



5 Digital Strategies to Drive Holiday Donations

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THE **RUNDOWN**

The holiday season is a mission-critical period for non-profit organizations to reach new supporters and drive donations. The decision to make a charitable donation requires careful consideration, and donors are increasingly turning to digital. In a recent study, we explored when and how people use the web to make these important decisions, and how non-profits can influence their path to donation.

It makes sense that the holidays and charitable donations go hand in hand—'tis the season for giving. Indeed, roughly a third of all annual donations are made in December.¹

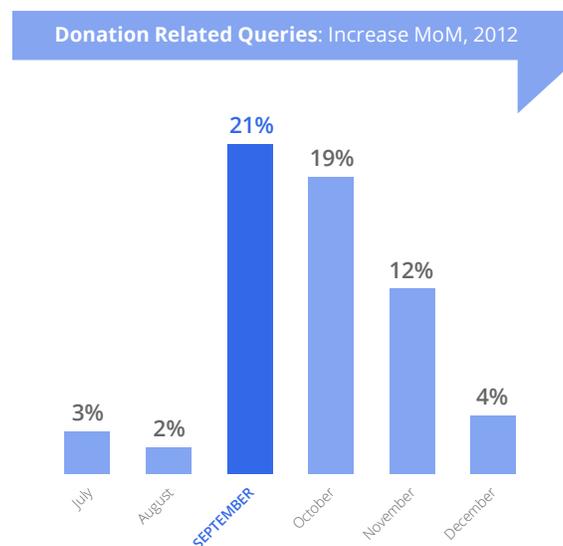
As with shopping for gifts or planning holiday travel, the web plays an integral role in the research and decision processes for prospective donors. In fact, in December 2012, online giving had grown 11.8% year-over-year, while overall giving grew only 3.8%.² The shift towards digital philanthropy is apparent in the rise of crowdsourcing fundraiser platforms, social media advocacy and mobile-giving applications, making online engagement a critical tool for organizations looking to reach new supporters.

In order to better understand the digital path to donation, we partnered with Millward Brown Digital to survey roughly 1,000 donors and analyze their online behavior from October 2012 through March 2013. We also analyzed Google query data to uncover major trends in donor behavior online.

Our research surfaced five actions non-profits can take to grow their donor pools and maximize their exposures during the holiday season.

1. Get an early start

According to Google query data, people begin thinking about potential donations well in advance of the holiday season. In 2012, we saw over a 20% uptick in general donation-related queries in September compared with August³—with much smaller month-over-month increases in the months that follow. Organizations that wait until November and December to tell their story and build awareness are missing a big opportunity to influence potential donors when they first start their consideration process.



2. Use digital to drive discovery

Our survey showed that 75% of donors use online resources to look for information about non-profit organizations.⁴ While the process typically begins with search, a variety of online platforms are used throughout the decision-making journey, including video sharing websites, social media and third-party reviews. Online resources in aggregate were found to be 20% more impactful than direct mail on the decision to donate. Through the survey, we found that digital advertising drives action, with 76% of donors saying that they go online to research a non-profit organization after recalling seeing an online ad (vs. 58% for direct mail). The more research donors do online, the more opportunities there are to connect with them, so use the diverse digital tools at your disposal.

3. Video turns viewers into donors

Online video tops the charts as the most influential online advertisement in driving a donation defined by surveyed donors, and YouTube is the most popular platform. Over three-quarters⁵ of donors agree that online video ads are the most useful online/offline advertisements when deciding whether to donate, and more than half of people who watch an online video make a donation afterwards.⁶ What's more, they take action quickly, as 39% of donors reported that they look up an organization within 24 hours of seeing a video ad. (That level of engagement is just shy of email ads, which donors reported as clocking in at 40%).⁷ Non-profit organizations have some of the most compelling stories to tell. Using the power of sight, sound and motion can help bring those stories to life.



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4. Mobile is a must

Consumers are constantly connected, and mobile devices have become a key part of the giving process. Four out of 10 donors used mobile to learn more about a certain charity⁸, and one in four discovered one they weren't previously aware of.⁹ While on mobile, most find search to be the most useful source (87%), with a non-profit's website coming in

second at 75%.¹⁰ Many are actually giving money with their device—25% in fact reported that they donated on a mobile device¹¹, with almost half doing so through a mobile browser.¹² So not only is it important to create a great mobile site experience for users, but it's also vital to make sure there's an easy mobile payment method as well.

5. Build your brand around your mission

Donors are comparison shoppers. When deciding where to give, they explore their options and consider multiple organizations. Nearly half of people in our study visited multiple non-profit websites prior to donating, and of those, half visit six sites or more.¹³ So how do donors make up their minds? The top reason for donors' choices is their belief in an organization's mission and impact—the core components of its brand.¹⁴ And three of the top four sources used to understand an organization's impact are digital (online video, a non-profit's website, and search).¹⁵ This means that the best way to influence donor decision making is to build a strong brand online.

The bottom line: Your future benefactors are using the web to hunt for worthy causes and research charities and non-profits. Will they find you? Will they like what they see? Using the five tips above, lean into this holiday season as your best opportunity to reach new donors, solidify your relationships with existing supporters, and boost your annual donations.

Check out the [details of the study](#). [Create a customized infographic](#) based on the data.



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- 1 Network for Good, Chronicle of Philanthropy
 - 2 Blackbaud, Charitable Giving Report: How Non-profit Fundraising Performed in 2012, February 2013
 - 3 Google Internal Search Data
 - 4 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, RT 1: Which of the following sources, if any, did you use to look for information on non-profit/charitable organizations?
 - 5 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, MI2: How useful were each of the following types of nonprofit/charitable organization advertisements in helping you decide whether to donate to a non-profit/charitable organization?
 - 6 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, V17. As a result of watching videos about non-profit/charitable organizations online, which of the following actions, if any, did you perform?
 - 7 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, MI5. How soon after the last time you saw or heard each of the following types of non-profit/charitable organizations ads did you look up the advertisers online to get more information?
 - 8 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, M5. Which of the following, if any, did you do on your mobile device while interacting with non-profit/charitable organizations? N=214
 - 9 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, M4. How did each of the following sources help you while you interacted with non-profit/charitable organizations on your mobile device?
 - 10 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, M2A. Please indicate how useful each of the following sources were while you interacted with non-profit/charitable organizations on your mobile phone.
 - 11 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, M5. Which of the following, if any, did you do on your mobile device while interacting with nonprofit/charitable organizations? N=214
 - 12 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, C1: How did you make a donation on your mobile device? N=36
 - 13 Compete / Millward Brown Clickstream Analysis, July 2013, BF02
 - 14 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, O2. Why did you donate to this non-profit/charitable organization? Please select all that apply. N = 827
 - 15 Compete/Google Non-profits Study, July 2013, RT9. How did each of the following sources help you while you interacted with non-profit/charitable organizations?
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