



## **10 Online Fundraising Basics You Need to Know**

By Joanne Fritz, About.com

Online fundraising is the wave of the future. Already, it is making a dent in direct mail fundraising, and, as the “wired” generation matures, online may become the dominant form of fundraising. The lesson is that if you have not started building your capacity to raise funds online, start now. Here are some things you will want to think about.

### **1. Get legal with your online fundraising**

Just as with other types of fundraising, online solicitations must be registered with the appropriate officials. Check with your state attorney’s office or secretary of state office to find out the requirements in your state.

### **2. Market your online fundraising program.**

It is not enough to just put a “donate now” button on your website and wait for the money to roll in. Promote your online capacity in your newsletters and include your website address on all of your collateral materials. Include information about the online giving option in all of your direct mail campaign literature. Put together a special promotion for online giving using your email list and your mailing list.

### **3. Explore all your options for online fundraising**

Do you want to set up your own system and be able to process credit card transactions? Or do you want to engage a company that provides that service for you? Would you like to be able to offer recurring (preauthorized) donations to your supporters? Do you want to use another site to collect your online donations? Or use some of those sites in addition to your own? Look at all your options before you decide.

### **4. Make sure your website invites online donations.**

You don’t need a flashy website, but you do need an attractive one that is easy-to-understand and navigate. Consider too the various generations that will be using your site. Design it in a way that will please all ages.

### **5. Observe proper online etiquette in your online fundraising.**

Don’t spam, and don’t look like a spammer. Don’t overwhelm your donors with too much email, and don’t use email to the exclusion of other methods of fundraising. Online fundraising should be only part of a well-balanced portfolio of strategies. Everyone has a preference...by mail, phone, online, even instant messaging or from their cell phones. Make sure you accommodate as many of them as possible.



**7. Make sure that your website donation button is big and above the fold**

Your visitors should be able to locate it immediately. And, it does not have to say “Donate Now.” The Hunger Project has a button that says “Invest Now.” That button leads to another page that offers options to the donor.

**8. Provide the opportunity for non-monetary contributions such as volunteer time**

Getting people to volunteer is one of the best methods of donor cultivation. Indeed, a study from the Association of Fundraising Professionals found that people who are asked to give of their time before being asked to donate will ultimately give more money to that organization.

**9. Show real donors and specify how donations will help**

Include testimonials and photos of donors. Provide photos of people receiving help. Be liberal with success stories, stories about real people, and use plenty of inspirational photographs. Provide information about how a specific level of donation will work.

**10. Try segmentation of your online fundraising audience**

As your expertise and experience with online fundraising advances, think about segmenting your audience. This will require good record keeping and growing a large enough list that there is something to segment. Segment based on age, gender, income, interests, previous giving history, geography, or role, such as donor or volunteer,

Develop different versions of your email campaigns to fit these various groups and then test. Testing involves breaking down a particular group into smaller groups and testing different versions of your copy.

*For additional questions on marketing, public relations and video production for nonprofits email [susan@purpleduckmarketing.com](mailto:susan@purpleduckmarketing.com) or call Purple Duck Marketing at (425)896-8959.*