

the fundraiser

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Issue 7 July 2011

VOLATILE CLIMATE

FUNDRAISING TRENDS FROM CHARITY MARKET MONITOR

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GETTING TO KNOW YOU

How qualitative research can help you serve donors better

FORCE OF NATURE

Gill Raikes on her successful career at the National Trust

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

Nick Hurd on government's approach to Big Society

Make do and mend

Andrew Woodger provides some guidance on lapsed donor reactivation, including working examples from a similar programme at WWF-UK



Nobody wants to mail or call donors who aren't there anymore. That's why considerable amounts of money and effort go into suppressing the names and addresses of people who, for whatever reason, are not responding. Apart from the upset that can rise from mailing the recently deceased, there is also the sheer waste of money sending messages out to people who are no longer at that address. When budgets are tight, and donor pockets are not deep, it makes sense to ensure that every single penny is spent as efficiently as possible.

Is a lapsed donor really a lapsed donor?

Not all lapsed donors are the same. Some may simply have moved, but not informed you. Of all the organisations that must be told about a move, a charity isn't going to come high on the agenda. But that doesn't mean the charity is forgotten, or that the motivation which originally engaged someone's support has lapsed. They could still be willing to donate, provided you can find them again.

Making reactivation viable

It costs ten times as much to recruit a new supporter as to retain an existing one, which makes reactivation seem an attractive option. If you can get some of those lapsed supporters back, the potential savings are considerable.

WWF-UK recognised this, but needed some help to devise a strategy which would enable it to identify which of its lapsed donors would be the most valuable potential prospects.

Consider a reactivation strategy

Ask yourself, can some of your suppressed records be revalidated? Might it be that your target donors

have not gone away at all, but are still there and an anomaly in the system? If they have moved, could you track them down again to a new address?

Before its reactivation programme was put in place, when WWF-UK received a mailing return it was simply flagged up as a 'gone away' and no longer mailed. At the time this was a sensible approach to take. However, the organisation realised that it needed to find a way to access these names and verify the details.

Putting it into practice

Like WWF-UK you need to ensure that the potential targets for reactivation really exist. This means developing a methodology to

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cross reference the name of the donor and their new address. On the one hand you don't want to over suppress and lock out those who might still be out there. On the other you have to ensure that those who have genuinely 'gone away' are not sent inappropriate communications.

Score for success

To do this you need to use a selection of external reference files. This enables you to identify those donors who have genuinely moved and their new addresses. A scoring model helps you to determine which donors who had a one off mailing return are still likely to be at the address held on your database.

By looking across a number of verification sources (including things like the Electoral Register) you can make a stronger case for the accuracy of a record. The more times it can be 'scored' across several difference sources, the more likelihood there is that the new record matches the existing donor you are trying to reactivate. This ensures that donors are not 'lost' and that records which really need to be suppressed are not mailed again.

Increase response rates

The WWF-UK programme demonstrates that these techniques can deliver excellent results. One-off donations from the charity's reactivated list delivered response rates as high as ten per cent – double that of the equivalent unsuppressed segments.

Integrate with your data programme

Like WWF-UK, you need to make reactivation a regular part of your donor data programme. As soon as a lapse takes place you need to have the systems in place to ensure that it is picked up and the address verification is applied automatically to identify those who are the most suitable prospects for reactivation. This should ensure that you are no longer flagging up gone-aways, who are still potentially active donors.

Don't lose, re-use

There are latent donors who could, with a little effort, once again be regular givers stored within your database. It takes a bit of time, but the analytical systems do now exist to enable this to be done accurately and cost effectively. At a time when every penny counts, that's got to be worth it.



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