



A Nonprofit's Guide to Targeting the Right Donors

Introduction

How well do you know your donors?

Maybe you have a general idea of how old they are, why they care about your cause, and where they live. Many nonprofit organizations can usually identify one (or more) “typical” donor profile when thinking about who in their community is most likely to donate.

Have you ever considered how that knowledge can help you in your day-to-day marketing?

“**Donor personas**” can take your outreach strategy to the next level.

Personas have been a standby in marketing for a long time. It’s the notion of putting together an imaginary “ideal customer” to target with things like ads and personalized emails.

Many marketers believe that personas are the future of effective promotions. After all, it’s a more detailed approach than a one-size-fits-all strategy – and with so much advertising out there competing for attention, you need every advantage you can get.

There’s a lot to consider, so let’s get started!

1. The Brainstorming Process

The first step to creating a donor persona is free, and only requires one thing: the power of your brain (as well as your team’s!). Start writing down who you think your ideal donor is. You can begin with location, income level, age, education, and related interests. You might want to segment two separate lists: your most common donor demographics right now, and the demographic you want to target.

Once you have a rough outline of your donor persona, you can drill down deeper

to create a full picture of their digital activity, including what device they typically use, what days and times they're usually online, what content they prefer, and what social networks they're most active on.

You don't have to limit yourself to only one ideal donor persona! Try creating at least three, based on different factors. These three personas ought to cover a wide spread of potential donors, with different ages, income ranges, and motivations for giving. The options are endless, so don't be afraid to start small and then work your way up to branching out.



If possible, bring in different members of your nonprofit's team to help build out the personas. It's useful to have representatives from marketing, design, sales, and anyone else who can give a creative perspective!

2. Putting Personas into (Marketing) Action

When it comes to segmenting your target marketing, you'll find that donor personas work perfectly. Think of it this way: You wouldn't want to send boomers the same email you're sending to Generation Z. Instead, if you have a specific donor persona handy, you'll be able to test out messaging for that type of donor before you go forward with emails.

For example, if you're aiming towards your ideal Millennial donor, you're going to want to keep the message fun and competitive with an angle towards social and sharing. For a donor who's a managerial type or a CSR decision-maker, you'll want to focus on employee engagement and retention.

So when you're developing specific email marketing or mailers, be sure to have your separate donor personas nearby in order to help you craft the perfect message – everything from tone to language to motivations.



Make sure you have fundraising software that allows you to segment your former, current, and prospective donors across separate lists. You don't want to cross the streams (with the wrong outbound emails)!

3. Use Case: Event Personas

In Chapter 1, we mentioned how donor personas can be shaped for specific purposes, one of them being for events. Let's examine how this use case works, with the idea that your nonprofit has created three personas to target for a peer-to-peer event:



Team Captain

This individual is a born leader and loves to motivate their teammates. You can help out this eager participant by targeting your strongest communications towards them and leading them towards encouraging their team to collect donations.



The Social Butterfly

This participant is all about expanding their social media reach online. Appeal to their social side – not to mention their wide audience – by providing them with the proper event hashtags as well as plenty of photo ops.



The Business Exec

This persona is based around a company executive who might not necessarily be a participant, but will have eyes on your event as something for their employees to sign up for. Remember to angle your marketing towards companies that may be looking to incorporate CSR.

Think beyond your participants. Do you have a persona created for corporate sponsors or media you want to target to write about your event? What are their needs? How can you present your nonprofit in the best possible light?



4. Using Personas in Social Media

Donor personas don't have to be limited to things like marketing for peer-to-peer events – they're also super handy for marketing online, particularly through social media.

Think about Facebook: Its advertising system allows you to target users by keywords that appear in their profiles, pages they've Liked, and more. All you need to do is look at your donor personas, determine what keywords would appear in their profiles, and then line them up with targeted ads! (For example, if you're looking to find more registrants for your cycle-thon event, try searching for Facebook users who Liked cycling and aiming ads towards their newsfeeds).



Instagram is another social media platform where you can place targeted ads, so that's a good place where you could attract someone like a Millennial persona. Instagram allows you to pay for sponsored postings, which can then show up in the feeds of particular users.

Whether you're looking to bring in a new donor base or seeking more registration for an event, using your donor personas to segment your social media marketing could open up a whole new audience for your nonprofit.

Do some A/B testing with your sponsored posts or targeted ads. If you don't see any uptick in interest, change up the messaging and examine whether or not you're aiming for the right audience. You can also adjust various characteristics of your donor personas – remember, they're not set in stone!



5. Sample Emails, Persona-Fied

Now that you've got some donor personas in place and you know a few ways to use them, let's look at a few sample emails that you can send to three separate donor segments. Not only are you going to make sure the language and tone are slightly different, but you're going to change the call-to-action at the end to best reflect which persona's segment you're targeting.

Previous Fundraiser ↗ ✕

Hi [NAME]!

We're glad to have you back in the fold for our upcoming event! Now that we've been reunited, we've got a little challenge for you – ask three friends to donate to help bring you closer to your goal. We know you can do it!

Cheers,
[NAME]

New Fundraiser ↗ ✕

Hi [NAME]!

Welcome to **[NAME OF PEER-TO-PEER EVENT]**! We're so glad to have you joining us this year in raising money for **[CAUSE]**. Your first mission: find three friends to donate to help bring you closer to your goal. We believe in you!

Reach out to us anytime,
[NAME]

Team Captain ↗ ✕

Hi [NAME]!

As captain of the team, we know we can count on you to motivate your people. Be sure to reach out to them today and encourage them to get three friends to donate – it's time to work that network!

Thanks for all your efforts – we appreciate everything you do!
[NAME]

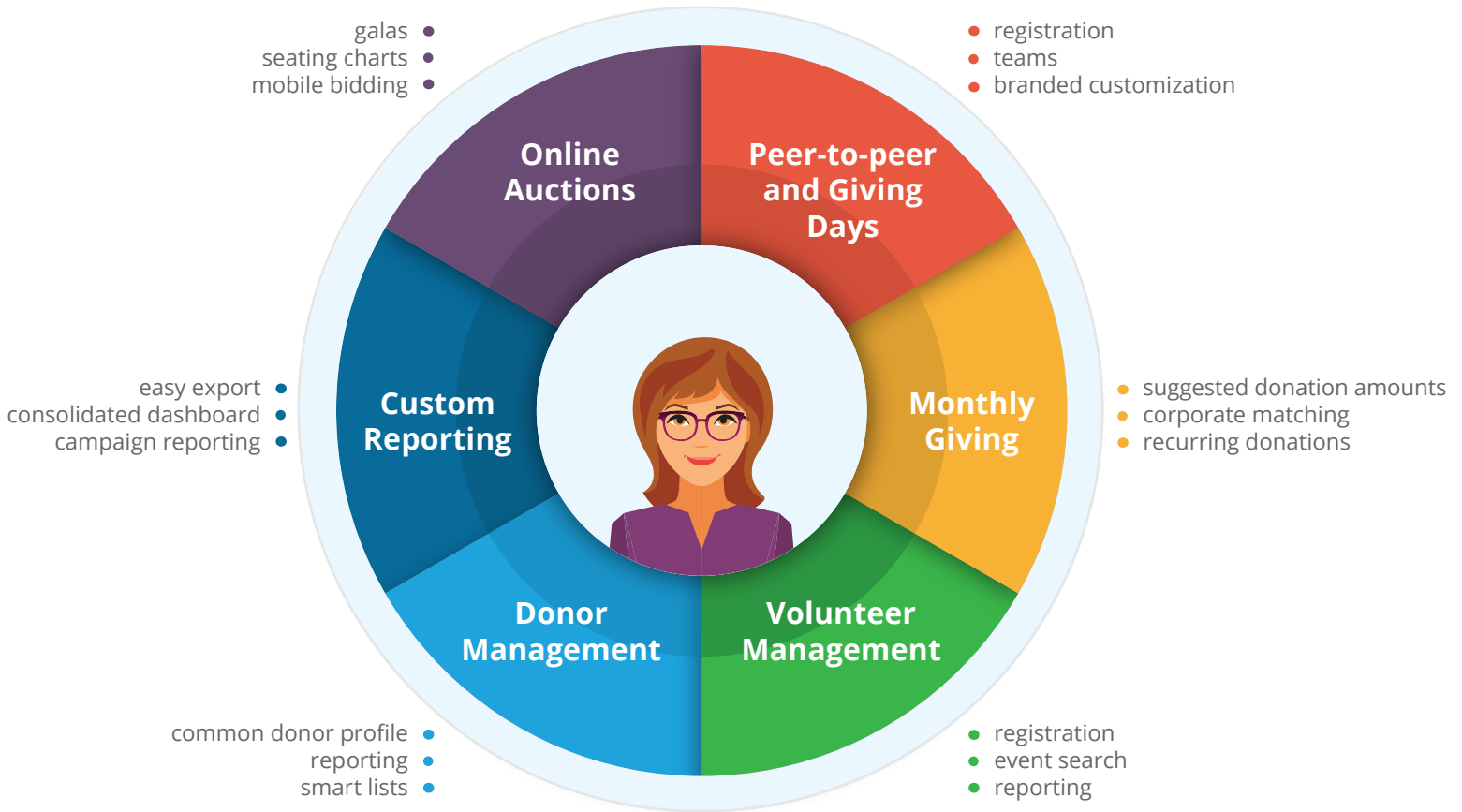
Have timed communications ready to go. Send out email drips to your different segmented lists every few days or weeks leading up to your event, and be sure to monitor your engagement!



Get Persona(b)!

Creating donor personas takes the mystery out of targeted messaging, and can help bring you closer to your prospective donor base. Whether you're struggling to reach new donors or just want a refreshed viewpoint, consider putting together a few personas and see where they take you! ■

Everything you need to run your fundraising in one platform.



What Panorama plan is right for you?

PRO	PREMIUM	ENTERPRISE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custom reporting dashboard • Peer-to-peer and project fundraising, giving days, and a donate button • Online auctions, event seating, mobile bidding, and ticketing 	<p>Everything in Pro plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor management and volunteer portal • 360 degree view of your giving activity • Unlimited records and emails 	<p>Everything in Pro and Premium plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully white labeled peer-to-peer campaign and event pages • Fully customized event registration, including multi-site events • Dedicated account manager

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