



JVA CONSULTING, LLC
partners in community and social change

Three Fundraising Strategies

All fundraising can be boiled down to three basic strategies. If your organization deliberately considers and practices these three strategies in all of its fundraising endeavors, it will be successful.

1. Acquisition

Acquisition strategies are focused on securing new donors to an organization. This could be anything from acquiring a direct mail list to attendees at an event to someone you meet at a cocktail party. Acquisition is the most expensive of the three strategies: It is far easier and more cost-effective for an organization to keep its existing donors than to find new ones.

2. Retention

Retention strategies are focused on keeping current donors to an organization. This is arguably the most important of the three strategies. Keeping your donors happy means that you know who they are and why they give. It also means that they feel appreciated and invested in your organization—and that their money makes a difference. Retention correlates strongly with an organization's ability to acknowledge, recognize and steward its donors.

3. Upgrade

Upgrade strategies are focused on renewing current donors at a higher level of giving. This is the finesse of fundraising: knowing your donors well enough and building strong enough relationships that they not only want to continue to give, they want to give more. Upgrading a donor requires that an organization enhance the donor's sense of engagement and investment in the organization, achieved most effectively via strong acknowledgment, recognition and stewardship programs. Upgrading also requires that you ask for more. No ask, no upgrade.

How Well Are You Doing?

The average nonprofit organization loses 20 to 30 percent of its donors each year. What is your organization's retention rate? How many donors do you need to replace each year and at what levels? The more you understand who you are losing, at what levels and why, the better you will be able to focus your retention efforts.

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