Peer–to–Peer Fundraising Success:
Paws With A Cause®

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Peer-to-peer fundraising through social media has gained popularity within the last few years. This case discusses the process one organization, PAWS With A Cause®, took to create and implement a highly successful online peer-to-peer fundraising campaign using the DonorDrive® software. The organization encountered many successes during the campaign due to strong social media planning and infrastructure, a long history of donor support, as well as momentum from constituents who truly cared about the organization. The organization also encountered challenges during a 10-day campaign of training donors who were not tech savvy how to use the DonorDrive® software, gaining staff buy in for social media, and distributing social media responsibilities across the organization. Ultimately, the campaign exceeded its goal and raised over $60,000.

INTRODUCTION

Nonprofits use a variety of methods to raise funds. One of these methods is peer-to-peer fundraising. Peer-to-peer fundraising began in the early 2000s as an option for in-person fundraising events. Supporters raise funds from their friends or family members while they run, walk, swim or golf for a specific cause or organization. For example, Palotta Teamworks' Avon 3-day cancer walk allowed donors to solicit money from their friends and family members for cancer research (Palotta, 2011). As the Internet gained popularity, nonprofits started using their social media networks to engage in peer-to-peer fundraising. Peer-to-peer fundraising through social media allows individuals to reach out to their friends and followers on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets and request donations for a specific cause.

Research shows that nonprofits using social media in their fundraising efforts reach more prospective donors than traditional fundraising efforts (Saxton & Wang, 2013) and peer-to-peer giving grew by 60% between 2012 and 2013 (Newmark, 2014). The 2013 Network for Good Digital Giving Index reported 18% of online giving came through peer-to-peer fundraising and the average gift was $66 (Network for Good, 2013).

Although large nonprofits have been successful in using online peer-to-peer fundraising techniques, many small to mid-sized nonprofits (under $5 million in annual revenues) face many obstacles and challenges to be successful in online peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns. One of these obstacles has to do with staffing. On average, nonprofits typically devote only 1/4 full time equivalent to social media management (Nonprofit Technology Network [NTEN], 2012).

This case study focuses on the process one nonprofit took to implement online peer-to-peer fundraising. The case addressed the following research questions:

- What technology infrastructure and staffing is needed to successfully launch a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign through social media?
- How can a nonprofit successfully pilot an online peer-to-peer fundraising campaign?
- What types of tracking are needed throughout the online peer-to-peer fundraising process?

To address these research questions, the chapter is structured in two parts. First, the theoretical framework and methodology are discussed, and then the organizational background, project and experience as well as challenges and opportunities are discussed.

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