Attracting and retaining online givers

Know who your digital donors are

Donors and volunteers increasingly expect non-profit organisations (NPOs) to provide easy and convenient technology.

Donors, volunteers and other stakeholders want speed, ease, convenience, engagement, personalisation and accountability.

Some NPOs doing great community work may find it difficult to compete in the sector if they cannot effectively use technology. If it is not easy to make a donation, people won't donate.

NPOs tend to focus technology use for giving and volunteering based on age. However, as all ages are increasingly using and relying on technology, income levels, gender and ethnicity all affect an individual's likelihood to donate money, time or expertise.

NPOs should:

- consider their donor audience
- be willing to trial a variety of digital mediums such as email marketing, social media and traditional web advertising, and
- plan how they can record and understand the success of their campaigns prior to beginning each campaign through such mechanisms as measuring click through rates and SMS donation rates.

Technology has also made it easier to acknowledge supporter efforts and maintain relationships through creating strong positive supporter experiences. People donate via an NPO's website for a variety of reasons as Figure 1 below demonstrates.

FIGURE 1: REASONS FOR DONATING VIA THE NPO's WEBSITE
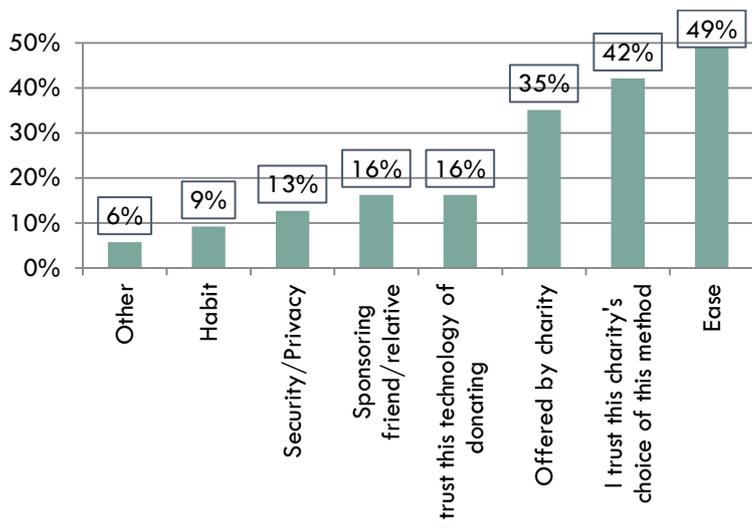
Technology use by NPOs

Key tools such as mobile applications, social media, crowdfunding and payroll giving are used to attract and retain supporters. NPOs should consider providing:

- websites (optimised for mobiles) that are easy to navigate with clear, easy to find functions and an intuitive design
- customised pages such as social media and third party information, education and transparency with clear messages on what donations are used for
- security and privacy
- convenience for volunteers in being able to interact on their own terms, whether it is looking up policies or reporting their hours, and
- acknowledgement of effort, money and time given.

Traditionally, NPOs do not have large budgets or experience in IT. One path to meet this shortfall is to find a reliable technology partner to provide advice on IT services and innovation.

The collection and analysis of IT data is a valuable tool for NPOs. Understanding why campaigns are successful through real-time data reporting and campaign tracking will improve future campaigns.

Characteristics of an effective charity website

The majority of NPOs have a website to communicate and present information as well as receive donations and fundraise. Effective charity websites have:

- simplified and quality design
- a clear description of the organisation's purpose
- details of who is served by the organisation
- history of the organisation
- information about how to get involved
- compelling imagery, and
- details on upcoming events.

Figure 2 below represents what NPOs currently see as their IT priorities.

FIGURE 2: KEY FUNDRAISING PRIORITIES FOR NPOS
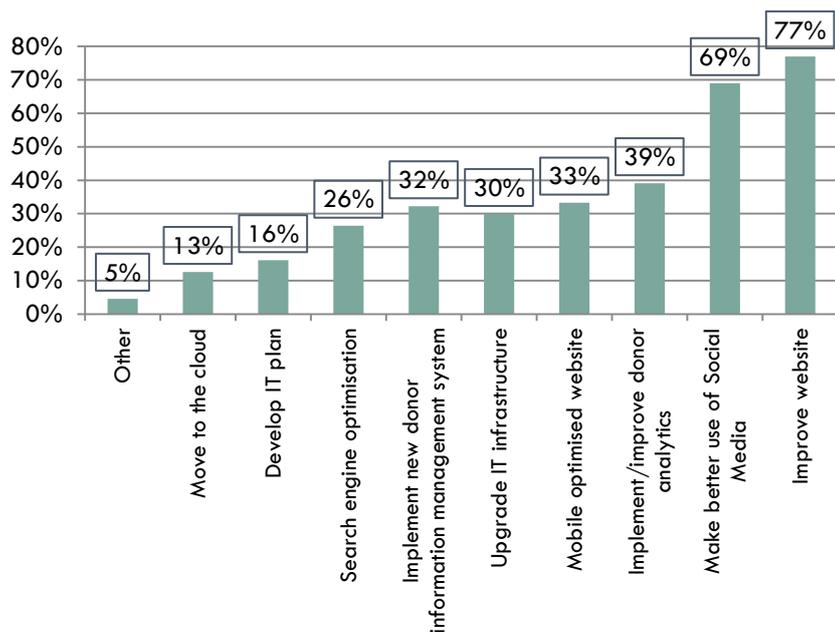

Mobile technology

Websites that are optimised for mobile technology attract 34 per cent more donations than those that are not. Online donations using mobile phones are expected to grow.

Mobile phones are the most commonly used personal communication medium. Twenty per cent of global website traffic occurs on a mobile phone or tablet. As well as a major access point for online searches, the majority of Australians use their phones to communicate via email or social networks, to stay informed and for entertainment.

> *"Mobile-based interactions will become the norm, so we need to think now about how we can make our website and other online fundraising opportunities link-in to this" (non-profit survey respondent)*

Mobile applications are an ideal medium for an NPO to increase interaction and communication with donors and supporters and improve fundraising strategies. Unlike other forms of mobile marketing (e.g. text, coupons, multimedia messaging service), mobile applications are not perceived as intrusive - consumers see them as a service.

FIGURE 3: HOW MUCH DO NPOs USE MOBILE TECHNOLOGY?
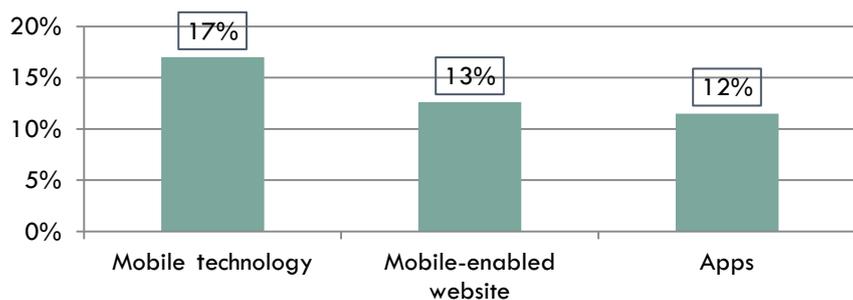
Premium SMS

Premium SMS or Text to Give is a message used for services such as TV show voting, competitions and donations. Use of Premium SMS as a platform for donations has been increasing in the USA and the UK, as it allows mobile users to donate to their favourite charities conveniently and be charged on their mobile phone bills (Mandyam and Milikich 2014). In October 2015, the Telco Together Foundation launched an SMS donation trial in Australia, which is still underway (until October 2017).

Virtual volunteering

Technology has transformed the way volunteers can be engaged, mobilised and activated. Virtual volunteering is more adaptable to people's work and lifestyle, physical abilities, obligations at home and time constraints.

Technology can help raise awareness about campaigns and the benefits of volunteering. It also presents advantages for increasing the number and suitability of volunteers and engaging professionals. This in turn increases efficiency and productivity and decreases environmental impact through printing reduction.

Skilled volunteering or 'experteering' is a relatively untapped resource. Infrastructure needs to be in place as well as a structured program of technology to reap long term gains.

The key to a positive volunteering experience is communication and feedback. Technology offers a range of ways for organisations to acknowledge volunteer support.