CAST A WIDER NET

3 Proven Strategies That Give Fundraisers More Opportunities for More Conversations With More Prospects

Planned Giving Marketing

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A friend of mine, who is in his mid-50s, was talking about his love for the arts.

“I’ve been a season member of the orchestra for years, and I regularly respond to their year-end appeals,” he said. “But no one has ever approached me about planned gifts.”

A *different* friend told a similar story.

“My husband and I met in high school, got married, had kids, and then sent our kids to the same school we attended! We’re totally committed to the school; the teachers and parents are like our family. But, planned giving? No. Nobody has ever talked to us about making a planned gift.”

Unfortunately, these stories aren’t unique. Because my friends don’t fall into the age and income bracket that defines the “ideal planned giving prospect,” they often don’t hear anything about planned gifts—even from organizations they *already* support!

In this eBooklet, you’ll learn three different strategies that will help you identify loyal supporters who are warm prospects for planned gifts, but who often get overlooked because they don’t fit into the sweet spot, the center of the age-and-income Venn diagram.

These proven strategies will open more opportunities for more conversations with more prospects.

THREE PROVEN STRATEGIES

Planned Giving Marketing has been serving nonprofits for over 25 years, and much has changed in that time!

Think of the monumental shift in how we communicate with one another today versus even *five* years ago. The sheer *volume* of communication sources, such as direct mail, email, social media, websites, and text, has had an effect on us—and on our donors.

It's hard to identify the scope of the shift, but it's easy to ***feel*** the frustration and confusion. Have you ever heard yourself saying something like this: "I just don't get it. People just aren't responding the way they used to. We're doing the same things that have always worked, but people just aren't giving."

We've seen it! We've felt it, too. And that's why we're helping fundraisers like you discover new ways to facilitate conversations with supporters who are already passionate about your mission. We want to help you recognize ways to make it easier and more natural to talk to those prospects so they raise their hands and identify themselves.

BY THE TIME YOU'RE DONE READING THIS EBOOKLET, YOU'LL SEE OPPORTUNITIES EVERYWHERE

We're going to do that using three proven strategies.

- We're going to **widen the audience** to identify prospects outside of the traditional **age and income** bracket.
- We're going to **widen the message** so it resonates with more people.
- We're going to **widen our touchpoints** to capture more attention and raise curiosity about planned gifts.

By the time you're done reading this eBooklet, you'll see opportunities everywhere, because the ideal planned giving prospect isn't limited by age and income. Instead, everyone who identifies as a "faithful, connected, and committed" supporter of your nonprofit is already primed to begin a conversation.

CULTIVATE A WIDER AUDIENCE

One strategy to facilitate more conversations with your prospects is to expand your idea of **who a prospect is**!

This isn't to say we **stop** looking at age and wealth potential, only that those two factors don't give us enough information. *Let's widen the net and speak to a wider audience.* Consider the NEW ideal planned giving prospect:

- the 45-year-old who just sold her business
- the middle-aged divorcé who wants to change his insurance beneficiary
- the college student from an affluent family

Did I just lose you on that last one? Think I went too far? Let me tell you a story. **You're going to love this:**

A university student was working in a school-sponsored internship. On the intake paperwork, she was asked to name a beneficiary on the insurance policy provided through the internship. She knew her family didn't need the money. And she knew her school had arranged this dream opportunity.

So guess who she named as the beneficiary of the policy . . .

You're right—her school! *As an undergrad, she made her first planned gift.*

So, with a wider audience as the goal, let's reconstruct an image of the ideal prospect. Rather than focusing on age or income, let's think in terms of *connection and relationship.* In other words:

"WHO LOVES YA, BABY??"

Cast a wider AUDIENCE NET by including *all the people* who love you. I'm talking about people who show up for events, those who donate their time, those who make small financial donations year after year. Who are these people?

- Your volunteers
- Your members and subscribers
- Your current staff
- Your *retired* staff

> **WHO LOVES YA, BABY??**

Think of people who have shown their commitment to your mission through annual or capital campaign donations, subscriptions, memberships, monthly gifts—and even those who have written Thank You letters for how you've touched their lives.

Consider younger people of modest means who give where they can and what they can. While not *all* in this audience will give financially, they all have a proven affinity with your organization. Deepen that connection by approaching them in humility and gratitude. And honor their generosity by including them in conversations that show them how they can make an impact deeper than they may have even realized was possible when they name your nonprofit as a beneficiary of one or more of their assets.

The topic of beneficiaries brings us to the next strategy of where we can widen our net. Let's broaden the message we use to engage more prospects.

A BROADER, MORE ACCESSIBLE MESSAGE

Let's start with a quick, two-question quiz.

Question One

Do you know which planned gift is the most **popular**? Of course you do: *Simple bequests and beneficiary designations.*

But if this is true, why are planned giving officers advised to spend their time, energy and resources trying to educate prospects about the legal differentials of every single planned gift option?

Question Two

On a list of the TOP TEN REASONS donors give for what motivated them to make a planned gift, guess how high "tax credit" ranks?

Number one? Top three?

Would you believe "tax benefits" barely made the list, sliding in only at Number ten?

So, let's ask again … why are planned giving officers advised to spend their time, energy and resources trying to educate prospects about the law?

Today's prospect is persuaded more by the *emotional connection* to the mission and to the *aspirational* idea that they can have an impact in the success of that mission. Rather than focus only on an educational message, we can open more opportunities with a more inclusive message that resonates with everyone.

Messages That Include More People

Spread the message that lets your prospects know *anyone* can make a planned gift (not just the Thurston and Lovey Howells of the world). Much of this is done by reframing the conversations around planned giving. Limit verbiage that positions these gifts as “later-in-life” estate-planning decisions. Doing this will allow prospects to more easily recognize themselves as likely candidates.

KEEP THE MESSAGE SIMPLE, EASY, AND INCLUSIVE

You can help prospects make that mental shift by talking with them about topics that are already familiar to them, such as wills, retirement, and insurance. For someone who is unacquainted with the idea of planned giving, terms like gift annuity, pooled income funds, remainder unitrust, donor advised funds, etc. might make their eyes glaze over (and their attention disconnect). And, of course, they may not even qualify for some of these gifts based on their age.

So, keep the message simple, easy, and inclusive. Make it *inspiring*, rather than educational.

Messages That Inspire More People

Planned Giving Marketing understands the extraordinary power of personalized, emotive stories. In truth, almost *nothing* has more ability to influence a person’s decision to give. One reason our clients see such a difference in prospect engagement when they work with us is because we don’t send generic, templated content. We know rule #1 of effective marketing is that it must be personal and inspiring. That’s why we’re committed to helping clients uncover *their* best stories, so *their* message connects better to *their* prospects and donors.

Great stories inspire people to come forward. They inspire people to imagine themselves *having the same impact*. So, in your messages, tell stories that inspire!

- Capture the emotions that motivated current donors to give.
- Capture the transformational impact your organization has had in someone’s life.
- Capture the pride someone feels when they realize their gift makes a real impact.

By widening the message net, you’re able to engage many more prospects because you’re touching their emotions!

Once you have this message, widen the outlets and channels where the message can be seen and heard.

A WIDER RANGE OF VENUES & CHANNELS

Have you heard the story of the retired high-school teacher in Concordia, Kansas, who left The University of Kansas a $7.4 million gift in her estate? Talk about inspiring!

It's not likely a donor like this decided to leave a gift because she sat through an Estate Planning Seminar. Donors *of all levels* give because they have a deep emotional connection to the organization or to that organization's mission.

So, let's think of how we can create events that make an emotional connection with a wider audience—events that facilitate opportunities for prospects to experientially recognize how your mission aligns with their passions.

Venues

What creative, impactful ways could you arrange to engage guests? Here are a few ideas:

- Schools: a guided tour of the newest building or exhibit
- Orchestra: a private performance or a behind-the-scenes view of a rehearsal
- Hospitals: a tour of the new surgical suite, led by the Chief of Surgery
- Museums: a docent tour of a new art collection
- Universities: Wine tasting at a homecoming event

Here's an insider tip: don't announce semi-public events, such as open houses, tours, or exhibits, as "opportunities" to "come see" or to "learn more." Go beyond the announcement and instead extend an *invitation* to your prospects. Encourage them to *attend as your guests*. And then make the event memorable by being there to greet them with personal time and VIP attention.

Channels

Another way to widen the net is through current correspondence channels. Where do you currently have a touch point with people who have already identified as your loyal supporters? What outlets are available where you could share powerful stories made possible by visionary planned giving donors? Some ideas:

- Alumni Magazines
- Newsletters
- Gift Acknowledgments
- Social Media Posts
- Intake/Admissions paperwork

Many times, people have to hear a message **eight times** before they respond to it. For that reason, think of places where you could use posters, signs, and plaques to spread the message that inspires people by the impact of planned gifts. This could be in hallways, public areas, lobbies, waiting rooms, reception halls.

While the channels are virtually endless, there's no reason to be overwhelmed. The idea is to look around and notice the possibilities of where and how your organization can cultivate a culture of giving and philanthropy.

Deepen the relationship with current donors

Recognize and honor your *current* planned giving donors wherever possible. Spread the message of their vision, their insight, their investment. In this way, those who already have an affinity with your organization will repeatedly hear about the importance and impact of planned gifts.

Planned gifts build a strong future for any nonprofit. These gifts empower people of average means to leave a legacy and to make an impact on multiple generations. Inspire people to recognize these gifts can be part of *their* story.

NEXT STEPS

You've learned three strategies of how to cast a wider net through your audience, through your message, and through your venues, outlets, and communication channels. And with this wider net, you'll expand your opportunities to engage in more conversations and deepen the relationships with those loyal prospects who already support your organization.

The team at Planned Giving Marketing has been helping fundraisers and development specialists like you for over 25 years. Our job is to make your job easier.

Call us at 484-680-7600 to talk about a marketing strategy that supports your goals of casting a wider net to identify and engage more prospects.