

## A Better Way

### How to build a brave new world of giving

By Sharon Danosky

For many years and in many presentations (including my own), fundraising experts have talked about the need to pivot to donor-centered fundraising. However, it wasn't until COVID-19 hit, and events were eliminated from our fundraising tactics, that nonprofits began to understand what that means.

It means making a real and honest connection with your donors.

The data has continuously shown us that donors want to engage. They want to know that their contributions are received and being put to good use. They want to know the difference they and you are making. Some want to be considered partners; others want to be thought of as long-distance relatives. None want to be ignored. That is why the connection that many nonprofits have been making with their donors during this time is resonating.

As nonprofits have successfully used this time to call and reach out to their donors – they have been met with pleasant surprises. Donors enjoy hearing how their nonprofit is doing. They appreciate going on a zoom call to learn more about how the organization is faring and innovating. They are grateful to learn how their money has been used.

So – what comes next?

We need to view this as a transition to a better, more donor-centered way of raising money. Not a one and done. Donors don't need an event to give to you. They don't need a virtual auction or virtual gala. They need meaningful conversations and discussions.

I believe the fundraising office of the future will and should be re-organized to meet this new fundraising paradigm. Instead of event planners, there should be “donor relationship managers,” responsible for stewarding a group of donors and developing meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships. Development offices will need someone to conduct research, to better understand major donors and potential emerging philanthropists, what they want, how they prefer to give and what their expectations are. The development office of the future will also need to employ people with the capability of harnessing digital philanthropy. Instead of traditional direct mail or e-appeals, it will need to embrace evolving technologies, including artificial intelligence, to manage and coordinate multiple digital platforms and target donors in a way that will increase philanthropic support.

With the pain, suffering, transitions and total upheaval caused by this pandemic – there is also a silver lining. Because there is a way to re-emerge stronger and better, with a focus on what is more relevant and meaningful. If we return to events and the fundraising tactics we have been used to – then we will



miss a tremendous opportunity to engage donors and provide them with the opportunity they want to make this a better world.