

# HMA's **TOP 10**

*Volume 3*

By: Harvey McKinnon Associates

Keeping Your Donors: Top Ten Tips on Retention

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# Donor Retention: It's TOP of everyone's mind

Or at least it should be. These days, it's more important than ever to focus on donor retention. Even a small increase in donor loyalty will have a big impact on your fundraising results.

The first and most important tip, of course, is to know your donor retention numbers. Get intimate with them. Know the attrition rates of donors recruited in each channel of your donor program (like direct mail, street face-to-face, door-to-door, and online). And keep track of them. Because a modest increase in attrition will change the long-term value of each of these groups of donors dramatically. And show you where to focus your donor stewardship, and your donor recruitment budget.

Enclosed, you'll find ten top tips on boosting your donor loyalty. Get in touch with us if you'd like to talk about this some more.

Happy reading!

# Improve your ask, and ask more often

Do you ever have to be reminded to do something? Especially something that's optional such as a magazine subscription or making a donation to a charity? One of the most effective techniques to renew more donors is to communicate with them more often. The frequency of communication depends on two factors: your current communication schedule and the channels you use.

Our testing shows that increased communication renews far more donors, and raises much more net money, for good causes.

Similarly, the quality of your creative – copy and design – makes a dramatic difference. Your creative can boost the number of gifts you get from 10% to 100%, or more.

## Example

We increased the donor renewal rate from 38% to 56% for a major hospital. Just one extra mailing, and a stronger creative, has led to a significant increase in donors giving year after year.

# Get donors to give through more than one channel

The results are in, and prove that multi-channel giving boosts donor value. So play around with mailing your donors and then calling them. Or calling them and then emailing them. Add in a bit of social media. Hire trained canvassers to recruit monthly donors at your events. And most importantly, cross-reference your data so you understand how your donors really give. Down with silos – up with channel-mix!

## Case Study

Last June, Ecojustice ran an extremely successful monthly donor drive. With the help of a deadline, a target, and a matching-gift donor, they beat their target of new monthly donors by 50%. Their optimum channel mix was email and telephone, along with online video thank-you's.

**ecojustice**  
Canada's leading charity using the law to protect and restore the environment. 

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[Your one-hour home or blog post heroes the YOY - it's time to celebrate!](#)

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**Thanks to heroes like YOU - it's time to celebrate!**

BY DEVON PAGE AT MAY 25, 2014 05:01 AM | 10 COMMENTS

FILED UNDER: [DEVON PAGE](#)

 **By Devon Page, executive director**

It's time to celebrate. Our first-ever monthly donor drive was a resounding success. We learned from our initial drive that 135 new monthly donors can make a big difference. Ecojustice's Club of 135 - thank you!

I want to thank everyone who helped make our monthly donor drive a victory. Whether you told friends or became a monthly donor yourself - thank you!

Help us celebrate! Tweet that you believe the law is the most powerful way to protect the Canadian environment.

**THANK YOU!**



# Be emotional, and tell inspiring stories

Do you know how many patients Vancouver General Hospital treated in 2006? Probably not. But will you remember Steve Howe, who was torn nearly in two after a horrific accident near the Sea-to-Sky highway? And who survived because of the amazing work of the doctors and nurses who operated on him 78 times! Yes, you probably will.



<Mail date>

Dear <Prefix> <LastName>,

I shouldn't be able to write to you today. I should have been dead at age 22.

I hope you'll take the time to read my story. It's about overcoming odds after a terrible accident. It's about the doctors and nurses at VGH doing everything they could to help me overcome obstacles so that I could be whole again.

And here's the truth of my story. I'm alive for two reasons: I refused to give up and the staff at VGH refused to give up on me.

I'm telling you about my accident so that you know about the incredible level of treatment and care the doctors and nurses give at VGH. I hope you'll consider continuing your crucial support of our hospital with a special gift today.

## I never saw it coming

On June 16, 2006, I was part of a construction team working on the Sea-to-Sky Highway near Squamish - you may remember my story from the news. We were removing the last tree for the day. I was guiding the excavator operator as he positioned the big bucket at the front of the machine to push the tree down.

Standing on the side of a gully, several metres above the excavator, I kept my eye on the machine. Pushing the tree should have been the last action of the day. But it was just the beginning of my horrific ordeal.

## The bucket impaled me

Without warning, the huge steel bucket suddenly came swinging right at me. It came so fast I didn't have time to move out of the way.

Next thing I knew, I was being lifted higher and higher into the air. I realized that the steel teeth on the front of the bucket had impaled me in the lower abdomen and pelvis. The bucket scraped along the side of the gully, dragging me along with it. The teeth were now tearing and crushing my insides while the rest of my body was being smashed on the ground and rocks.

## Holding on to life

When the excavator operator finally realized what was happening he stopped the machine and ran to me. I had taken first aid training so I gave him instructions on where to apply pressure to slow the bleeding. I knew if he didn't apply pressure fast, I'd bleed to death right on the spot.

*Please turn over*



There's a reason story-telling has been such a large part of our lives since *Beowulf*. Stories stick in our heads. They touch our hearts. In a way that statistics and facts never will. Fire up your donors' enthusiasm by telling them a story they'll remember. And helping them understand that the happily-ever-after part is up to them.

# Thank your donors FAST and FREQUENTLY

Seems obvious, doesn't it? Thanking someone for doing something nice makes them feel great. It makes them feel like doing something nice again. Like donating to your charity! Yet, HMA's mystery shopper program shows that there are still so many organizations that are terrible at thanking their donors.

Dear Donor,

I am writing to thank you for giving money to Santa Barbara County's United Way so I have a recreation center to go to when I'm not in school. Otherwise I'd mostly be hanging around the streets. I have been coming here since I was eight years old. It's like a second home.

Last spring I graduated from Santa Barbara Junior High. I was the Sports Editor and my class representative for the Associated Student Body. I am on the football team.

I learned a lot of stuff at this place to help me get this far at school. My friend Kevin helps me with school work in the Learning Resource Center. I was co-president of the Friday night parties to keep kids off the streets. These parties were my favorite times.

I can't imagine what I would do without Kevin and Joe and my other friends here. There wouldn't be anywhere to go but the streets. I want you to know that you are helping Santa Barbara County's United Way help kids like me.

Thank you for caring about someone you've never met.

- Peter

They are late to thank – taking weeks or even months to get a letter out. Or send form letters that have nothing to do with the appeal a donor replied to. They get vital information wrong. Or, tragically – some don't thank at all.

On a positive note, some organizations do a fantastic job of thanking donors. And they see great results: donations up 35% after thank-a-thons. Notes from donors thanking them for their thank-you letter. These things matter to people. On the left you'll see a thank-you we produced for the United Way of Santa Barbara.

# Develop a Donor Lifecycle Map

Donor Maps are great. Our clients print them out and pin them above their desks, so they can remember what we all agreed to do to help them keep their donors happy and loyal. A new member of staff in the donor relations team? They get the map as part of their training. Is it time to send a monthly donor upgrade? Just consult the map.

And the mapping process itself is great, too. It really helps you see where the big gaps are in your stewardship.



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# Build trust: Tell donors what you've done with their gifts

Donors want to know that their donation went where you told them it would. And when they see their donation was put to good use, they're much more likely to make another gift.

Write specific thank-you letters that follow up on the appeal a donor replied to. Be as specific as you can. *“We'll help feed 25 hungry people.” “You helped us purchase a new scanner.” “Yesterday, we learned that Hamid has been set free!”*



Newsletters are a vital tool to give donors feedback. Copy should always focus on how donors made your success stories happen. And don't dispense with your print newsletter, no matter how much money it will save you. We interviewed a selection of one client's major donors recently. The top complaint of a \$250,000 donor we spoke to was that she missed the newsletters she used to get and displayed for guests on her coffee table. As you can imagine, our client has pressed the 'print' button on their newsletters again.

## Be personal and focus on the donor

Donors don't want to feel like an ATM, so put them front and centre in everything you do.

Personalize all your communications to them. Get their names right. Know how they like to be addressed. If they are a monthly donor, a member of your mid-level club, a super-loyal, or a legacy pledger – make sure you acknowledge that special status right away. And make sure that the word “You” far outnumbers the word “We” in all copy that you write.

Embrace the capture-culture, and keep all the tidbits of information you can on your donors. Do they have pets? Children? When's their birthday? The anniversary of their first gift to your organization? Can you take five minutes to send them a clipping with a little note about something you know that they care about? You'll make that investment back in loyalty.

YOU & YOU & *you*

# Know why your donors stop giving

When you discover why a donor stops giving, you gain valuable insight into how to get them back, and how to do a better job of retaining similar donors in the future.

This applies to both single-gift donors and monthly donors. Maybe one of your monthly donors is having a tough financial time, and could use a "monthly giving holiday" for a while.

## DONOR SURVEY

① Your opinion matters. Please tell us how we can do better:

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If you ask, there's a good chance they'll say 'yes' to you calling them in a few months' time to ask if they'll renew their support.

For single-gift donors, lapsed donor surveys are also a great tool. Ask them why they stopped supporting you. You may find that they didn't feel they were making a difference. Now you have an action you can take – making sure you're doing a better job of showing donors the impact of their gifts.

# Know your numbers

If you're like many people in the non-profit sector, you don't dig into your numbers in great detail. But by doing so you are investing time that can really boost your retention.

A proper analysis of your results, creative, and donor base will show you who renews, who isn't renewing, and what motivates your donors to give. This leads to better strategies and more strategic investment decisions. For instance, you will find that donors from one channel will have a renewal rate that's often 1,000% greater than another channel. Donors have different long-term values, and that determines where you should invest your money.

## Case Study

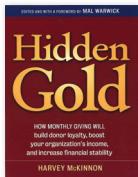
We analysed a new client's file and discovered they were wasting money mailing to people who likely would never give again. We stopped mailing to these unproductive names and saved the client \$100,000 a year. When we took over their in-house program we increased their net income by \$500,000 in one year.

\$1234567890 \$1234567890 \$1234567890

# Convert to monthly

Many of the organizations we work with have donor retention rates of more than 90%. It's as close as you can get to a donor giving you gifts forever.

The lifetime value of a monthly donor is often more than \$2,000. We have worked with non-profits across Canada, USA, Australia, and Europe. And in every country, the highest donor renewal rates come from committed monthly donors.



Harvey's book *Hidden Gold* has helped thousands of organizations globally raise millions and millions of dollars. Get in touch with us and we'll let you know how to download a version for a discounted price.

## Case Study

This year we started building a monthly giving program for a major US nonprofit. In less than eight months, we've increased the number of people in the program by 600%. With their anticipated investment in the program, they will earn an additional net income of \$40 million in just five years.

# Here is another number you need to know...

If you need to acquire more donors, boost your net revenue, or increase the long-term value of your donors, we should talk. Please call us today.

- **Harvey McKinnon or Lynne Boardman: 1(800) 815-8565**  
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## About Us

Harvey McKinnon Associates is a team of passionate fundraisers who help non-profit charities acquire donors, boost net revenue, and increase long-term donor value. We do this primarily through direct mail, monthly giving, mid-level donor programs, and bequest marketing.

We are a full-service direct response fundraising agency. Our mission is to help you build ethical, loyal relationships between your donors and your organization. We believe that by using our skills to put your donors first, we can help you reach your fundraising potential.

## Specializing in Integrated Direct Response Campaigns

» Program Strategy and Analysis

» Award-Winning Copy and Design

» Direct Mail

» Digital Fundraising Campaigns

» Legacy Fundraising

» Data Analysis and Services

» Donor Stewardship Support

## Working with organizations we believe in



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across Canada  
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