

PREFACE

The Internet Evolution: Online Fundraising Works

Remember when it was OK to say the words *Internet revolution*? As late as autumn 2000, you could create a new buzzword just by adding the letter *e* in front of any word. Imagine . . . e-business . . . e-marketing . . . even ePhilanthropy! With the Internet, the world was ours for the taking. Or rather, the e-taking.

Now, of course, all those notions sound naïve. Say the words *Internet revolution*, and you're likely to meet with reactions ranging from apathy to scorn. The failure of many dot-com businesses—and the crash of technology stocks—have reinforced the notion that the Internet, for all its opportunity, is out of favor.

The Internet revolution is over, ultimately a victim of expectations that exceeded reality. In the end, this may be a good thing. The hype can die down, the expectations can be adjusted to reflect reality, and the real work—the Internet *evolution*—can begin.

If your organization is like many charities, you're probably not sure what to do with the Internet. You know there's potential online. In the United States alone, the number of adults with Internet access has surpassed a hundred million. That's far too large an audience to ignore.

But challenges remain. Some of the excuses we hear for why charities are not getting on the Internet have validity. It *is* unpredictable. Effective and efficient business models *are* few and far between, and many new ideas get taken out for a test spin and are just as quickly put back on the shelf. A lot of organizations don't know what they're doing or how to harness their potential online. And how do long-standing ethical guidelines, such as the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Code of Ethical Principles, or those of other organizations, apply to the online environment?

This is where the second edition of *Fundraising on the Internet* comes in. This volume contains the blueprints and guidelines your organization needs to get started—and succeed—on the Internet. It will speak to you in plain language about what you can expect to get from the Internet, the challenges you'll face, and why charities need to be online.

The introduction from the first edition, published in 1996, perhaps

said it best: “Fundraising on the Internet is a pioneer adventure.” Five years later, the statement is still true. Given the changes that continue to occur on the Internet, this volume, like the earlier edition, is a work in progress. But charities have found success on the Internet, and business models and practices have been developed from which your organization can learn. There is a growing body of evidence that proves what we have thought all along: Online fundraising works. It takes effort, and you probably won’t see substantial revenue overnight, but online fundraising is working for charities that take the time to invest in and cultivate their online users. After all, that’s what fundraising is all about anyway!

As you explore the new opportunities online, take the time to become familiar with the ePhilanthropyFoundation.Org, a foundation set up to foster ethical online philanthropy. The Foundation is developing standards, information, models, and types of assistance for charities getting started online. The writers of this book constitute a Who’s Who of Internet fundraising experts—they really know their stuff, and they come at the Internet environment from a variety of perspectives.

Part One, “The Big Picture,” reviews the current landscape of Internet fundraising and where this new medium is headed. The chapters on professional standards, best practices, evaluation of online fundraising success, and government regulation will be of great interest to all practitioners, whether your organization is just getting started on the Web or has had a site for several years.

Part Two, “Online Fundraising Fundamentals,” covers the essentials of Internet fundraising, ranging from electronic newsletters and special events online to donation portals and shopping malls. So much has happened in the last couple of years with online fundraising that individuals of all experience levels will find this section compelling and informative.

Next, Part Three, “Technology and Your Organization,” explores behind-the-scenes efforts involved with a charity’s online fundraising, including donor research and managing donors and volunteers in the Internet environment as well as the complexities involved in online fundraising for multichapter organizations.

Part Four, “Tapping into Outside Resources,” will be especially helpful, given most charities’ current technical limitations. The chapter on outsourcing online services (Chapter Nineteen) is perhaps the most exciting part of the book, covering new developments and advances the online landscape has experienced over the past several years.

Part Five, “Beyond the Basics” explores some of the many ways that nonprofit organizations can maximize their online presence. Six chapters cover topics such as Web site design, viral marketing, and advocacy campaigns and plumb the future of fundraising with a look at building one-to-one relationships through technology.

With a new communications medium such as the Internet, a section on “Case Studies” is always invaluable. What worked—and what didn’t—can be a real eye-opener.

An extensive resource section rounds out the book, with source documents that illuminate vital topics such as ethical online fundraising practices and effective e-mail marketing techniques.

In a society that can be as cynical and apathetic as ours, it may be difficult to remain enthusiastic about the Internet. But I firmly believe, and I don’t say this lightly, that the future of philanthropy lies on the Internet. Yes, the axiom that “people give to people” will remain, but the Internet provides incredible opportunities for charities to recruit new donors and volunteers, energize their constituents in action, and develop an entire new generation of—here’s the new buzzword—*e-donors*. Like any other fundraising initiative, the online campaign will require a lot of effort and groundwork before the results are seen, but it will happen.

So yes, maybe the Internet revolution is over, and the cynics won the first round. But the Internet evolution—the real work of creating a philanthropic landscape online, step by step—is just beginning. It’s time to get started.

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