DIGITAL DONOR ACQUISITION

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS, TIPS, AND RESOURCES THAT LEAD TO FUNDRAISING SUCCESS

Canada
Helps.org
giving made simple

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OVERVIEW

This is the era of digital donations. Over the past 15 years, fewer Canadians donate to charities, yet online giving has consistently grown each year. In 2017, online giving totalled nearly $145 million, a 17% increase from the year before, according to recent data from CanadaHelps. With this in mind, online donor acquisition is crucial for small and mid-sized charities.

If you want to acquire more donors online, we've summarized the latest digital-marketing trends, strategies, and tools below. These will drive awareness, engagement, and conversion of new donors – step by step, showing you how digital fundraising marketing tactics and a communications plan work in tandem with donation forms, ticketed events, peer-to-peer social fundraising, and other tools to acquire new donors and increase donations.

Understanding which channels are available and how to use them will help you see what makes sense for your charity and allows you to develop an integrated plan. Below are a few things that you should consider when building your digital donor acquisition plan We cover these in greater detail in the pages that follow.

Digital donor acquisition refers to strategies and tactics that attract new donors, mainly through prospecting, cultivating, and converting people who are interested in your organization's work.

1. A critical first step in improved donor acquisition involves planning and identifying the goals of a particular campaign, followed by developing a communications plan and determining the right channels for your campaign.

2. Good website design and search engine optimization, especially for mobile devices, are important. Mobile giving comprises 21% of online donations and is growing fast, according to data from CanadaHelps. Having website analytics in place helps to stay on top of your visitors and traffic, but more importantly, it helps you monitor your results, adjust marketing tactics, and increase donations over time.

3. Email marketing can engage potential supporters individually, build stronger relationships, and improve donor acquisition. The most popular email marketing tools are relatively inexpensive and make it easy for anyone to get started.

4. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and other social media channels allow you to engage both your current supporters and wider audiences and their sophisticated advertising tools allow you to target very broad or niche audiences.

5. Paid search ads offered by Google and Bing appear near the top of search engine results and can increase leads or donors, which you can track, measure, and optimize. Plus, Google Ad Grants, a great opportunity for charities, offers $10,000 in Google Adwords for registered charities who apply and qualify.

1.0 GOALS AND STRATEGIES FOR DIGITAL DONOR ACQUISITION

A *funnel* is one way to look at the process that introduces potential donors to your charity and eventually inspires them to donate:

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE DONOR FUNNEL

AWARENESS

CONSIDERATION

DONATIONS

REPEAT DONORS

1. Increase **awareness** by driving potential supporters to your homepage through social media, search engine optimization (SEO), and search engine marketing (SEM). Prospecting (the first phase of donor acquisition) is about increasing awareness of your charity among those who may not know who you are.

2. Deepen **consideration** with potential donors, primarily via your website, social media, and emails, all of which provide ongoing information as prospective donors research and evaluate your charity. Generate interest in your organization's work and address their questions along the way.

3. Obtaining **donations** requires a website and donation forms that are optimized to drive donations. In addition, using *Donate* buttons and a clear call to action across every digital channel is critical.

4. Creating **repeat donors** through carefully stewarding your donors means thanking donors and using social media, email, and other online channels to report back to them on the impact you're making.

This deepens relationships, fosters greater trust, and encourages loyal repeat donors.

1.2 A BIT OF PLANNING GOES A LONG WAY

Laying out a few basics for your online fundraising plan will help your charity immensely, especially if you include a feedback loop where you evaluate results and make adjustments as you go. Most plans include these nine steps:

Set goals for donor acquisition that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely), with a process that's iterative.

Define specific **audiences**, including key demographics, values, and motivations that your ideal donors may have in common, and identify the best places to find them online.

Assemble **resources** and assign responsibilities to a volunteer, staff member, or team. Be realistic and outsource if needed.

Craft **key messages** for each audience and create a simple call-to-action.

Identify your online communication **channels.** The major ones are listed in the sections that follow.

Nail down a **timeline** and **budget** for each fundraising campaign and communication channel.

Outline the **key activities and deliverables** from each resource for each campaign and channel.

Test key messages with specific audiences and launch the campaign, measure and evaluate the results, and decide how to improve future campaigns.

Evaluate and iterate. Evaluate your success against the goals you set, make improvements, and find ways to continuously improve upon them.

Once you have a basic plan in place, you're ready to start increasing awareness, deepening consideration with prospects, and acquiring new donors. This all starts with one of the most important tools at your disposal: your website.

2.0 WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION AND SEO FOR MOBILE DEVICES

Your website plays a key role in deepening awareness for prospective donors and driving them to make their first donation. It's a critical channel to engage supporters, collect leads, and solicit donations, but you have only a few seconds to engage a new visitor. How do you do that? The short answer: make sure there's an easy-to-read message, with no long paragraphs, and a compelling video or photo, with clear calls-to-action (*Donate, Get Involved* and/ or *Volunteer* buttons).

A WEBSITE WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN BANANAS

The **Orangutan Foundation International Canada** leverages its homepage to attract visitors with compelling visuals, a frequently updated blog, vital information about their mission, an option to sign up for their newsletter, and, most importantly, an easy-to-find *Donate Now* button. Best of all, the website is mobile optimized, so that visitors get a good experience regardless of how they access the website.
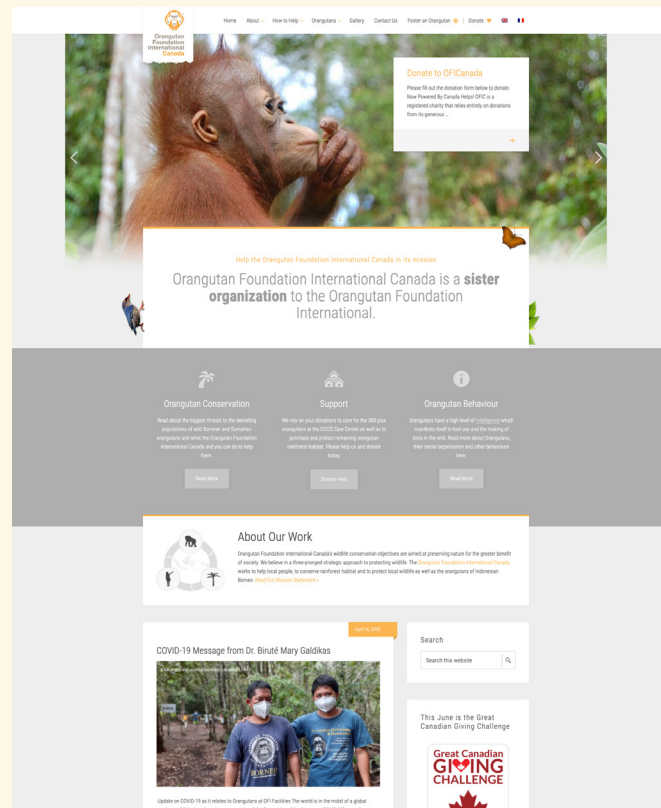
2.1 OPTIMIZING YOUR HOMEPAGE AND LANDING PAGES
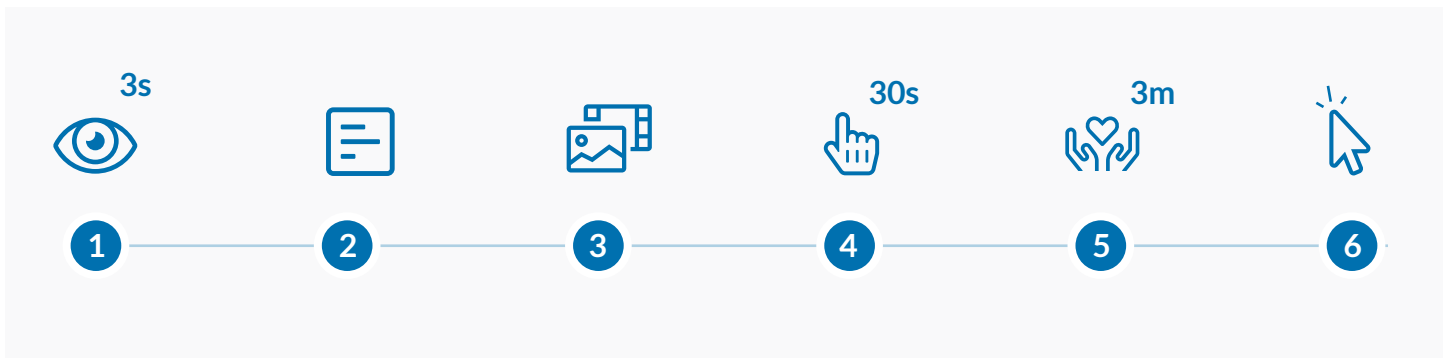
Here are some tips to consider when designing your homepage or a landing page:

1. You have three seconds to first engage someone who visits your site. They'll read a headline, subheading, look at an image, and decide whether they're in the right place.

2. Messaging: On your homepage, pitch 70% of your content for new supporters, 20% for existing supporters, and 10% to volunteers. Make sure it's easy for visitors to quickly scan with clear headlines and direct calls-to-action.

3. Visuals: Use a photo or video to tell your story or demonstrate your charity's impact and to deepen engagement.

4. You have 30 more seconds (past the three-second test) to encourage a visitor to click deeper into your site. Use bulleted lists, highlight important content, and include clear calls-to-action.

5. You have three minutes (past the 30-second test) to convince someone to become a donor. Establish the need your charity answers and prove the impact your charity makes. You can use videos, infographics, personal stories, and whatever communicates to your target audience why they should support you. Make sure your donation forms are easy to find and optimized to drive donations.

6. Calls-to-action should be direct, powerful and highly visible. The fewer steps there are, the easier it will be for visitors to donate, sign up for an e-newsletter, or get involved in other ways.

Effective website design is critical to digital donor acquisition. After you get the basics in place, you should look for ways to further optimize your visitor's experience, such as A/B testing critical elements on the page (e.g., buttons, calls-to-actions, and/or imagery selection) or through creating specific landing pages tailored to specific campaigns, audiences, or digital channels.

2.2 MOBILE OPTIMIZATION FOR DIGITAL DONOR ACQUISITION

Desktop computer users account for much of the online giving in Canada, but mobile giving is growing fast and makes up 21% of giving, according to data from CanadaHelps. That's $2 out of every $10 raised online! Overall, mobile donations grew 33% last year.

Your website needs to be optimized for mobile phones and tablets, and donors should have a smooth experience when visiting any page on your site on a mobile device, as easy as it is on a desktop. This means your content has to go beyond being simply legible; design should be responsive, which means it adapts and adjusts based on the device being used.

Here are key things to keep in mind:

- Make it easy for supporters to navigate and find what they're looking for. Consider a drop-down style of navigation (often called a hamburger-style menu), and ensure there's an ever-present, visible donation link.
- Make sure buttons and links are large enough so that those of us with big fingers can easily navigate your website.
- Ensure text is easy to read; text and images should resize automatically so they're legible on smaller devices.
- Make sure your donation form is also optimized for mobile devices, so supporters can easily tap through and donate directly from any device.

The more mobile friendly your site is, the better your search ranking will be, meaning your site will more likely to show up when someone searches for words related to your charity. To assess your site's mobile optimization, try Google's "Mobile-Friendly Test."

Traffic Distribution by Device Type, 2018 vs.
Traffic Distribution by Device Type, 2019

41%
59%

49% **8% INCREASE OVER 2018** 51%
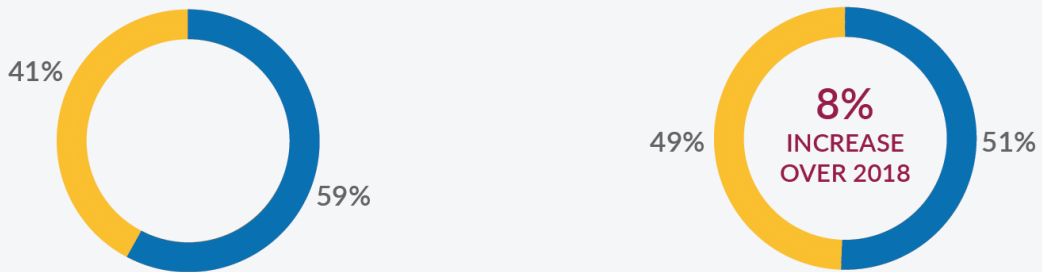
Donation Dollars Distribution, 2018 vs.
Donation Dollars Distribution, 2019

20%
80%

21% **1% INCREASE OVER 2018** 79%
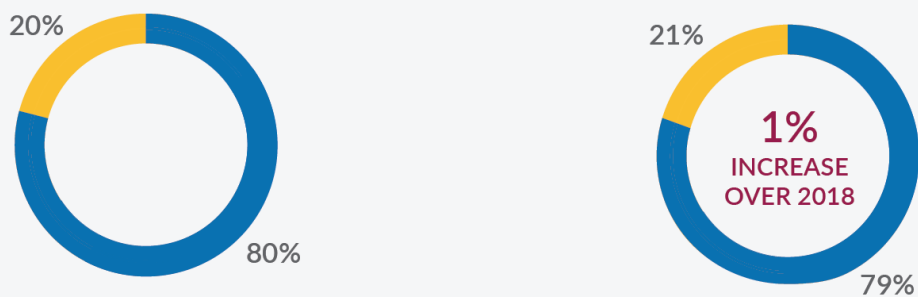
■ Desktop   ■ Mobile

2.3 SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

SEO ensures your website appears near the top of internet searches, and is one of the most cost effective ways to drive qualified prospects to your site and increase donor acquisition. For instance, if someone sees a news story about homelessness or about a hurricane, and they want to help, they might search "how to help the homeless" or "help with hurricane Dorian." If that's what your charity does, you want a relevant page on your website to be one of the first results they see.

You don't need to be an expert to get started on SEO, and once you start, you can make slow, steady improvements in three areas to maximize rankings:

The Three Pillars to Effective SEO

The coding of your site and its speed

Keywords

External links
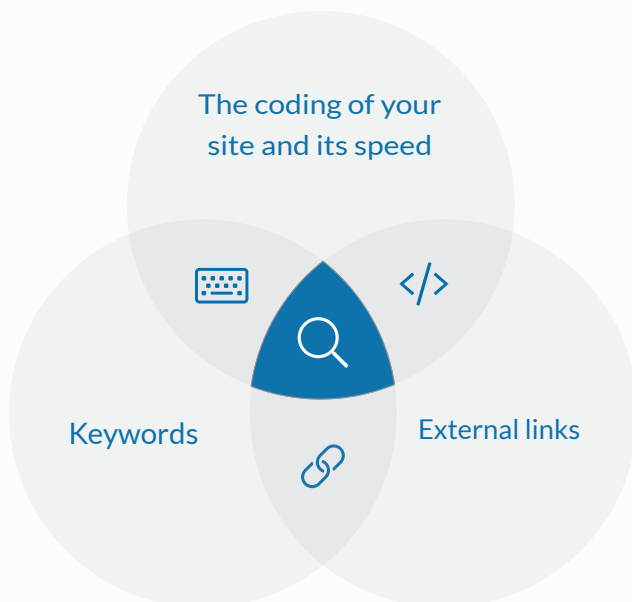
1. **The coding of your site and its speed** are crucial, as search engines place an emphasis here when choosing how to rank your site. Not only should your site load quickly and be mobile friendly, it should use some other best practices, like a sitemap, the right meta tags, and be free of errors.

If you use a popular content management system (CMS), such as WordPress, to build your website, you're probably already on track, as most CMSs are set up with SEO best practices built in. If you have doubts, hire an expert or use an online tool to assess and improve your coding.

2. **Keywords** are the main way a search engine ranks your website relative to others. Ask yourself when you want your charity's website to show up, or rank, when a user searches.

The keywords you choose might relate to the following:

- Your cause;
- The services or programs you offer;
- The city or area where you're active; as well as,
- Relevant questions related to what your organization does.

If you're looking for some help getting started, you can use free tools such as Ubersuggest. Not only should the keywords you want to rank for appear throughout your website, your most critical words should also be used in headlines, sub-headings, and links throughout your website.

3. **External links** to your website by third parties are signs that the content is valued and your

website is an authority on a given subject. Search engines consider the number of links to your site when determining ranking. How do you increase external links? Like this:

- List your charity on trusted, relevant sites.
- Look for opportunities to be featured in local media.
- Add new, shareable content to your website, include it in your social media posts, and encourage sharing.
- Offer to write a short article or guest blog post on other sites.
- Ask sites that mention your organization to add a link.

For a more comprehensive explanation of SEO or for help with choosing keywords, read CanadaHelps' 2 Important Ways to Drive Supporters to Your Site and watch the webinar Attract More Visitors to Your Charity's Website by Improving Your SEO.

2.4 WEBSITE ANALYTICS: TRACK WHO'S DOING WHAT — AND WHEN AND WHERE

Visits to your website aren't enough. You need to track and analyze the results of your efforts, measuring click-throughs to donation pages, how many visitors complete a donation, the amount of time someone remains on your website, how many visitors leave with no interaction, and more. Google Analytics is a robust, free tool to track data like this that can be organized into reports and tables.

With Google Analytics, you can learn basic facts about your donors, such as general demographics, the city they're visiting from, or the device they're using to browse your website. You can also learn which channels drive the most traffic to your website and how effective each channel is in driving donations, allowing you to evaluate the value of your efforts and each program. Once you set up website analytics, you'll learn more about your supporters and their behaviour on your website, providing you with the data you need to be more effective at acquiring new donors.
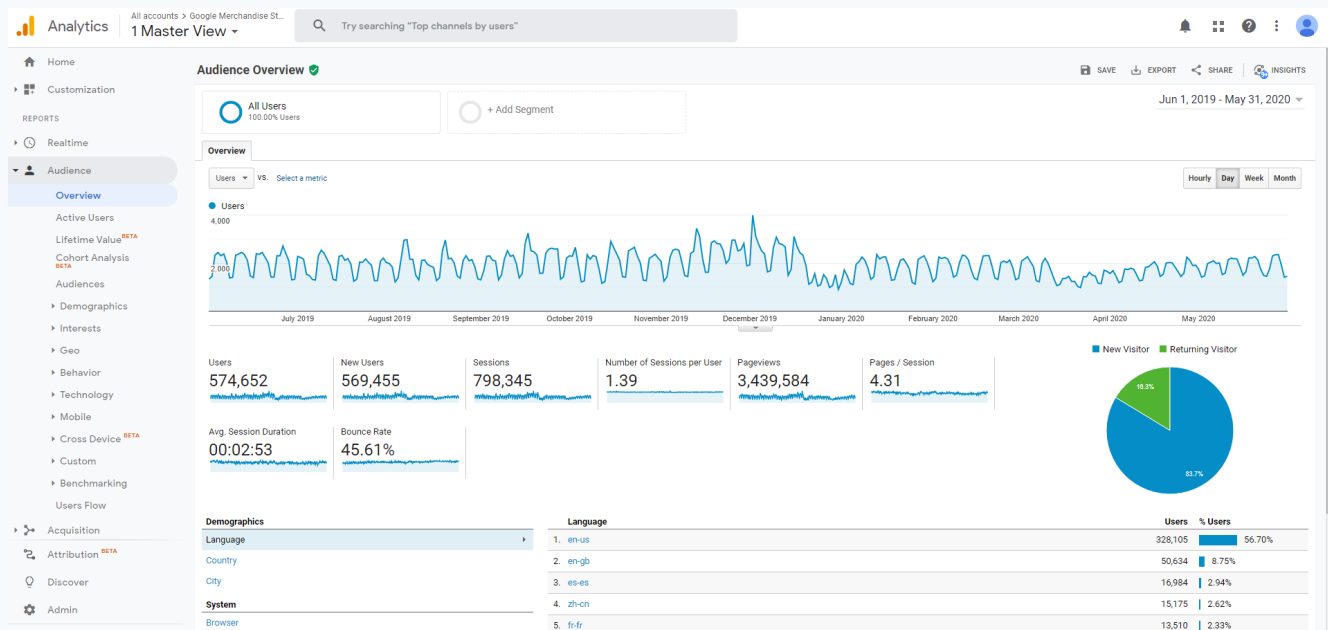
The Google Analytics demo account provides an inside look into the types of reports available on the platform. For example, you can review the number of users, sessions, pageviews, visit length, pages visited, and the number of return visits over a defined period of time.

3.0 EMAIL MARKETING

Judging from the number of e-newsletters and marketing messages in people's inboxes, it's clear that email marketing can generate serious results. Emails or e-newsletters engage people individually, build stronger relationships over time, improve donor acquisition, and can increase donations. Many of the software tools available are relatively inexpensive and easy to use. Here are three important aspects to start or improve your email marketing:

1. **Build your email list.**
2. **Get started with a simple plan.**
3. **Send emails to new leads or potential donors.**

3.1 BUILD YOUR EMAIL LIST

To build your database to improve donor acquisition, ask for email addresses:

- Throughout your website, including in the footer;
- On your donation forms;
- As a field in your direct mail forms;
- During event registration; and,
- On phone calls.

Also, consider more creative ways to collect email addresses, such as through an online petition, pledge, or quiz.

3.2 GET STARTED WITH A SIMPLE PLAN

To get the best results from your email marketing efforts, take the time to go through a few important steps:

Step 1: Choose a cost-effective, email-marketing tool, such as MailChimp, Constant Contact, Sendinblue, or iContact, which will allow you to build, send, and track emails.

Step 2: Spend an hour or two learning the design parameters of the service; the knowledge will carry you through many campaigns. Test out emails by sending them to one of your email addresses.

Step 3: Determine the type of content you'd like to share: a conventional email "newsletter", program updates, letters from your Executive Director, stories from program participants, and direct appeals to donate. Plan your emails in advance and add them to a calendar, so you know what will be sent and when.

Step 4: Send the email. Afterwards, assess open rates, click-throughs, and donations. Summarize results using tracking tools and reports provided by the email service. This info will help you to improve the next initiative.

Tip: Ultimately, you want to email often enough (perhaps once or twice a month), so that you remain top of mind, but not so often that you run out of compelling content or annoy supporters.

A note about direct mail

Direct mail can be a valuable source of acquiring and retaining donors. When sending direct mail, it's important to integrate it with your online fundraising efforts. In addition to providing a reply card to allow people to give by mail, include a link to your website, as many donors now prefer the convenience, speed, and security of donating online. Go the extra mile and create a dedicated landing page and donation form that builds on direct mail asks. You can further encourage them to donate with compelling visuals or a video. For those who choose to use the reply card, ask them for their email address and permission to add them to your email list so you can continue to engage them online.

3.3 WELCOME NEW SUBSCRIBERS

Remember to welcome new subscribers to your email list. It will be key to nurture these new prospective donors while their interest is fresh and they are motivated to learn more about your cause. Most email deployment tools allow you to set up an automatic Welcome Email when someone joins your list. Thank your supporters for joining you, reinforce why their support is so important, and briefly tell them the type of content they can expect to receive from you in the future.

Here are some best practices to consider to ensure the success of your email campaigns:

- **Keep it brief yet compelling.** Most recipients will start with a quick scan of your email. Grab their attention with a compelling headline and graphic, and ensure the rest of your message is brief and gets to the point quickly.

- **Always include a clear call-to-action.** Whether you want them to read a longer article, volunteer at your next event, watch a video, or make a donation, include a clear ask in your email and link them to the most relevant page on your website.

- **Pay special attention to *Subject* lines and *From* names.** These will ensure your recipients open your email and have the opportunity to benefit from the content you prepared. Make sure your supporters know it's from your organization and give them a reason to open it with an attention-grabbing subject line.

Email content and donor acquisition

- Pay special attention to the *Subject* line, *Preview* line, and *From* name. Getting these right will be key to getting your emails opened.

- Keep the content brief yet compelling. After reading the *Subject* and *From* lines, most readers will scan the photo, photo caption, headline, and subheading in the email.

- Always include a clear call-to-action or an ask in your email, and link it to your website.

- Create a header for all emails, something with your logo, and a link to both your homepage and *Ways to Give* page.

- Your standard footer should include your contact information, social media links, a link to unsubscribe, and a way to manage the user's subscription.

- **Create a standard header and footer to use in all of your emails.** Your header should include your charity's logo and a link to both your homepage and your *Ways to Give page*. Your standard footer should include your organization's contact information, additional links important to your organization, and a link to unsubscribe.

WELCOMING SUPPORTERS OF NATURE
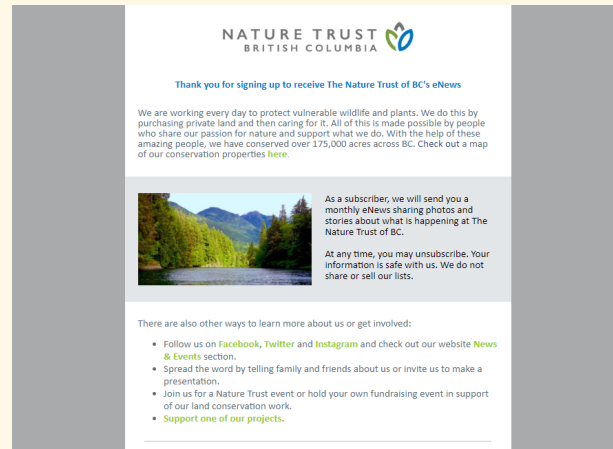
The **Nature Trust of BC** has a simple, straightforward welcome email for newsletter signups that briefly explains to their supporters who they are and what to expect from their newsletters, along with ways they can participate (including a link to donate).

4.0 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media refers to websites and applications that are designed to allow individuals to share content across a broad network quickly, conveniently, and in real-time.

4.1 WHY IS SOCIAL MEDIA SO VALUABLE?

Social media allows you to engage with your prospects and supporters, tell your stories, leverage videos/photos, promote events, solicit feedback, show leadership, and drive people to your website. The ability to easily share on social media allows your fans and followers to further amplify your messages on their networks. All of this dramatically improves donor acquisition through these largely free platforms.

POWER TO BE SURVIVES AND THRIVES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Power to Be, which helps people living with a disability to access nature, offers great examples of videos. It posts videos on Facebook and YouTube from its staff, videos like "10 essentials to bring on a hike." In this post, they provide a link to a dedicated landing page on their website wheresupporters can view more content, and more importantly, donate.

Power To Be
May 7 ·

Have you ever gone on a hike and realized halfway through, that you forgot your water bottle or your jacket? Learn from our program facilitator Mike Milner about the 10 Essential items to bring when you go out on a hike or adventure! #ItMatters

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I43Oprx2vWQ
Visit powertobe.ca/itmatters for more activities and to donate.

The "10 Essentials" with Mike

Power To Be

YOUTUBE.COM
The "10 Essentials" with Mike
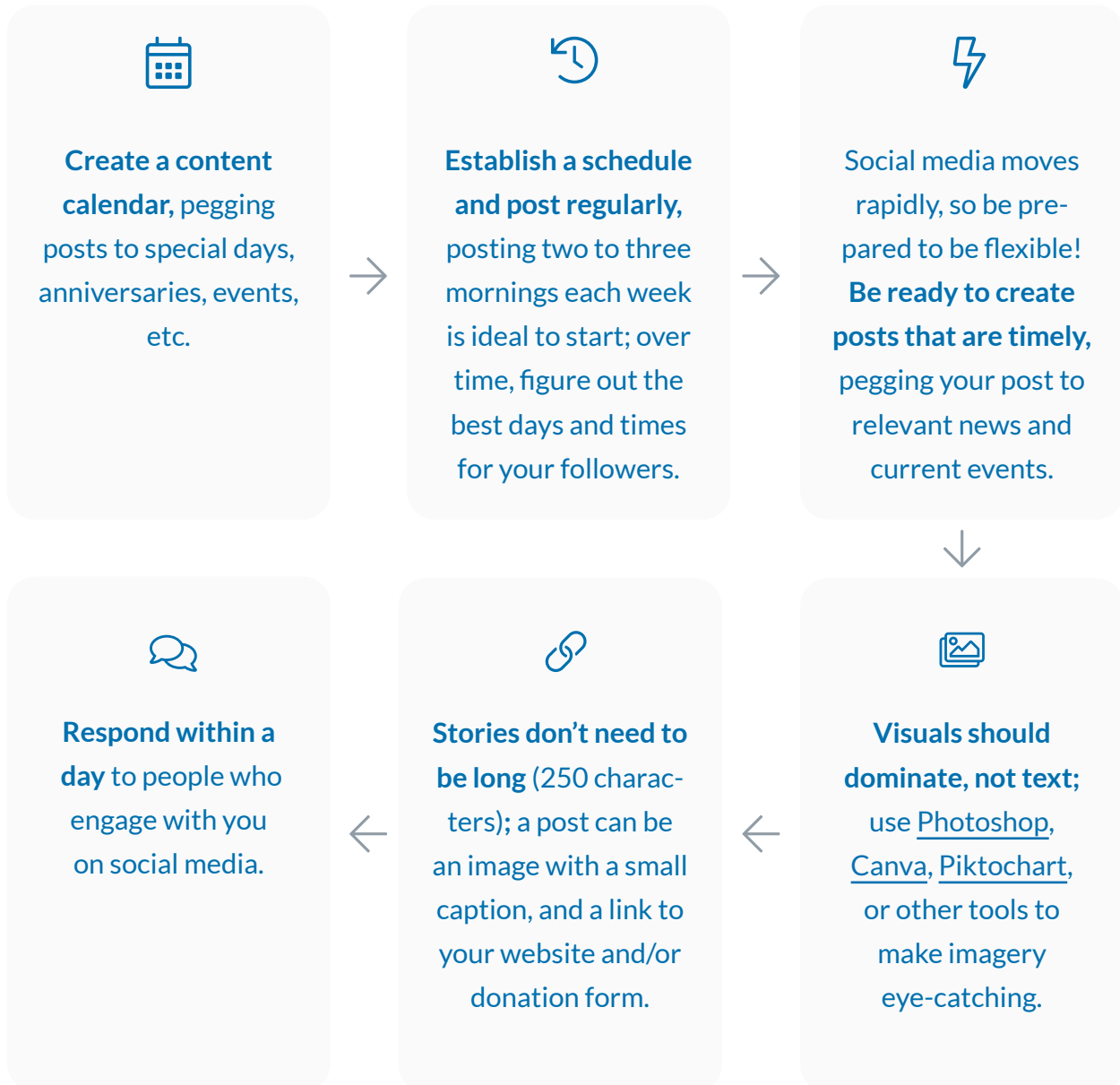Have you ever gone on a hike and realized halfway through, that you...

4.2 STEPS TO SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS

A checklist to get started on donor acquisition via social media

- ☐ **Define primary and secondary audiences.** Are they donors, clients, volunteers, and/or partners? Be specific.

- ☐ **Establish objectives and the metrics you'll use to measure your success.** Do you want to build awareness? Acquire new donors? Build a volunteer network? All of the above? Determine how you'll measure each.

- ☐ **Get input from supporters. Consider surveying your donors** to find out which social media channels they use and the kind of content they like.

- ☐ **Research the social media programs of similar organizations and others you admire**. Which platforms do they use? What types of content do they post, and how frequently? Follow others and look for inspiration.

- ☐ **Prioritize and select one or two platforms** you'd like to start with.

- ☐ **Consider if you'll invest in paid ads** to acquire more followers.

- ☐ **Assign roles, including day-to-day management** and monitoring of each platform.

- ☐ **Develop a content calendar to guide your content creation.** Include holidays and relevant cause days, as well as events and program dates.

- ☐ **Determine which stories, photos and videos you'll need,** and how you'll create or get them. Videos, photos, GIFS and visuals of all kinds provide a unique, compelling way to tell your story and demonstrate your charity's impact. Video, especially, is worth investing in, as it elicits strong emotional reactions. Consider using video to share your success stories, feature testimonials, or to give supporters a glimpse behind the scenes by showing them the work you do. If you're asking for support, always link to a page on your website that contains a donation form.

- ☐ **Include *Share* or *Follow Us* social media links on all communications** and marketing materials, both online and offline.

- ☐ **Set up analytics tools to assess what you're doing.** Additionally, much of your work will go into tracking hashtags and content related to your work, ideally through Google Alerts or other services.

4.3 PLAN YOUR CONTENT

Telling stories about your cause is likely what you do best. Stories, images, and videos that demonstrate the need your charity fills, and the impact your charity makes, are at the heart of great donor acquisition strategies. In terms of storytelling and content, there are a number of basic things you can do:

Create a content calendar, pegging posts to special days, anniversaries, events, etc.

→

Establish a schedule and post regularly, posting two to three mornings each week is ideal to start; over time, figure out the best days and times for your followers.

→

Social media moves rapidly, so be prepared to be flexible! **Be ready to create posts that are timely,** pegging your post to relevant news and current events.

↓

Respond within a day to people who engage with you on social media.

←

Stories don't need to be long (250 characters); a post can be an image with a small caption, and a link to your website and/or donation form.

←

Visuals should dominate, not text; use Photoshop, Canva, Piktochart, or other tools to make imagery eye-catching.

ℹ **Photo sizes and video specifications:** *Different platforms require different photo and video sizes. Use expert sites, such as SproutSocial's always-up-to-date guides for images and videos, both of which offer details for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and YouTube.*

4.4 FACEBOOK

Facebook boasts more than 2.5 billions users worldwide, with its youth base shrinking while its seniors audience is growing. You need to figure out which channels your primary audience uses most often. For instance, even though Facebook has users in every age group, Instagram might be better if you're appealing to a younger demographic. There are many online sites that offer insights into Facebook's demographics, including how to track the performance of your posts.

Visual content such as images and video are critical if you want to be successful on Facebook and content is often consumed on mobile devices, so keep content short (250 characters), use correct image sizes, and focus on video and images that look good on small devices. Compelling content and visuals will encourage your followers to share with their own network, increasing your reach and the opportunity to acquire new donors. In addition, you can expand your reach and acquire new donors using *Boost Post* and targeting specific demographics with paid advertising. (For more about Facebook, see the *Facebook Ads* section in this white paper.)

BRINGING THE WILD INTO SUPPORTERS' HOMES

The Toronto Zoo maximizes use of Facebook by regularly posting short news items about their animals, great photos, beautiful videos, fundraisers, and *Shop Now* and *Donate* buttons, resulting in more than 260,000 followers. Most posts, like the one above, are short and visually compelling — and a great example of how the Conservancy and the Zoo work together to achieve fundraising success.
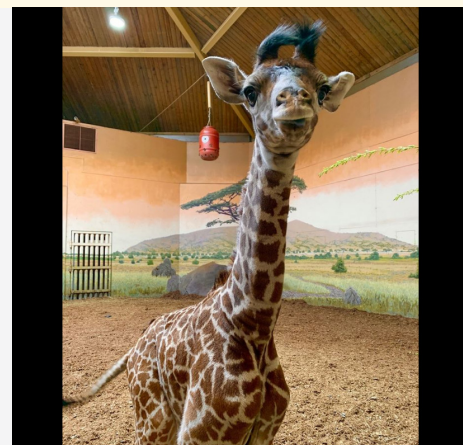
The Toronto Zoo
Like This Page · June 1 · 🌐

The Great Canadian Giving Challenge is here! For the entire month of June, you can help Toronto Zoo Wildlife Conservancy win $20,000 for our #RoomToGrow campaign in support of #BabyLongLegs and our growing Masai giraffe family. Every $1 you donate to us through www.canadahelps.org or www.givingchallenge.ca qualifies our giraffe family to win! 🦒

To make a donation and help us win $20,000, visit: https://www.canadahelps.org/en/gcgc/115667.

👍❤️😮 1.4K   45 Comments 131 Shares

4.5 INSTAGRAM AND IGTV

Owned by Facebook, Instagram has more that 1 billion users worldwide, and about two thirds of them are 18 to 29 year olds. Instagram is entirely based on photos and videos, and is designed to work best on your phone with Instagram's apps, but you can access the website on your desktop as well. You need to follow a few basics about image sizing and video uploads (limited to less than 60 seconds). Instagram recently launched IGTV, a video app for phones that allows you to post longer videos.

Instagram is also known for its *Stories*, a feature that organizes multiple photos and videos together, in a slideshow format, that disappears after a day, unless you save them. You can add stickers, polls, quizzes, questions, and many other elements that can increase engagement, prim-

ing people for a donation ask. Letting compelling visuals dominate your posts will be key to driving supporter engagement. Pairing this with more information and relevant hashtags will help amplify your message to a wider group of individuals who are searching for related content on the platform. Don't forget to add a donation link in the bio section of your Instagram profile, and be sure to add a mention like "donation link in bio" in the text section of relevant posts to drive supporters to your website. As with Facebook, you can expand your reach and acquire new donors on Instagram by targeting specific demographics with paid advertising. (For more about Instagram, see the *Instagram Ads* section in this white paper.)

There are guides that offer details about Instagram's demographics and tips on how to increase followers.

SUDBURY FOOD BANK ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Using a friendly, intimate tone, the Sudbury Food Bank posts engaging, simple photos of food, donations, and frequent fundraisers, along with information about its work.
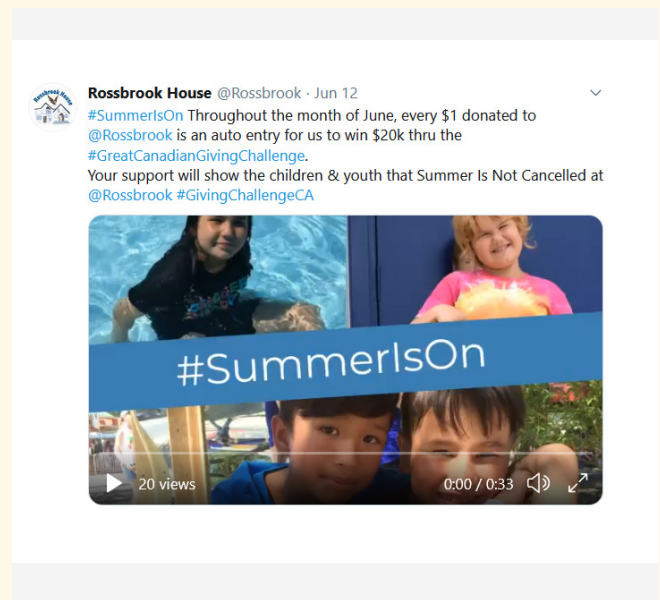
4.6 TWITTER

If Facebook is like a train in terms of sharing information, Twitter is like a jet scooter. The posts on Twitter, called *tweets*, are a perfect way for timely announcements and conversations with some of the 330 million users (and growing). As with other channels, compelling imagery or video is critical, and you need basic knowledge about copy length (currently 280 characters) and image sizes, especially for your profile photo.

Twitter can be a great platform to leverage in order to engage with your supporters, reach a wider audience, and drive donor acquisition. As with Instagram, be sure to combine great visuals with compelling copy and relevant hashtags, and include a link to your *Ways to Give page*. In addition, you can expand your reach and acquire new donors by using Promoted Tweets and targeting specific demographics with paid advertising. Excellent resources exist online for more guidance. (For more about Twitter, see the *Twitter Ads* section in this white paper.)

ROSSBROOK HOUSE DEEPENS RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPPORTERS

Rossbrook House regularly posts engaging content, including photos and videos on its Twitter account of participants taking part in daily activities and programming. These allow them to tell their stories in compelling ways, and the organization reaches its supporters and deepens connections with its mission.

Rossbrook House @Rossbrook · Jun 12
#SummerIsOn Throughout the month of June, every $1 donated to @Rossbrook is an auto entry for us to win $20k thru the #GreatCanadianGivingChallenge.
Your support will show the children & youth that Summer Is Not Cancelled at @Rossbrook #GivingChallengeCA

#SummerIsOn

20 views   0:00 / 0:33

▶ 4.7 YOUTUBE

Deeply integrated with tools from Google, its owner, YouTube's platform allows you to [upload videos of all lengths](#), build a list of subscribers to your video channel, add descriptions and tags, create video playlists, and quickly reply to viewers' comments. It's also a useful tool for embedding videos on your website and other social media platforms that will both drive engagement and assist with donor acquisition activities.

in 4.8 LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a professional networking site where conversations tend to focus on professional topics and be more corporate than other social media networks. The site's 675 million users tend to be older and more educated, and most use the platform to connect on issues related to their profession, look for job opportunities, and follow experts and thought leaders. It's critical to create a company page on LinkedIn for your charity, which is a great place to connect with leaders in your field, build a volunteer base, and to post jobs, news, annual reports, and more. (For more about Instagram, see the *LinkedIn Ads* section in this white paper.

4.9 TAGGING IS A MUST

Hashtags are simply short words, phrases or acronyms used to categorize a post by event or subject. For example, #GivingTuesday will take you to all recent posts about that special day. Hashtags are used on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and, to a lesser extent, Facebook. Tagging every Instagram and YouTube upload is a best practice, and you can use several relevant hashtags toamplify your content. Hashtags are also ideal for jumping on trends and finding new or related content. Overall, they're an excellent way to reach a more general audience beyond your followers.

Hootsuite

sproutsocial

[Hootsuite](#) and [Sprout Social](#) are hubs that allow you to easily post content on multiple social media channels from one central website or app. You can schedule posts in advance, track your performance, monitor mentions of your charity, follow hashtags relevant to the work you do, respond to comments, and much more.

4.10 PAID ADVERTISING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Advertising on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn can be powerful ways to acquire new donors. The channels have useful information about their users and their preferences. You can use this information to target specific audiences with ads.

Facebook ads reach 1.95 billion of the platform's 2.5 billion monthly users. That's 32% of the world's population (over the age of 13). Facebook members share data about age, gender, location, work details, educational background, likes, interests, product use, and a lot more. You can use this data to target ads, increase online followers, make announcements, and promote fundraising campaigns to audiences you choose.

Instagram ads are similar to Facebook ads. Driven by photos and videos on mobile phones, Instagram ads can be targeted in a variety of ways. You should look closely at demographics; millennials and Generation Z use Instagram more than Facebook for example. Instagram ads allow you to add a *Donate* button to posts, which can drive supporters to a dedicated landing page where they can complete their donation. Many sites, such as Hootsuite, offer guides and tips on how to create the ads.

Twitter ads appear as *promoted* tweets, accounts, or trends marked with a *promoted* icon – and they can quickly lead to engagement and conversations because of how fast users engage with content on Twitter. When setting up a campaign, remember to research demographic data; for instance, approximately two-thirds of the platform's users are male.

LinkedIn ads are much more business focused than ads on other platforms. You can filter your audience based on industry, geography, seniority, age, job title, education, skills, company size, and other criteria. The ads appear in LinkedIn news feeds, and sponsored InMail messages appear on computers and mobile devices.

Troubleshooting and trolls

There may be times when you don't receive positive reactions to your social media posts. Here are a few tips:

- Address complaints head-on by posting in-thread within a day.

- Explain your organization's position on the matter, while remaining respectful.

- Ask to take the conversation to DMs (direct messages), email, or even telephone. Not every conversation is best had in public or within a limited character count.

- To create a safe space for others, delete blatantly offensive content or personal insults and block trolls (abusive users on social media).

4.11 SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS: ACQUIRE MORE DONORS

On social media, posting content without using analytics is like travelling without a map or GPS. If you're trying to improve donor acquisition, then tracking data related to your content – and analyzing that data – is as important as the content itself. Social media platforms (like Facebook and Twitter) and third-party companies (such as Hootsuite and Sprout Social) have their own analytics tools that automate data and insights for easy analysis of:

- User demographics (age, gender, location, and more);
- Numbers and locations of fans or followers;
- Likes and shares (or rates of engagement);
- Click-through rates; and,
- Much more.

You can use these insights to assess and organize other campaigns.

How analytics can help you: A charity buys $1,000 in ads on Facebook and Instagram. After the campaigns, using analytics tools, it discovers that there were 8,000 clicks to its homepage, 200 new email subscribers (leads), and 25 new donors who gave a total of $850. The charity can now calculate the cost per click (12.5 cents/click), per lead ($5/lead) and per donor ($40/donor), along with other data, to assess if the $1,000 ad investment was worth it.
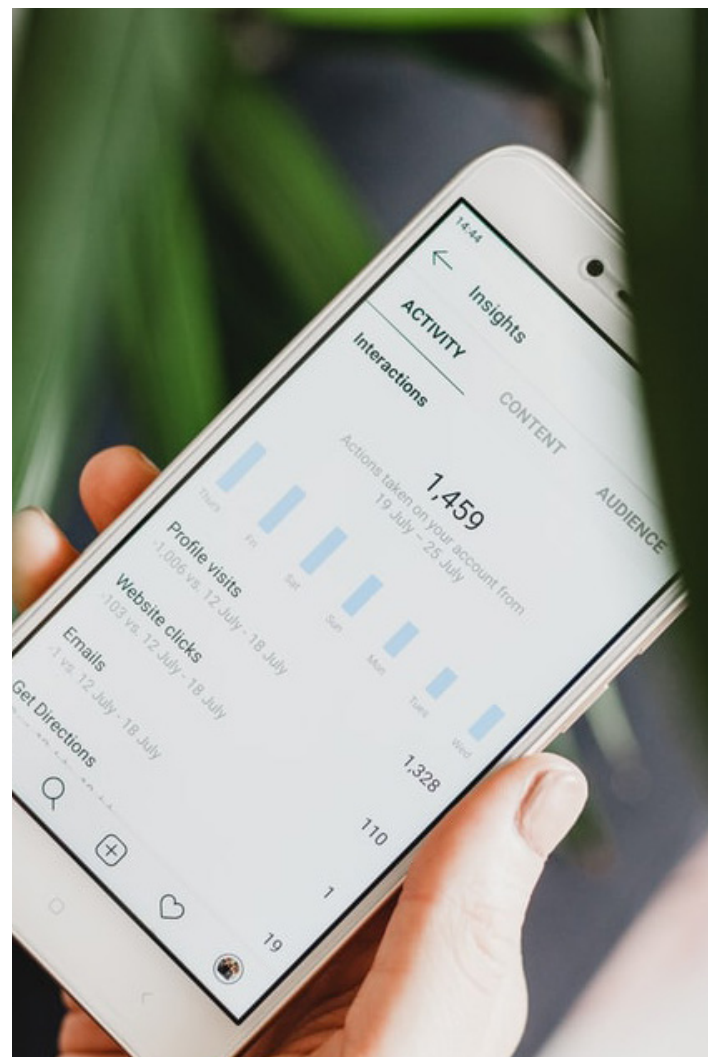
5.0 SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING AND ADS

Search engine advertising, or paid searches, offered by Google and Bing appear at the top of search engine results and look like the results themselves, except for a tiny *Ad* icon before the listing. They are based on keywords you select, and can also be based on users' cookies (bits of data sent from websites and saved on your computer). There are many other types of digital ads, including display network ads and video ads. On many ad platforms, including Google and Bing paid searches, you pay only when someone clicks on the ad. In general, the goal of your ads should be to generate clicks that capture leads, acquire new donors, sell event tickets, or drive some other measurable, valuable behaviour, all of which you can track and measure.

5.1 GOOGLE ADS

Google controls a substantial portion of the ad market on the English-language internet. For a small or mid-sized charity aiming to improve donor acquisition, Google Ads can help you reach fundraising goals. Text-based ads have three parts: headline text (up to three lines), a display URL (with up to two paths), and description text (up to two lines). Successful ads depend on three areas that you can influence:

1. Select keywords: Put some effort into selecting keywords and writing the ad content (the length of messages, headlines that work, etc.). Google offers a Keyword Planner to help find words rele-

vant to your charity, your cause, or your primary audiences.

2. Bid on keywords: Google Ads are a market in which advertisers bid on keywords, and you determine how much you're willing to bid. Generally, the higher the bid for a keyword, the higher your ad will appear on a search results page. However, set a maximum based on your objectives, so that you use your budget efficiently.

3. Write effective ads: Reaching potential donors successfully will depend on how well your ad is written. Your ads should be clear, relevant, and specific. Here are some quick rules to follow when putting together your ad:

- Follow the character length limits for your headlines (30), descriptions (90) and URL paths (15).
- Talk about your cause and how your charity is helping.
- Add a clear call-to-action, such as an ask to donate, in the description.
- Include at least one of your keywords in the copy, such as the headline, to tie it back to the user's search.
- Include content in the description that's similar to what's on your landing page
- Test different versions of your ad, with different headlines and descriptions, to see which ones work best over time.
- Adjust your copy for an audience that's searching on mobile devices. Ads can appear differently on mobile, so concise, action-centered information is key.

Consult this guide for more tips on creating successful Google Ads.

For the keywords you target, Google uses your bid, the quality of your ad copy, your landing page, and other factors in their algorithm to determine your ad's eligibility and position in search results. Taking great care in putting these elements together will help your ad's performance immensely.

If you're ready to get started, Google takes you through the steps to setup and test an ad or campaign.

Google Grants offers $10,000 USD in Google Ads to registered charities and non-profits who are eligible. Setting up the grant and your ads can be simple or complex, depending on your website, your goals, and the number of products, services, and geographic locations, but Google Grants could lead to more of your ads appearing beside Google search results related to your cause. This can lead to increased donor acquisition.

5.2 REMARKETING AND GOOGLE ADS

In addition to search ads that show up in response to keywords in a user's search, you can create and target an ad for visitors who already visited your website. For instance, you can create an ad for people who visited your *Ways to Give* webpage and then left without completing a donation. This is called *remarketing*. To launch a remarketing campaign, your website needs a bit of extra code, called a *remarketing tracking pixel*, on every page of your website, in order to track what a visitor did. These ads take a bit more effort to set up, but they tend to perform better; click-through rates and donation rates are higher. The ads are an effective reminder about the impact your charity makes or the needs you fill in your community, and the ads drive visitors back to your website.

CONCLUSION

In our increasingly digital world and with the rise in online donations, focusing on digital donor acquisition is no longer an option — it's a necessity! If you're already doing so, it's important to build on your existing efforts, track your progress, and look for ways to improve. If you haven't spent time focusing here, this is the time to start.

You're already an expert in telling your charity's story and showing its impact, and these are critical skills as you increase your digital donor acquisition. We've offered a number of digital strategies, tactics, and channels that you can combine with your existing expertise.

While fewer Canadians have been donating over the years, online giving has consistently grown each year for the past 15 years. The important thing is to create a plan to improve your digital donor acquisition and expand your online presence, because every bit helps. Online giving isn't the future; it's right now.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ONLINE

The Giving Report 2020: Online Giving is On the Rise, by CanadaHelps

https://www.canadahelps.org/en/the-giving-report/download-the-report/

Your Essential Guide to GivingTuesday Success, by CanadaHelps

https://www.canadahelps.org/en/free-white-paper-your-essential-guide-to-givingtuesday-success/

2 Important Ways to Drive Supporters To Your Site, by CanadaHelps

https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charity-life/digital-marketing/2-important-ways-to-drive-supporters-to-your-site/

Boost Your Digital Holiday Fundraising Results, by CanadaHelps

https://www.canadahelps.org/en/free-white-paper-launch-your-holiday-fundraiser/

The Ultimate Guide to Nonprofit Marketing in 2020, by Allie Decker

https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-run-a-lean-mean-nonprofit-marketing-machine

2019 Fundraising Effectiveness Survey Report, by the Fundraising Effectiveness Project and the Association of Fundraising Professionals

https://afpglobal.org/sites/default/files/attachments/generic/FEP2019AnnualSurveyReport.pdf

Hootsuite Social Media Statistics

https://blog.hootsuite.com/facebook-demographics/

https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-demographics/

https://blog.hootsuite.com/twitter-statistics/

https://blog.hootsuite.com/youtube-stats-marketers/

https://blog.hootsuite.com/linkedin-statistics-business/

https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-advertising/#linkedin

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

Learn how an online donation form fits into your
donor acquisition strategy to help you raise more.

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