

# W5

**Wednesday**

**Morning**

**Fax**

*from*

**The**

**Castle**

**Press**

## **4** tips on retaining donors

Donors you have acquired — usually, expensively — sooner or later quit responding to your appeals, writes fundraising expert Alan Sharpe. Sometimes, you can't do anything to stanch the bleeding. Often, if you are alert enough, you can. Try one of more of these four pointers on keeping contributors active:

### ■ **Help them remember you**

Your contributors, like you, lead lives filled with distractions. Over time, many of them just forget about you.

A periodic newsletter or other message from you — filled with engaging accounts of your organization's activities, problems, and achievements — is an effective, economical way to keep donor interest hot.

By all means, avoid ego tips in your communiqués. (Only you and your board will be interested in your new office building, or in bloviating speeches by your top dogs.)

Some of the most effective of such reminders never ask for a dime in contributions.

### ■ **Go back to the well often enough — but not too often**

Some nonprofits shoot themselves in the foot by mailing fundraising appeals so frequently that they turn off their contributors. Others — shrinking violets — sabotage themselves by mailing too seldom. Either way, they say bye-bye to contributors.

*America's 1.4 million nonprofit organizations account for 5.2% of total U.S. economic output.*

— MSNBC

They lose immediate income ... waste the good will of proven cause-sympathetic donors ... and need to invest heavily to find new contributors to make up for those they have let go.

One answer: take new creative departures. (A bored donor is a dud donor.)

### ■ **Use variable printing**

A fundraising mailing should be as close as possible to a love letter.

Do not gush — people who protest too much, as William Shakespeare noted, lose believability. But address your recipients by name and cite their particular contributions and interests. Lovers who address their loved ones as "Dear Friend" rarely score.

In test after test, personalized printing has shown that it pays for itself, many times over.

### ■ **Listen**

Never take a donor for granted. If a contributor expresses a gripe, take action and report back to him pronto. Mail thank-you notes within 24 hours or fewer of receiving a contribution. And follow them up with another note, explaining the difference their generosity has made.

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