

The National Funding Scheme Key Insights Report: Month 1 - April 2013

Introduction

Welcome to the first in a series of monthly *Key Insights* reports from the National Funding Scheme (DONATE) that we will be providing to our Pathfinder partners and funders.

Whilst it is still very early days for the scheme (which launched on 27 March and has yet to go live in some of our Pathfinder organisations), useful learnings are already emerging. Some of these consolidate existing fundraising practice and knowledge, whilst others point to broader challenges and opportunities.

As our data grows richer and we bring more partners on board, we expect these insights will provide increasingly valuable quantitative and qualitative insights as well as influence the way DONATE is adopted, adapted and communicated. Over the next few months we will also be publishing individual case studies on our Pathfinder partners.

Key findings

The cause

- The more specific the cause for which you're fundraising, the better
- Communicating a financial target to potential donors is important but the DONATE cause needs to be realistic and attainable through every day, casual donations. We recommend between £5k and £10k
- If you are fundraising for a much bigger cause, try to break that large cause down into smaller, bite-sized 'asks'.
- Where possible, make the cause you're fundraising for tangible. For example, if you are a museum, allow the visitor to see the object you wish to conserve, acquire, support etc. If it is intangible, try to make it tangible (e.g. 'Help us deliver 500 free tours this year' or 'Help us reach 1,000 young people with our Education Programme').
- DONATE benefits from being integrated into your fundraising effort and not as a stand-alone channel

The communication

a) Signage

- Place signage in close proximity to the cause or, where not possible, in high-trafficked areas of greatest visibility
- Signage where people naturally congregate and look around is more effective than signage in walk-through corridors leading to more visually enticing areas

- Signage can have more of a 'destination' feel, with an accompanying donation box and leaflet stand.
- Have multiple signage points and mechanisms (table tops, posters, programmes etc.)
- Consider non-traditional areas (such as cafés, toilets, bars and table tops) as additional opportunities to make the ask
- If the cause is a particularly large or interesting object, mention its interesting features and/or size
- Involve curatorial staff as well as communications and fundraising teams when devising your signage: curators have interpretative expertise and a fascinating insight into objects' stories that can excite and emotionally engage potential donors.
- Place a cash collection box near the DONATE sign(s) and vice versa to create a fundraising installation. DONATE is about raising overall funding so if we can help bring about an uplift in physical donations too, that's great

b) Internal messaging

- Embed DONATE within and across your organisation. Explain to colleagues across departments (development, IT, marketing/comms, visitor services, curatorial) how it is being used to support your fundraising mix
- Train staff/volunteers about DONATE so that they are knowledgeable about the scheme and can help visitors with the donation process
- As above, involve curatorial staff as well as communications and fundraising teams when devising your signage: their knowledge can unlock an object's story to excite and emotionally engage donors

c) External messaging

- Encourage tours and advisory staff to recommend DONATE as a way of supporting your venue and its work
- Launch your cause with an event and actively ask for donations
- State an amount you wish to raise at any such event (making donation levels visible)
- Use PR to explain and promote the cause
- Find a funder that will match each pound raised (perhaps a local digital entrepreneur)
- Consider digital pay-offs, for example: project a thank-you message onto a wall; send a ringtone/image to the mobile phone/email address

d) Digital promotion

- Support the cause with digital promotion, using social media to acknowledge and identify amounts raised
- Link to DONATE via your website if you don't have an existing online donation mechanism - and if you do
- Cross-promoting fundraising from your homepage via a direct link to the DONATE site leads to more data being available on donors and donor behaviour