalized email is the best way to get donations. Social media is helpful to reach new audiences, too. Read more on page 4.

3. Keep up the human connections

Help other people connect with the cause and need by focusing on being human. Meet people face-to-face to help them understand your passion for and commitment to the cause. Read more on page 6.

4. Emphasize how everyone can make a difference

Show that even small contributions will amount to big, tangible results. Read more on page 7.

5. Your cause is worth the effort

Getting donations for a cause isn't easy. You'll have to persevere through some dry spells and be assured that your efforts matter (because they really do!). Read more on page 8.

6. Remind others to contribute

Update and share progress with friends and family. This is an opportunity to remind others of your fundraising progress and how they can help. Read more on page 9.

7. Be appreciative

Always thank your donors and supporters. They want to be recognized and your appreciation goes a long way. Read more on page 10.

First Habit: Personalize your fundraising

“Personal stories have the capacity to awaken something in others...”

Online fundraising is most effective when it's made personal. Your personality and your passion have to shine through in any type of fundraising effort. Making the campaign personal gives your cause credibility. Personal connections motivate people to give more than the cause in and of itself.

Cheryl Knopp, a fundraiser for the Agahozo Shalom Youth Village, found that people want to donate when your personality emerges from the fundraiser. She says, “Let people know that it is important enough for you that you are taking action and you are hoping that they feel some of your passion and commitment as well.”

Reach out to your network of friends, family, and even coworkers. People help personalities they can connect to and trust. To become personalities they would want to support, convey your belief in the cause. If donors trust you, they trust your message, which translates to more donations.

Showing your personality is important, but telling personal stories helps even more. Through the stories she shared, **Jody Landers**, from The Adventure Project, demonstrated what she's done for the cause, how passionate she is about the cause; how the cause impacts her; and what the cause has taught her. Jody says, “[personal stories have] the capacity to awaken something in others.”

There's so much noise that it's hard to get your message across to the right people; you're fighting for relevance. Being personal also helps you distinguish yourself from the crowd. For instance, when earthquakes and tsunamis struck Japan in March, **Meniscus** magazine, like many others, tried to help. They found that establishing personal connections with their audience encouraged people to give through *Meniscus's* SXSW4Japan campaign versus other Japan relief options that were available.

Second Habit: Use multiple ways to raise awareness

“Social media can bring together like-minded individuals to make a powerful difference.”

To get maximum exposure for your fundraiser, ask your personal network of friends, family, and co-workers; use different ways to reach out to them. This doesn't mean you should incessantly blast out streams of messages to your network asking for donations. Be mindful to pick the best methods to reach your audiences.

Amy Sample Ward, Membership Director at the Nonprofit Technology Network (NTEN), believes that the right channel has to be matched with the right audience. She says that in order for people to use social media or any channel effectively, you have to know where your community or audience is. We're going to break down some of the most successful channels that fundraisers generally use.

Ethan Austin, Founder of GiveFoward hasn't seen Twitter to be an effective channel, and the results of our study confirm his observations. He says, “Sending personalized and heartfelt emails or Facebook messages to friends who actually care about you is going to be much more effective than tweeting your fundraiser link to random followers on Twitter.”

The most successful fundraisers always use email to individuals. It allows a great degree of personalization and you'll know that the audience received your message. Camp Rising Sun fundraiser **Rene Pierpont** says, “[I sent] a series of emails (~10-15 emails to different camp alumni from different seasons, family and friends) to potential donors informing them about the initiative and asking them to participate. Some emails were personalized with pictures or stories from specific camp years.”

The second best method is through social media where your close personal connections are, e.g., Facebook. Because of the more personal networks found in Facebook, it is the most productive social media channel to reach donors.

Lastly, Twitter and LinkedIn work well for most people as awareness and reinforcement but not as a primary means of communication. **Jerry Lee**, a successful fundraiser for Unique Learning Center, found that using social media created a huge impact in his fundraiser. He says, “[social media] can bring together like-minded individuals – many of whom have

never even met – to make a powerful difference.”

A few fundraisers have active blogs or are part of vibrant mailing lists and online communities.

They’ve seen a lot of success in using those channels. The key is not to blast on all channels, but to pick the ones that you have the most personal connections with and cultivating those the most.

Generally, successful fundraisers have also used more passive channels such as including their page link on their email signature or other online presence.

Third Habit: Keep up the human connections

“You’ll be surprised at...the human connection that results.”

We live in an interconnected and online world, but the most successful fundraisers don’t lose the personal human touch. Fundraising shouldn’t be about soliciting donations and taking transactions, but it should be about helping other people connect with the cause and need. As a result, professional fundraisers know that the stronger the connection they form, the more likely the people with whom they connect will donate.

Shonali Burke, USA for United Nations Human Rights Council, has found that the human connection is a valuable way to tell a compelling story and help your audience identify with your cause. She says, “The key is to tell the stories of the people you’re helping in a compelling way. A great way to do this is to start by asking, “Have you ever ____ ?” You’ll be surprised at the answers you get, the emotion that question evokes, and the human connection that results.”

Humanizing your messages to each individual also helps with building a connection. **Lee Overtree**, a fundraiser for Story Pirates, says “You always need details in there that show you put thought into writing them - they’re not just another name in your address book.”

In addition to compelling stories, take advantage of in person opportunities to drive people to your campaign. Successful fundraisers take advantage of every chance to promote their cause. Non-profit engagement consultant, **Debra Askanase** believes that you should use the communities that you have already. She says, “When you raise money online, leverage those relationships by asking them to donate to a cause that is meaningful to you. When you see them in person, reinforce the online appeal by mentioning it again and letting them know why it is so important to you. This is how face to face relationship building in your community translates into a powerful online fundraising effort.”

Meeting people face to face helps them understand your story, your passion, and your commitment. It is the best way to express yourself.

Fourth Habit: Emphasize how everyone can make a difference

“Sometimes making a difference doesn’t mean making a donation.”

Small efforts make big differences. That’s why you fundraise for your organization. Unfortunately, many people choose not to donate because they don’t believe their contribution will make a difference. We found that the most successful fundraisers show their friends and family that even small contributions amount to big, tangible results.

Hester Mourik of Camp Rising Sun, listed items her organization needed to show how contributing even \$5 makes a difference. This technique helped her raise more than \$2310 in her fundraising effort. She made the connection between the donation and the difference made; it becomes less about the dollar amount.

On the other end, sometimes making a difference doesn’t require any money; building awareness is just as important.

Skylar Davis, from the New England Nordic Ski Association (NENSA), says, “Even if they didn’t donate through my page, it still helped to popularize the Annual Donation, which was the ultimate goal.”

He found that there was value in getting people simply to see his page and learn about the cause and organization. The more people he brought into his page, the more successful his efforts were. The donations were just a result of awareness building.

Fifth Habit: Your cause is worth the effort

“Never feel like your work is ever done.”

The best rewards come from hard work. Getting donations follows the same theme: It's hard work but the payoff is well worth it. You're actively making a difference in helping your non-profit or cause get steps closer to fulfilling its mission.

Successful fundraisers found that their work was never done; there was always more that they could do. **HelloKatyxo**, a fundraiser for Girls Who Rock, says “Never feel like your work is ever ‘done’.” Whether you've raised \$10 or \$10,000,000, never stop fundraising. Consider how much the cause means to you, and go from there.” Every little bit counts, and you should start at a place that you're comfortable with.

Fundraising may get difficult. You'll have to persevere through some dry spells and stay encouraged -- your efforts really do matter. The hard work that you put into fundraising matters because you're giving other people the opportunity to help.

Claudia Chow, a fundraiser for the American Red Cross, says about her fundraiser, “Everyone was looking for ways to help – they just needed an outlet.” People will rally around your efforts. You just have to give them the opportunity to do it.

We've also seen that the most successful fundraisers have an unending drive to succeed. **Hester Mourik**, of Camp Rising Sun, tried to reach as many people as she could and did not relent in her efforts. She says, “I sent out tons of e-mails and Facebook posts. Apart from that I tried to tell as many people as possible by Facebook chat and MSN Messenger.

Sixth Habit: Remind others to contribute

“People will notice how much this means to you and want to help out.”

Personal fundraising is all about rallying your community but many people won't get the message the first time. We're constantly bombarded with messages, Tweets, and a plethora of other distractions. Many will donate, but many don't because it slips their mind. Be sure to update your friends and family on your campaign progress and set a persuasive example of the importance of your effort.

Yoko Nakano, a fundraiser for the American Red Cross says, “Set an example by working hard and giving the most you can. People will notice how much this means to you and want to help out.” Send out reminders and messages using the best ways to reach your specific audiences.

Successful fundraisers also update their fundraising page. This creates an opportunity to remind others on your fundraising progress and what they can do to help. **Tiffany Eriksen** of the Adventure Project says, “Let them know where the campaign is at. Then follow up, send them an email thanking them and letting them know you'll keep them informed of future opportunities.”

Sometimes it takes multiple efforts to make progress. Don't give up.

Multiple messages can help, but the content of the reminder matters too. **Ashley Faison**, Director of Development at Change for Kids, recommends using a campaign countdown as a natural way to maintain awareness of your efforts.

She says, “The goal is to get your friends to stop what they are doing and click on the donate button now! Don't be afraid to interject your personality when posting solicitations to your social media outlets (so they know this is personal and not spam).”

Communicating a sense of urgency of your message is important and making it tangible is even better. Ashley also suggests, “Post something like, “Hi [500 Facebook] friends, I've got a challenge for ya. Think about this for a second, if every one of you gave \$1 right now we could provide an entire semester of violin lessons for an elementary student in the South Bronx. \$1, Come-on, it will take just a minute and I promise it will make you smile! Click here.”

Seventh Habit: Be appreciative

“A simple thank you can lead to bigger things”

You like to be appreciated when you go the extra mile. Similarly, always thank your donors and supporters. **Rob Bradlee**, a fundraiser from the New England Nordic Ski Association (NENSA), says, “I just wish there was more time and opportunity to thank people in person. I send emails thanking everyone, but a handshake and clap on the back is what I wish I could give them.”

A simple “thank you” spurs further action from your donor. Being thankful for each donation shows how important the donor is -- no matter how large or small the donation amount.

Showing your appreciation also motivates people to donate to you again in the future. **Jonathan Han**, from Unique Learning Center, says “A simple thank you can lead to bigger things as those who donate have that appreciation stick with them and they begin to spread the word for you.”

Your donors are the ones that rally alongside you in your fundraiser. Many times, it’s easy to leverage technology too much, which detracts from an effective appreciation.

Ruthellen Rubin, Professor of Philanthropy and Fundraising at NYU, believes that the best “thank you’s should never be impersonal or automated. She says we should “pick up the phone, send a personal email and write a personal note on your thank you letter to let the donor know you noticed and appreciated the gift.”

Your donors deserve recognition, and your appreciation goes a long way.

Allyson Kapin, from the Rad Campaign and Frogloop, says that in order to make your donors feel like rockstars you should thank them, shower them with love, and don’t take them for granted.

Offering incentives can be a personalized way to show your appreciation too.

Albert Zhou, from Synergy Ministries says, “Be creative in how you get people involved. I’m passionate about guitar, and as part of my fundraising campaign, I offered guitar lessons and song covers for donors. This is not only an incentive to donate; it is also a way of showing my appreciation for their support, and it increases their engagement.”

Afterword

Thanks for reading this guide. We hope you've enjoyed *The Seven Habits of Effective Personal Fundraisers*. Our hope is that these seven insights will help you become a better fundraiser so that your cause and non-profit can get the resources they need to do create more impact.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at hello@causevox.com or visit us at www.causevox.com.

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