

A Quick 6 for a Slow Economy: Uncommonly Creative Ways to Grow.

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IF YOU'RE like most organizations, the past few years are taking a toll on your membership and development programs. Maybe you've been able to squeak out the revenue but file size and average gifts have taken a hit, or maybe it's your bottom line that has bottomed out.

Either way, business as usual is not going to cut it in 2011.

The following are six uncommonly creative ways to help your direct response fundraising program rebound in the face of a slow economy and grow.

1. Fight for your budget.

Cutting expenses may have been necessary during the recession, but now you need to increase the investment in your fundraising programs. The best time to do that is during the annual budget planning for your organization. Do your homework so you can make the case and show the payoff.

- Analyze your results over multiple years.
- Be able to show the trends, and highlight the pockets of opportunity.
- Calculate your ROI (return on investment) and show your bosses when the payoff will occur.

Whether it is higher volume in acquisition, new package testing, expanding lapsed reactivation, or doubling your online and social media efforts, you'll want to show how you plan to bring back the donors that fell off the file. Remember, the donors you gain this year will be the revenue you'll count on next year and beyond.

2. Integrate your fundraising, and then integrate it more. Donors expect to have the same experience whether in the mail or online.

- Make sure every mail and phone campaign has an online counterpart or landing page.

• Test messaging online and then use it in your mail and phone campaigns, and vice versa.

- Offer donors ways to do more than just click the donate button or write a check, including surveys,, voting, petition signing, or anything that allows them to show you their passion and interest.

3. Ruthlessly analyze results.

Metrics are down and files are shrinking, but don't just accept the recession as the excuse. Take this opportunity to dig deeper into your file and look for behavior trends among donor segments.

- Identify the messages or package elements that worked, and didn't work.

• Pay special attention to the pockets of donors that responded and figure out what else they have in common

- Use behavioral analysis, demographic overlays, and appends to better inform your targeting.

The information you learn can have an immediate impact on future results through more predictive targeting and more profitable campaigns.

4. Test! What are you waiting for?

It's time to reenergize your program by testing breakthrough creative and out-of-the-box offers. The best way to ignite these ideas is to invest in a creative audit.

- Look outside your current creative team for a fresh perspective.
- Develop a testing plan.
- Think BIG. (A breakthrough won't happen testing the color of the BRE.)

• Be open to uncommonly creative ideas.

For the price of a creative audit, you'll uncover a list of ideas and

improvements that will often more than pay for the audit in a just few months.

5. Create "Ambassadors." Statistics show that the number one influencer of purchases are recommendations from family and friends, whether online or in person. So make sure your donor's experience with your organization is comment-worthy. Develop your own "Ambassadors"—people who will tell their friends, neighbors, and anyone else they are "linked" to about your organization. Go beyond the expected and see what happens.

6. Don't go it alone. The best ideas and brilliant breakthroughs are almost always the result of collaboration. Find the right agency partner who will work with you to develop the strategy, creative, and results you need right now. Get started on a better fundraising program today.



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