



Nonprofit Technology News

Written by Evan Hackel



Are You Doing All You Can to Engage Your Donors and Volunteers?

RECOMMENDED CONTENT

Every single one of your donors and volunteers is literally one in a million. They could be supporting tens of thousands of other organizations out there, but they chose you. They donate their time to support your day-to-day operations, fundraisers, special events and more. They talk about you to their families and friends. They provide financial support.

And after doing all those things, what do they want? They only want to work more, donate more, and do even more for you. As I said, they are one in a million - the lifeblood of your organization.

A Sobering Thought

Are you meeting them halfway? I understand that you're doing a lot. You're inviting them to previews and special events, giving them free admission to your premises and sending them umbrellas and tote bags. But are you repaying them with anything that's even half as valuable as what they are giving to you?

I know that you are trying. But let me ask a sobering question . . .

Do you know what your donors and volunteers want?

As I stated above, I believe that they really want to do even more for your organization than they are already doing. They want opportunities to become even more engaged.

How can you accomplish that? Here are some suggestions.

Let them Shape your Mission and Vision

I could encourage you to invite them to regular forums where they address "big picture" questions like, "Who are we?" and, "What should we be?" and, "What makes us different?"

Treat those meetings like business brainstorming sessions by setting up easels and capturing ideas on big pads. Then discuss those ideas and create task forces to explore them or put them into action. And in all cases, follow up and thank everyone who made a suggestion, even if you were unable to put it into action.

Have Your Leaders Meet Individually with Donors and Volunteers

Few activities build volunteers' engagement more deeply than an invitation to sit down with one of your organization's executives – either over lunch or in an office setting. At those meetings, be sure to ask more "big" questions about who you are and what you should become.

At those meetings, do even more than taking notes or listening actively. I recommend adopting a new way of listening in which you actively listen for "golden nuggets" in what the other person is saying – ideas that are sound, actionable, valuable and maybe even profound. When you hear those nuggets, explore them more and take steps to develop them.

Another suggestion? Don't ask for money during these sessions. Doing so can weaken the message that you genuinely want to engage in a meaningful dialogue.

Review Your Way of Communicating with Donors and Volunteers

A strong "customer service" orientation can go a long way to make your supporters feel valued. For example, you can provide a dedicated phone line they can use to call your offices. If a member of your staff does not answer it and the caller leaves a message, set up systems to assure that the call will be returned within an hour.

But I also know that there are other ways to use communications to let your supported know that they are part of your family and not just "callers."

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One way is to create a special group for members only on a social media site like Facebook or LinkedIn.

Another option? Experiment with [GiveGab.com](#), a new option for volunteer communications that offers an app that your supporters can use to stay informed and communicate with you.

Finally, Follow Up and Keep Improving

Using email surveys and other tools, ask donors and volunteers how connected they feel to your organization, what they gained from your most recent event, whether they have suggestions to make your next one even better, and more.

The more genuine, thoughtful and welcoming your communications are, the closer you come to meeting your supporters halfway. Or perhaps you can do much, much better than that.

Evan Hackel, creator of the concept of Ingaging Leadership and author of [Ingaging Leadership](#), is a successful businessman who has started more than 10 companies. During his tenure at CCA Global Partners, he ran a \$5 billion division. One of his signature achievements was turning around a bankrupt business in four years, more than doubling system-wide sales to exceed \$2 billion. As CEO of [Tortal Training](#), a Charlotte North Carolina- based firm that specializes in developing and implementing interactive training solutions for companies in all sectors, Evan is a leader in the training field. He is also Founder and Principal of [Ingage Consulting](#), a consulting firm headquartered in Woburn, Massachusetts. He is recognized as a thought leader, speaker and author on leadership. Follow at [@ehackel](#).

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