Digital Fundraising is Now

How can your charity be a part of it?
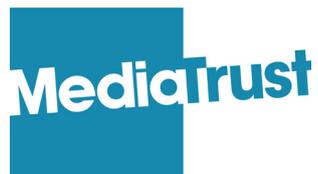
MediaTrust Reason Digital JOHN LYON'S CHARITY

The basics:

Definition of digital fundraising:

Digital fundraising is any kind of fundraising activity where you are collecting money digitally, or someone is collecting money digitally on your behalf. That is to say through a computer, laptop, tablet, mobile phone, smart speaker, and, soon, maybe even a smartwatch or smart TV.

It's particularly important now given that mass gatherings can't happen and won't be able to for a while. What all these things have in common is that they are ways of people donating without leaving their homes.

How can you fundraise digitally?

Digital fundraising isn't just about clicking a donate button on your website. There are a variety of different ways to collect - and frame - donations to your charity. Choosing the right mix of these will depend on your audience, and how much time and money you have to invest.

Let's take a look at the most common ways...

Types of digital fundraising

1. **Grassroots fundraising phenomena:** First, a note on viral, global and grassroots social media phenomena that drive digital donations such as the 'ice bucket challenge' and Captain Tom Moore's walk for the NHS. These are difficult to engineer and usually come from a spontaneous impulse from a supporter that catches viral attention online. This makes them almost impossible to replicate so we recommend you don't try to engineer one of these.

2. **Single donations:**
   A one-off donation on your website or a donation page on another website

3. **Regular donations:**
   A regular donation via a debit card or credit card repeat charge or a bank account direct debit.

4. **Text donation:**
   By texting a code to a short, simple phone number which allows them to give a set amount, up to £30. Recommend using this to capture the details of the donor to ask for support in the future. Success rates are 5-25% for charities doing this.

5. **Matched giving:**
   Working with a corporate partner that's willing to match donations during this exceptional time. This is a very popular way of boosting income from donation appeals.

6. **Crowdfunding**:
   Can be used when you're trying to achieve a defined fundraising goal. It's recommended that you share what tangible event will happen as a result of this goal being reached, e.g. You can buy a van to deliver food to those in need.

7. **Competitions and lotteries**:
   These can encourage people who wouldn't ordinarily give to you to get involved and donate. Or, they could encourage people who are already donating to you, to give that little bit extra in exchange for being entered into a draw or a competition.

8. **E-commerce and auctions:**
   Selling new or used goods, or event tickets, online. Please note: Any incentive that you give in return for a donation means that you cannot claim gift aid.

9. **Traditional sponsorship**
   Individuals raising funds digitally via sponsorship platforms, which pay directly to your charity, often whilst they take part in a challenge event like a marathon or mountain climb.

10. **Novel sponsorship methods**
    New ways of empowering individuals to go out and fundraise digitally on your behalf. This could be a challenge they could complete from home, like a game playing marathon or hosting an online quiz.

11. **Social media giving:**
    On-site/in-app donation features built into social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, can be used for one-off donations or by supporters to collect sponsorship.

The 3 levers

There are many ways to give, but no matter which way people are giving there are three factors that control the outcome. They are the number of people who see the opportunity to give, the percentage of them that decide to give, and the amount (on average) they decide to give. These are multiplied together to give you a prediction of how many people will give to a campaign…

People   x   Decisions   x   Amount

This can also be written in digital jargon like this...

Unique visits x **Conversion Rate** x **Average Gift** = Income

To see how this works here's a quick example with some typical numbers...

UNIQUE VISITS x CONVERSION RATE x AVERAGE GIFT ► INCOME

10,000 VISITS x 1 % CONVERSION RATE x £20 AVERAGE GIFT ► £2,000 IN DONATIONS
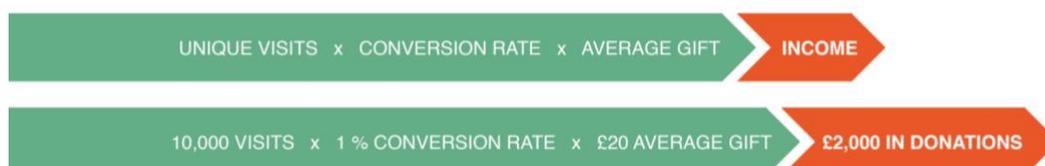
Each number multiplies the one after, this means that if any of the numbers are 0 then the outcome is £0, no matter how well you're doing in other areas. The most persuasive campaign page in the world will still get no donations if hardly anyone is looking at it. On the flip side, increasing each number a bit will have an outsized impact, because those increases will multiply together. Have a think: where might you be not doing as well as you could? Can people give online easily (convert), are there enough people finding your website or campaign (visits/impressions), is what's on the campaign encouraging them to give a significant sized donation (average gift).

From the donor's perspective, they don't see any of this. What they see is a journey. Let's think about it from that angle too. First: someone has to find your campaign, then be convinced to support it with the words/images/videos that is there, and then they have to actually go through and make the online payment successfully. We have to attract them, convince them, and convert them...

That means to get those results, we need to get to the convert step at the end. The technical term for places where this happens in the potential donor's journey is "the conversion point", let's look at how we can make sure that happens...

Conversion points

There is two types of conversion points:

Onsite (on your website): Your donation form, event sign up forms, newsletter subscription form, etc.

Offsite (using other channels): Facebook fundraising tool, sponsorship platforms, ticket tools, etc.

Your website

Your website is a key conversion point. People who care about you and your cause will be visiting your website, so it is essential that you have a donation point located on your website.

Recommendation: go on your website and follow all the steps to make a donation (including, making a donation). This will help you understand:

- Does the process work, was the payment taken?
- Are your messages and thank you emails up to date?
- Was it easy to understand and reassuring, did you hit any barriers?

How to improve your website donation conversions:

- Have an easy to find 'Donate' button in your website header so it shows up on all pages
- Allow people to donate on the website directly by entering their card details into a form (without PDFs, posting a cheque, sending an email or making a phone call)
- Make sure this works well not just on desktop computers and laptops, but on mobiles, too
- Provide the donor with confirmation of donation receipt and a 'thank you'
- Pave the way to the donation by publishing interesting content around your cause on your website with a clear call to action (link) to the donation form, inspiring people to donate
- Suggest donation amounts (e.g. £20, £40, £100) which are a little above average to encourage people to up what they give
- Provide a tangible idea of what donations could be used for at each suggested amount, using photos to bring this to life if you can
- Offer the opportunity to give a regular donation as well as a single donation, ideally via direct debit from their bank account rather than a recurring card payment
- Enable on your website the option for donors to use previously saved credit card details in their web browser/phone, making the process faster and easier
- Support mobile payments such as Apple Pay and Google Pay avoiding the need for a card at all, people can use these to pay and give details by scanning their fingerprint or face
- Once someone has donated, and they've seen a 'Thank you' page, encourage them to take another action such as sharing that they donated on social media
- Send a follow-up email, showing what your charity has done with their donations (generally) as this will help increase the chance the donor will give again

Offsite conversion points

There are places donors can give that aren't on your website. You have much less control over how these look and work, so it's about picking ones that work well and that fit with your audience...

Facebook fundraising

Facebook is one of the most important offsite fundraising sites because so many people use Facebook on a regular basis, and it has a good overlap with the demographic that gives the most to charity. You can use it in two ways...

1. Your charity can post a fundraiser for itself on your Facebook feed.

   - You do not need to include a totaliser/target on there, but it helps if you do!
   - Choose an engaging image to go with your fundraiser
   - Tee people up to give as soon as it goes live so that the progress bar doesn't look empty, this will make it less likely people will give. Momentum helps.

2. Encourage your supporters to fundraise for you using the Facebook fundraising tool.

   - Update your page on Facebook so it's easy to find, make sure your name is set to what people will search for and your page is marked as a charitable organisation
   - Add your logo so that when people search, they can recognise your charity instantly

- [Register for Facebook fundraising](#) to be able to collect donations (see link for instructions)
- Facebook prompts people to set up a fundraiser for their birthday so you may start seeing spontaneous Fundraising campaigns from your supporters, staff and volunteers as a result of this if you're registered correctly

Sponsorship platforms

There are specific sites that support people to set up a fundraising page. These include sites such as JustGiving and Virgin Money Giving. You should register with these sites because:

1. JustGiving automatically creates a donation page, which if you don't have one on your own website, you can link out to this page.
2. It allows people to find you to raise funds on your behalf if they have you in mind. Or if someone doesn't have your charity in mind, JustGiving prompts you to search for a charity to raise funds for and you have to be registered to be in with a chance of appearing in a search.
3. It is a good idea to have a campaign or page name that gives a little insight to the user about what your charity does. E.g. *Emma's charity: Supporting children's mental health*

To register for these sites, just go to their website ([JustGiving](#), [Virgin Money Giving](#) etc.) and follow the step by step process which is slightly different for each.

Text giving code

Whilst all good offsite conversion points work well on mobile you can also collect donations on mobile via SMS. To do this you need to register for a text giving code. These are very useful if you're promoting a live event or content as people might find it easier to text a code whilst watching than type a web address in. There are various providers for this, [Donr](#) is one of them.

Boosting conversions

Now you've got a conversion point or three set up, here's how you can drive more results from it...

Getting your 'call to action' and message right

- Tell people about it, but don't just ask all the time.
- Use language that means something to the donor, not just to your charity's team. For example, you might care if the message came from your CEO, but does the donor?
- Link your ask to what the donor wants, help them understand how supporting you benefits them - be it with good feelings, or in some other way.
- Use a button to highlight the call to action and make it more prominent
- Give a sense of urgency in your call to action, otherwise people might put off taking the action to a future time and just forget to do it.
- Link your call to action to Covid if appropriate as this is what people care about right now
- Tell human stories around your call to action, using photos and videos to bring your cause to life, don't just talk about the numbers or the raw facts.
- Talk about your past successes to show what impact you have when supported
- Positive social proof makes people more likely to do something. If nobody else has supported you it can feel like something unusual or abnormal. Make it seem like lots of people are giving to you, even if this feels counter intuitive to demonstrating need.

Measure success

Every cause and audience is different. The sure-fire way to keep improving your conversion rate is to measure it, make tweaks, and see what the difference in results is.

To do this you can monitor the amount of money you're collecting and tools like JustGiving allow you to set different pages/campaigns so this can be tracked.

You can also see what drives interests and clicks using the Insights or Analytics features on social platforms like Facebook, and on your website using Google Analytics. All these are free, you might just need the help of a techie volunteer to set them up.

Digital fundraising strategy

Four strategic areas you can boost funds in:

	Ongoing	Campaign
Donations	Boost passive donations direct to you	Driving donations through a campaign
Sponsorship	Get more people choosing to sponsor you for their own activity	Driving sign ups to a sponsorship activity, online or offline

Not all of these strategies are applicable to all charities but consider which area you're not maximising as much as you could be. If you're struggling to know where to start, we would recommend **driving sign-ups to a sponsorship activity online**. For most organisations this delivers the best ROI as it involves inspiring people to go out and fundraise for you to a new audience (their friends and family).

## Reach out to an audience

There are three key, core ways to reach out to an audience online, to promote your fundraising campaign/cause directly they are...

1. **Your website and blog** - publishing content on this that attracts clicks from existing visitors and search engine traffic from people searching for relevant topics.
2. **Social media** - reaching your social media audience who are already warm to you.
3. **Email** - often overlooked, but gives good results compared to other channels if used well.

Capturing an audience

If you don't have a big audience to send your campaign to - whether that's by email or on your website, or if you only have a humble following on social media - one thing that you might want to think about is how to capture new people. Capturing means not just asking for their money but asking for their contact details, to help grow your audience and keep exposing them to messages which will (hopefully) gradually encourage them to donate over time.
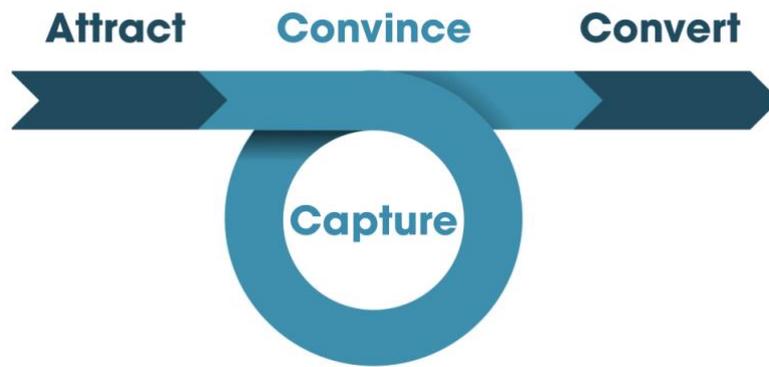
A newsletter sign up form on your website can help you capture email addresses of those who are happy for you to contact them about campaigns, events, and your impact. Mailchimp is a free (up to 2,500 contacts) tool that can support your charity with this.

Remember: Sometimes you need to **audience-raise**, or **relationship-raise** before you can **fundraise**. You may even need to **content-raise** to help you do that.

Don't be one-dimensional

Repeatedly asking your audience for money and nothing else, can be frustrating and uninteresting for people who follow your organisation and is not a successful digital fundraising strategy. It can cause you to lose an audience rather than grow one.

We recommend you post interesting, emotive, engaging content in order to ensure your posts are reaching more people, mixing this between asks for money. Ideally there should be 4 interest or useful posts about your audiences' interests/needs - which could be your own content or others - to every 1 post asking for money or promoting a campaign.

Digital outreach

If you are struggling to build an audience and your messages are getting lost, reach out to people or organisations online (e.g. on social media) who have spent time (and money) on building up a loyal audience. Ask smaller scale social media influencers to share your content on your behalf. This can build not only reach but reputation and trust. Some of them might have high traffic websites too (such as a local newspaper).

Social media is a good place to find these. Think beyond just obvious celebrities:

- **Local organisations** (cricket clubs, pubs, etc.) or groups relevant to your audience
- **Individuals** Beyond just celebrities, your charity could reach out to individuals who have a following in a specific area or in a specific topic relevant to your cause.

If these people and organisations promote your campaign it'll seem more credible as it's not just you asking for money for your own organisation, too.

Covid campaign

To boost results from the "campaign" strategic focus area we recommend setting up a COVID-19 related campaign on your website if it is relevant to your organisation. Some tips for this type of campaign are below:

- Be open, honest and vulnerable about the challenges you're facing
- Set up your campaign and a conversion point (donation page)
- Share your campaign across social media accounts, tailoring a message to the specific platform. Ensure you change the messages slightly each time to avoid repetition.
- Create different types of media - simple, videos that demand attention
- Use paid social media to reach more people (remember to start with a small budget and tweak to check you're getting a return on your investment).
- Share your campaign via your email newsletter - these can even be written as plain text to make them seem more stark and urgent.

Content is key

Campaigns need content to keep them alive, websites need content to attract traffic. If you're running a campaign, make sure you...

- Create a content calendar to keep track and plan your posts
- Between campaigns, post regular content to keep your audience growing and warm for the next campaign.

Sponsorship

Another way to deal with a limited audience size is to stop thinking just about using and growing your own audience and to inspire others to go to their own audiences to raise money on your behalf. Often these will be people who have donated or volunteered for you in the past.
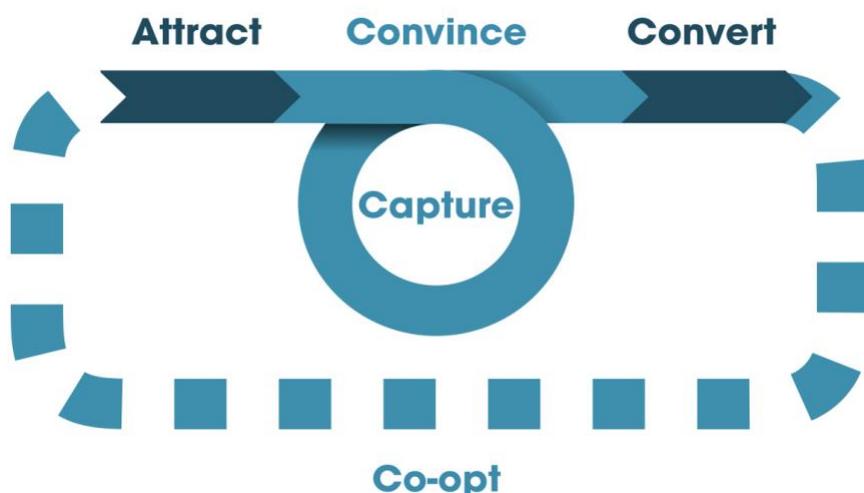
This is common in offline fundraising with things like marathons and triathlons and is often facilitated by digital fundraising platforms like JustGiving. It's less common in purely digital, or none in-person/mass event ways, but creativity here will really help meet the challenge of the Covid lockdown. How could people be inspired to do something to raise funds for you, with the restrictions that are in place at the time?

Virtual events

One way to encourage people to give to you is to set up a virtual event or inspire supporters to set up their own virtual events in aid of your charity - collecting sponsorship online whilst they do.

There are many platforms online that allow for live video streams which are good for hosting virtual events. We would recommend using Facebook Live or YouTube Live as these have mass appeal and are easy to use.

Twitch, Instagram and TikTok are the platforms we would recommend you explore if you are trying to reach a younger audience.

Some tips for virtual events:

-   You can record the live events to upload afterward as engaging content.
-   Facebook live is powerful because it has the Facebook fundraising tool, allowing individuals to fundraise for you with a donate button visible over the video feed at all times.
-   Think about if you should stream on your own page or channel or use an influencer instead to reach a different and/or wider audience.
-   Ask people to host virtual events for you, such as quizzes, competitions or challenges, and they can use the 'Donate' button on their livestream to raise money for your charity.

Recap: takeaway actions

As a recap on some of the digital fundraising actions that your charity can take now, we've pulled together this handy tick list for you:

- ❏ Set up a way for people to give, on-site or off

- ❏ Ensure people can give instantly online with their card

- ❏ Create clear calls to action throughout your content, and make them inspirational to the user, not just all about you

- ❏ Create urgency so people take the action now and don't put it off

- ❏ Bring your work to life with emotive stories, photos and video

- ❏ Get set up on a sponsorship giving platform like JustGiving

- ❏ Get registered for Facebook Fundraising so you can add donate buttons to posts and your supporters can set up fundraising events for you

- ❏ Get supporters fundraising for you on Facebook by inspiring them with suggested challenges or event ideas.

- ❏ Make sure you have access to your results and analytics data

- ❏ Set up a Covid campaign page on your website

- ❏ Be vulnerable, honest and open about coronavirus's impact on you

- ❏ Create content (text, images, and video) to share the message on e-mail and social media

- ❏ Explore local groups, orgs and communities to find people that might want to give or places you can promote your campaigns

- ❏ Leverage influencer relationships across social media, both organisations and individuals.

- ❏ Move your events online using live streaming