

1. Make every interaction count – Your gift processors are so very important. So are the people who take your inbound phone calls. Treat these folks well! Authentic Donor Relationships start from day one. Understand and focus on a long-term relationship with the donor by providing excellent customer service. EVERYONE IS A FUNDRAISER.

2. My most important piece of advice – Test and Assess. 10-15% of your acquisition costs should go toward testing. You can, and should, test everything. Then use the knowledge you learn in future appeals.

- Test your list - Create robust data segmentation – get to the right audience...use the date of their last gift, gift designation, how often they've given, amount of last gift, age, time on file, gender, income level, major/college of graduation, acquisition channel (mail, phone, crowdfunding, email, etc.).
- Test your creative – Apply versioning depending on who you're talking to...not a “one size fits all” approach. This applies across all marketing channels. Test images and verbiage in mailing envelopes, email subject lines, phone scripts, etc.
- Test your offer – Vary what you are asking the donors to do or the amount to give.

3. Use the phone – Consider having your student leaders make the calls.

- Say thank you to specific segments of donors such as first-time donors, major gift donors, monthly donors, and consecutive year donors. Look at your data and figure out when people are falling off the file and create a special touchpoint before you lose them. Don't ask for a donation, just say thanks. Leave thank you voicemail messages if you can't speak in person.
- Make the best use of your calls by segmenting warm prospects for acquisition (for example, social media followers and engagers, people who used matching gifts, survey responders, petition signers, email clickers, people who update their information through online forms, and event attendees). Look at your rate of return not just in the short term but over a couple years.

4. Create interactive content and don't forget to engage with your responders! Respond to their tweets, Facebook messages, and Instagram comments. Invite them to participate with your organization in ways that aren't always about money (for example, ask them to be social ambassadors to share content or request their feedback).

5. It's about them, not us. Don't tell how great your organization is, but how great the donors are and how we can advance the mission together because of their gifts. Clearly let the donor know how the organization is uniquely helping the population they care about. Tell the donor why s/he is critically important to the mission.

6. I cannot stress enough the importance of regularly maintaining your database. This is critical.

*Alissa Campbell Shaw
Director, Annual Giving
acshaw1@Memphis.edu*