Internet fundraising learning points

Lokabandhu, November 2008
Made after a day's training at DSC in London.

Special features of the internet as a medium.
Challenges and opportunities.
Some people love it, some don't go near it – huge diversity across the population …
➢ People easily distracted
➢ Short attention spans - people don't read, they skim
➢ Social networking opens up new ways of institutions and consumers interacting – potentially very powerful but the institution has to give up some control.
➢ Push and Pull both possible (pull – people seek out and 'pull down' your info (eg web pages, blogs); push – you actively send it to them (eg SMS, email)

General principles
➢ See internet fundraising as a path of deepening interest/engagement – a courtship.
        Generic path would be: contact> engagement> action (the ask) > become ambassador
➢ Your proposition must be simple – bold – clear – memorable – participatory – action-orientated
➢ Weave together on-line and off-line messages – be consistent
➢ Make sure you look ok across all your media (eg have logos that look ok when v small)
➢ Be timely – relevant - personal (but get it right – no 'Dear Mr [blank]'s!)

Components to internet fundraising
will mostly happen together bit-by-bit, rather than in a neat order
➢ Construct and communicate message (in various media)
➢ Become visible (have clear response mechanisms)
➢ Build database (harvest email addresses, mobile nos etc) But – observe Data Protection laws
➢ Follow up

Useful model for attracting/retaining/regaining/developing donors (not just on internet):
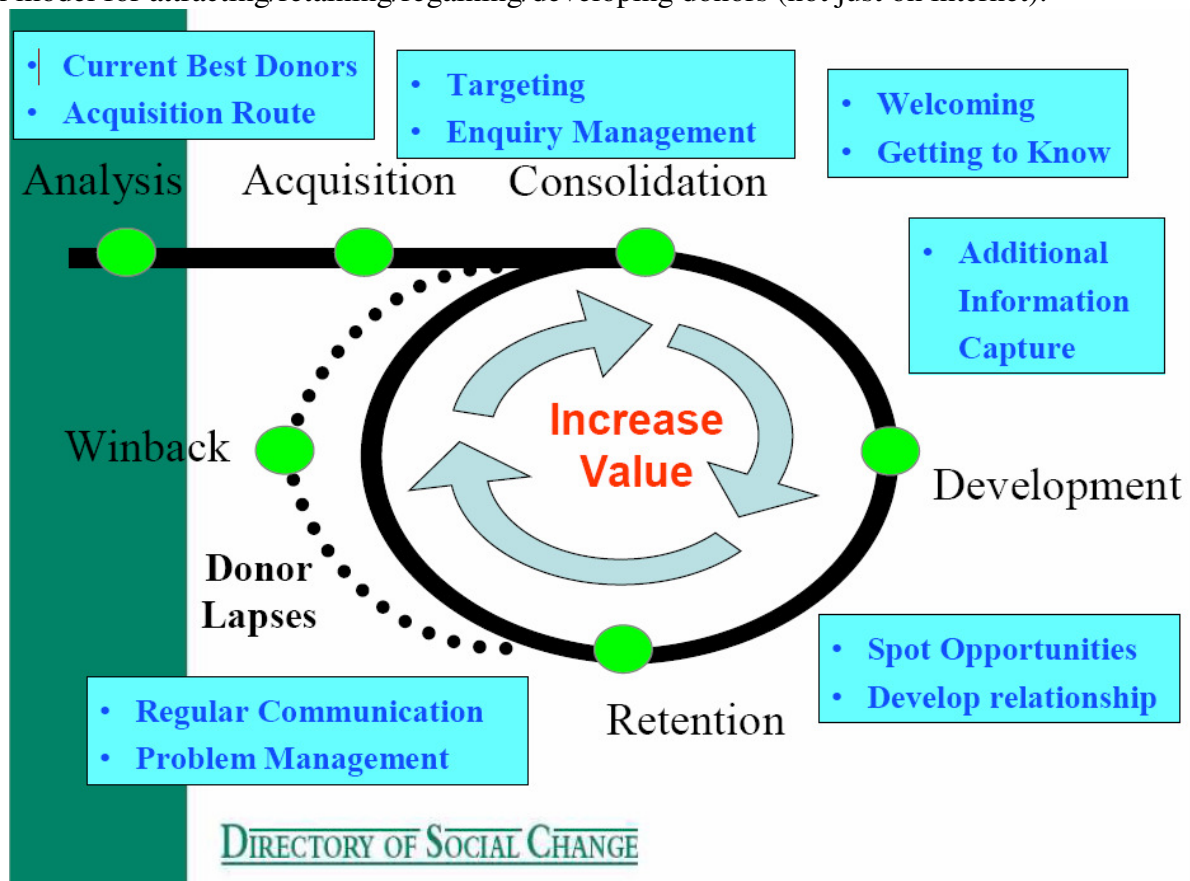
Web page design

People don't read text! They skim… So use lots of headings, sub-headings, captions, good logos.

- ➢ Every web page must tell its own story
- ➢ Every web page must have a call to action
- ➢ People read in an 'F' pattern – across, next line, left-hand column. Position logos and text accordingly – logo in top left.
- ➢ Home page is a series of little adverts for the rest of the site
- ➢ Try not avoid reasons for people leaving your site – eg embed video rather than link to it.
- ➢ Address how to appear both local (== relevant) and global

Other stuff mostly old hat to us eg search engine optimisation.

Web advertising – probably not v relevant to us. A whole science… Google AdWords, etc. LB has notes if needed. NB - Google is charity-friendly – but not religious charities! See, eg www.google.co.uk/grants

Good example: www.bhf.org.uk

Email design

Basic aim is to get people to 'click-through' to your web page.

- ➢ Make sure you specify the exact right 'landing page' and that it has a similar appearance/message/request to the email.
- ➢ Remember people don't read – so jazz it up! BUT – test it in different programs.

A prerequisite is of course that they open your message!

- ➢ Personalise – but get the salutation right, also tweak your text towards your various donor 'categories' (major donors/regular donors /occasional donors /lapsed/enquirers/cold calling etc)
- ➢ Avoid your message being classed as spam – avoid words like 'Adult', 'Free'…
- ➢ Make sure the 'from' field is friendly and meaningful
- ➢ Subject line must grab attention; the proposition/ask must be in first three sentences.
- ➢ Make unsubscription easy – or you risk building up bad feelings
- ➢ Deliver on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.
- ➢ Don't use attachments
- ➢ Other advice is similar to general copy-writing: list benefits; make proposition…

Finally, build in mechanisms to measure response (open rate, click-through, bounces, etc)

Useful for teasers, 'ps's, warm-ups, thanks, donor care, news flashes, special events...

Works well in conjunction with direct mail. Hard to stand out due to volume of emails people get.

Social networking

Lots to choose from.

Good Facebook examples – NSPCC, Obama

Good YouTube example - Oxfam

Choice of Group (emphasising shared interest, collaboration) or Page (like mini website)

Basic message = New Media, Old rules!