



Museum Results

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

Your Monthly Resource for Philanthropic News
from Alexander Haas

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from the desk of
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Stewardship Matters

One of the things I have enjoyed most during my 35-plus years as a fundraiser is donor stewardship. Not only is thanking donors one of the most important things we do, but it is also a wonderful opportunity to showcase your organization's mission and the people you serve. It should be performed with sincerity and authenticity and, as much as possible, be personalized to resonate with your donor's particular interests.

Thus, I had great trepidation as I read *The Chronicle of Philanthropy's* recent article [How Some Fundraisers Are Using ChatGPT Technology to Do Their Jobs Better](#) (may require subscription). Call me old-fashioned, but the thought of using ChatGPT to write thank you letters (or even grants) made me shake my head, wondering where the value and respect for the donor relationship had gone.

In fairness, I understand the point the author makes about ChatGPT being helpful to fundraisers who struggle with writing to get a first draft to then edit. I agree with the article's assertion that fundraisers are overloaded, and though ChatGPT may help them save some time, I am still not sold.

A week or so after the article appeared, I was pleased to read Lauren Brownstein's letter to the editor entitled [Thanking Donors Is Not Drudgery](#) (may require subscription). I couldn't agree more with her statement, "Have we really reached the point in the fundraising profession in which writing a thank you note to a donor is (as the ChatGPT article stated) 'time-sucking' and 'mundane'?"

Effective stewardship is one of the strongest drivers of renewed and increased support. Having spent most of my career as a frontline fundraiser, I prioritized employing creative, personalized, and organization-centered stewardship strategies, and I have seen the return on that investment time and again.

At The Carter Center, where I worked many years ago, President Carter called every donor who made an annual gift of \$2,000 or more to join our Ambassador's Circle. In the history of fundraising, there may have been no more greatly appreciated act of stewardship than that. Though he was the

busiest employee at The Carter Center and traveled to hundreds of countries each year, President Carter made time for stewardship because he understood its importance and truly enjoyed interacting with donors.

I realize most organizations don't have a former President of the United States representing them. Still, I have found that simple, yet personal acts of stewardship also resonate powerfully with donors.

While leading Development for an agency serving children who are blind, visually impaired, or multi-disabled, I created note cards with photos of our children in our special education school or trying new adventures at our camp each summer. My team and I used these photo cards to send handwritten thank-you notes to donors each week.

After one of our recurring donors, giving \$50 per month, received one of these photo cards, he called to say how much it meant to him and added that he wanted to increase his monthly gift amount from \$50 to \$500. Several years later, while visiting him at his home, I noticed that he had framed that photo card and had it in his living room. He said he looked at the photo each day, and it reminded him of the importance of caring for others. During that visit, he told me he wanted to make a gift in memory of his parents and his brother, and he committed \$250,000.

I sent a similar handwritten thank-you notecard to a donor who had made her first gift of \$150 via an acquisition mailing. She called to tell me how much she enjoyed the photo and asked if I could mail her more information about our students and programs. Within six months, her attorney notified me that she had passed away and left the organization a gift in her will of \$750,000.

As one of my early mentors was fond of saying, "Your next donor is your last donor." I would revise that to say, "Your next donor is your last donor, assuming you have stewarded them thoughtfully."

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Giving USA 2023

Results of Giving in 2022

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Stay tuned!

Best Practices for Online Fundraising

A new report found that GoFundMe campaigns shared more than six times in the first few days are three times as likely to raise more donations than those shared less often. Traditional nonprofit fundraisers should apply this information when crafting their own online campaigns, says Michelle Boggs, executive nonprofit industry adviser for Classy. GoFundMe bought the Classy fundraising platform last year. “The State of Modern Philanthropy 2023,” a new report written by Classy, pulls data from the 34 million donors that use both platforms.

Classy is still integrating data from GoFundMe into its ecosystem, but initial indications show donors who give to GoFundMe campaigns are similar to those who support traditional charities.

Report Highlights

Social Media

Facebook was the most popular site for charitable campaigns, with 84% of all campaign traffic. But Facebook didn't have the highest conversion rate – just 13.4% of people who clicked through to the drive completed a donation. For the second year in a row, LinkedIn had the highest conversion rate at 33%. But only 1% of campaign social-media traffic goes through the site. The study notes LinkedIn donors may have both higher intent and higher net worth.

Events

Creating a positive experience at your events – whether they are virtual or in person – is essential. The report found 91% of attendees who had a positive event experience took further action with the nonprofit, 51% attended another fundraising event, and 44% sought more ways to support the nonprofit after the event.

Make It Easy to Pay

The report notes that embedded forms – often pop-ups that require minimal giving information – have higher success rates. A key factor is having easy-pay options. If people don't have a credit card handy when they click through to the donation form, they often stop, thinking they'll come back later – but then forget. So having that easy-pay option is crucial.

Recurring Givers

The report says, “Recurring donors are 9 times more valuable than one-time donors.” The report finds that 29% of first-time donors who are approached within 90 days of their gift sign up for monthly giving. *COP, 5-16*

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Generational Wealth Transfer Reinforces Inequality

Through 2045, an estimated \$84 trillion will be passed down from the baby boom generation to their millennial and Gen X heirs, with the wealthiest 10% of households expected to give and receive the majority of the wealth.

According to The New York Times:

- In 1989, total family wealth in the US was about \$38 trillion, adjusted for inflation.
- By 2022, that wealth had more than tripled, reaching \$140 trillion, with boomers largely benefiting from price growth in the financial and housing markets.
- Since 1983, the average price of a house in the U.S. has risen about 500%, and the stock

market, as measured by the benchmark S&P 500 index, is up by more than 2,800%.

- Of the \$84 trillion projected to be passed down from older Americans to Gen X and younger heirs through 2045, \$16 trillion will be transferred within the next decade.

Amid what has been described as the greatest intergenerational wealth transfer in U.S. history, which is ongoing, the wealthiest 10% of households—including the predominantly white top 1%—will dictate the broadest share of the transfer, with the more diverse bottom 50% accounting for only 8%.

According to the financial research firm Cerulli Associates, high-net-worth and ultra-high-net-worth individuals—those with at least \$5 million and \$20 million in cash or easily cashable assets—make up only 1.5% of all households, and together, constitute 42% of the volume of expected transfers through 2045.

Conversely, according to the Realtime Inequality Tracker, in 2022, the bottom 50% of households had an average annual income of about \$28,000. In research conducted by a researcher at Vanguard, “all but the most wealthy” are on a trajectory to be financially unprepared to retire to some degree. *NYT*, 5-15

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Welcome Returning Client



We Know Museums

For more than 35 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with leading museums and cultural organizations across the country that help communities be a better place to live. Just ask our clients.

[Our Museum Clients](#)

Face It: Museums are Different

Our services aren't cookie cutter. We don't operate with a boilerplate, merely changing names and locations. We craft each and every service we provide to match your museum's unique needs, wants and abilities. We work hard and expect you to do the same. Together we can help you transform your museum, your fundraising, and the community you serve.

Whether your need is in Capital Campaign, Annual Fund Campaign, Major Gifts, Leadership Annual Giving, Planned Giving or all of the above, we take a fresh approach to nonprofit fundraising.



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