

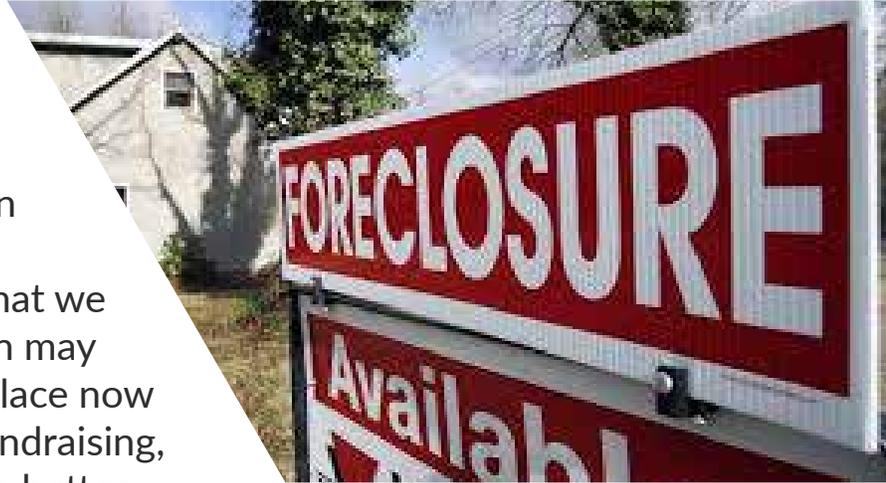
ENGAGING WITH YOUR SUPPORTERS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

7 THINGS YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN START DOING TODAY

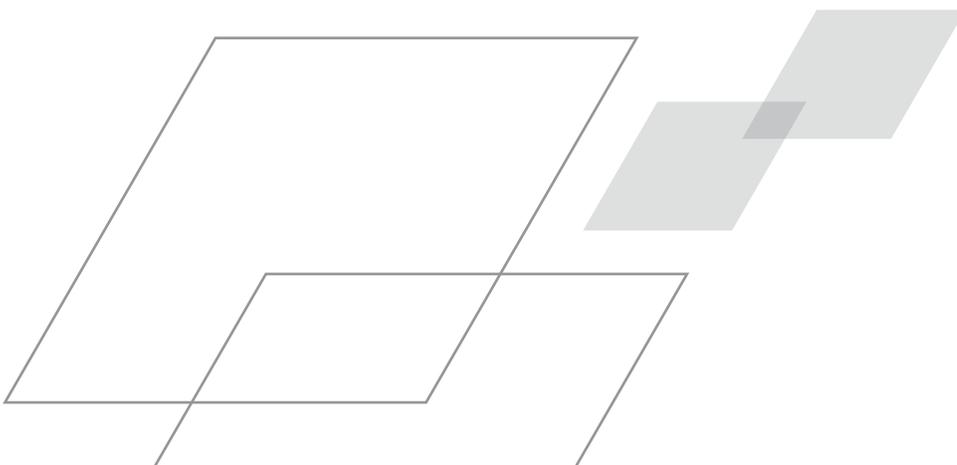
STRATEGIC PLANNING DURING CHAOTIC TIMES

Most of us in the nonprofit space have faced crises in the past and weathered the storm – think Hurricane Katrina or the Great Recession. The new coronavirus disease COVID-19 is unique because it is impacting everyone both here in the United States and around the globe. And all of us are collectively pausing to think through the best way to respond.

Most nonprofit organizations have already had to postpone or cancel events in an effort to ensure the health and safety of their supporters, volunteers and staff. But what about in the weeks and months to come? The coronavirus is uncharted territory in that we just don't know how long this situation may last. Organizations that put a plan in place now – for engaging with supporters, for fundraising, for communication strategies – will be better positioned to face the challenges to come.



Charity Dynamics has outlined seven action items your organization can start doing today to help readjust your fundraising and engagement to the new normal for the foreseeable future.



1. PROVIDE FREQUENT COMMUNICATION AND WAYS TO CONNECT.

Keep communicating with your supporters. Honestly, you can't over-communicate right now. With many people now at home and adjusting to a new normal (including increased anxiety levels), they are craving information and updates. They are looking for ways to connect. They want to help.

So don't pull back on communications for fear of not knowing what to say. Offer honest communication about how your organization is responding, how your organization is impacted and ways that donors can help. Now is the time to build relationships. Even if your cause doesn't have a direct connection to responding to this crisis, you know at a minimum that all of your donor's lives are impacted, so reach out.

Social Media Is Key

Keep the lines of communication open with your donors via your social media channels, email and website.

FACEBOOK FUNDRAISERS



If you haven't leveraged Facebook Fundraiser, now's the time.

With so many people connecting on social, we need to meet people where they are – and they are on Facebook. To learn more about Facebook Fundraiser, download our recent guide.

GET THE GUIDE



Social media is especially important right now. Even if your audience isn't typically on social, they may very well be during this time as they look for information and want to connect with people to avoid feeling so isolated.

To this end, think about ways you can encourage your supporters to connect:

- Is a Facebook Group appropriate for your audience?
- Can you call on your Social Ambassadors to share your message and fundraise?
- Or can you ask others to join your Social Ambassadors group to help get your message out as a way to lend a hand?

2. TAKE THE OFFLINE... ONLINE

During this time, using digital tools and resources is vital and can help to reshape your fundraising and engagement with your supporters. We are all social distancing and we will all have to adjust. Here are two key questions you need to think about:

- How will your organization be most affected in the coming months?
- How can you adjust your operations to continue to allow people to support your mission?

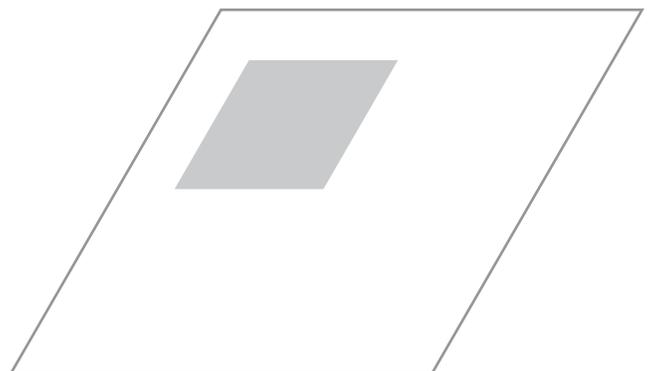
People will want to help but they will need to be provided with ways to still do so.

Hold Virtual Events

Although your organization will likely need to cancel or postpone many in-person events in the weeks or months ahead, think about ways to transition those events into virtual ones.



Food banks will become an even more critical resource as more and more people face financial hardships from this crisis. So turn an in-person food drive into a virtual food drive, as food donations will continue to be needed. (Tip: You can set up virtual food drives and other events on Facebook Fundraiser.)



2. TAKE THE OFFLINE... ONLINE (CONTINUED)

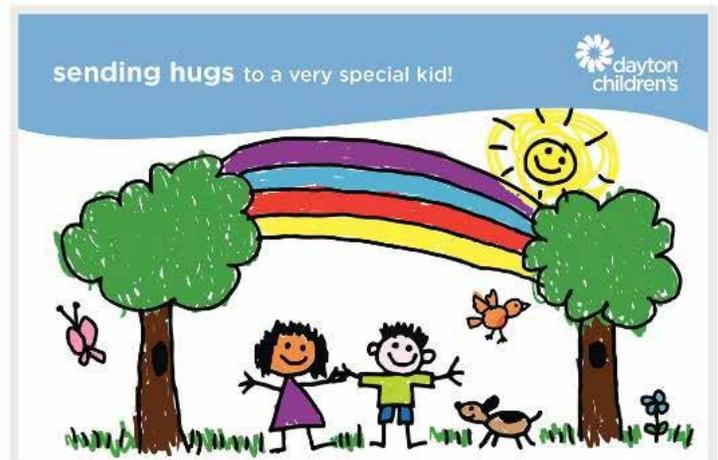
Build Your Community Online

With physical volunteer opportunities being limited right now, consider asking your volunteer base to become Social Ambassadors and help to get the word out about ways people can help:

- Sharing lists of available resources, such as virtual libraries and videos
- Organizing or participating in a virtual event
- Lending assistance to community members
- Sending virtual care packages to friends, family, neighbors.

Send E-Cards or Virtual Care Packages

The day-to-day operations of some organizations are being interrupted due to the coronavirus crisis. For instance, most if not all hospitals are restricting or limiting visitors. Providing a way for supporters to send an e-card to a patient to brighten their day and provide that missing connection would be a welcome option. Or virtual care packages for seniors or immunocompromised people who absolutely cannot go out right now.



3. BRING CERTAINTY DURING AN UNCERTAIN TIME

During times of great uncertainty like with the coronavirus pandemic, people at every level may very well be inclined to give less. The stock market is fluctuating, and many people are facing job losses or greatly reduced income. They may be thinking, what if I need the money if I get sick? How will I pay my bills or buy food? And these are all logical thoughts for people to have. But yet, to do the good work that is still important takes donor support.

Make a Direct Connection to How a Donation Can Help (More Important than Ever!)

Be sure to paint that picture clearly in a donor's mind. Their donation having a positive and specific impact is something they can be sure of during an uncertain time.

Where you can, connect the dots to how your cause is helping people during this crisis or how your cause is being impacted. For some organizations, the connection is straightforward and your daily work is filling a necessary gap or providing an essential resource. For others, the connection will need to be explained or adjusted. For example, can you raise funds to help families you serve or employees who may be facing financial hardship?

It can feel helpless to watch the news and not know what will happen next. But if your supporters can clearly understand how their donation can make a difference, it will help fight that feeling of helplessness.



4. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOUR CAUSE IS STILL IMPORTANT.

For many organizations, connecting the dots to the current crisis is difficult. All attention is on dealing with the coronavirus situation, and it should be. But at the same time, people are still dealing with existing illnesses or other issues and they still require support.

The point is your cause is still important, and funds are still needed. As the dust settles and we to adjust to a “new normal,” it is absolutely appropriate to remind your supporters of that point and let them know how to support your mission during this time. Communicate with empathy and make sure that your messages are relevant during these trying times.

Remember: Honest, authentic communication will always resonate.

After Hurricane Harvey, people wondered when it was okay to fundraise for a cause not directly related to relief efforts, given the fact that so many had suffered.

“One thing that stuck with me from that experience is the message that during and after Harvey, people who were dealing with cancer still had cancer and those who were dealing with heart disease still had heart disease, and so on. We can't stop our fundraising for causes that are still important to the lives of so many people.”



— Tara Mermis,
Principal
Consultant,
Charity Dynamics



5. LEAD WITH YOUR RESPONSE, FOLLOW WITH AN ASK

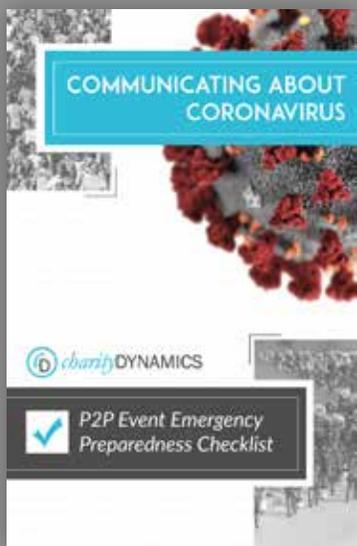
It's important to remember that every single person is being affected by the coronavirus and everyone's situation is different. How a person is impacted (medically, financially, etc.) won't necessarily align with your typical constituent segments. You need to be sensitive to that fact, while reminding people that your organization is still doing important work.

If your organization is responding to the crisis and needs support or is doing great work that is helping in some way, make sure to lead with that first and then follow with an ask for support. People want to help, but you need to frame it correctly.

This is not the time for an overly produced campaign, and you need to be sure your communications don't feel like that for the moment. Instead, focus on providing facts, updates, how you are responding, then follow with an ask for support.

If you have a campaign scheduled, take a look at the messaging. Can you reframe it? A direct ask may still be appropriate. But perhaps a large campaign turns into a monthly ask to support response efforts over the coming months. Or you could send a message to donors with a donor-advised fund to consider making a grant recommendation during this time.

WONDERING HOW BEST TO
COMMUNICATE RIGHT NOW?



GET THE CHECKLIST



6. REVIEW YOUR COMMUNICATIONS CALENDAR

Following off the previous point, the coronavirus situation is changing by the day and none of us have the answer to the burning question of when we'll get back to "normal."

Take a look at your communications calendar over the next 6 to 12 months and begin to plan out a few different scenarios:

- How will your campaigns and events be shifted if social distancing continues for longer than expected?
- What is that impact on your fundraising and your staff?
- What changes can you make (e.g., bring the offline online or reshape the message or ask)?

Having multiple contingency plans in place can go a long way to being prepared for whatever lies ahead.



7. CELEBRATE AND RECOGNIZE THE GOOD THINGS

During times of crisis, people rise up and help, so take the time to celebrate the wins! It's vital right now to bring joy and hope to people and to celebrate and honor generosity. **People will want to see good news!**



Look for user-generated content from your supporters and highlight it. People who are doing their part to help and finding ways to bring hope during this time.

You should also pause to thank your donors and volunteers. Remember, connection is important, so here are some easy steps you can take:

- Thank all of your Facebook donors.
- Highlight any corporations that help.
- Share updates on giving and what you are able to do with donor and volunteer support.
- Thank existing donors for their ongoing support.
- When we get on the other side of the coronavirus crisis, share the overall donor impact and how the steps you took together made a difference.

Remember: Frequent communication is a good thing right now, and these ideas give you plenty of really good reasons to reach out to your donor base.

CONCLUSION

As the impact of the coronavirus continues to grow, the work of nonprofit organizations will be more essential than ever to assist those in need in the weeks and months to come. Thus, it's vital to keep fundraising efforts going. We hope this action plan provides a framework that you can use to do just that by effectively tackling the challenges inherent in communicating about the coronavirus and creating opportunities for meaningful engagement with your supporters.

And send us your good news stories! Let us know how you're responding to the coronavirus and what strategies you are implementing to engage with and help your constituents.



4031 Guadalupe St.
Austin, TX 78751
info@charitydynamics.com

