

Know your supporters.
Grow your support.

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Charities must get better at attracting, retaining and growing support. The first step is getting to know your supporter. Hyper-personalisation is a new approach to supporter engagement that will move your supporters up the ladder of engagement. By knowing and understanding the needs, motivations, and nuances of their donors and volunteers, charities can establish and nurture a long and mutually profitable relationship with their supporters.



Figures from the Charity Commission show that the collective annual income of charities in England and Wales passed £75 billion for the first time in 2017. On the surface this is good news for the sector. However, the number of registered charities has been steadily rising by between 1,000 and 1,500 a year since 2009, so the numbers don't translate into a simple increase in income if taken on a per charity basis. Also, large charities now account for over 60% of the overall income, which is over 10% more than in 2007.

So, there is a growing divide between the income going to the large charities and that going to smaller or local charities, which are struggling to survive in many cases. This is also against a backdrop of shrinking government funding, so the source of the funding is increasingly coming from private donors, who must be convinced to support any given charity.

Charities must get better at attracting, retaining and growing support than ever before – the competition for support is real and is subject to the same market dynamics of supply and demand as any commercial sector.

The way that charities will succeed is to know and understand their supporter base intimately, specifically: their sense of purpose and what motivates them; how they want to engage, volunteer and give; and what they want in return. By knowing their supporters, charities can grow their support and be future ready.



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Understanding supporters and their needs

Most charities to some degree take a scattershot approach to recruiting and growing support: By the law of averages, the more people you can get a message to, the more people will support you. Whilst there's a place for this approach – especially for building basic brand recognition and reinforcement – it doesn't deliver a high conversion rate.

Instead, imagine if you could appeal to an individual's values, to guarantee you'll use their support for the things that matter to them, to make them feel that you understand what they want and that you'll be the conduit through which they can make a genuine difference. If you could offer and deliver this to a supporter, then it's likely you'll build a strong, lasting and mutually profitable relationship.

The first step is getting to know your supporter.

The “supporter” is a complicated individual. They could be a donor or a volunteer or both. They might donate or volunteer only for key events and projects or might holistically support the wider activities of a charity. They might dedicate their support to one single-issue charity, to several charities engaged in the same sphere or to a portfolio of seemingly unconnected charities. They might demonstrate different supporter behaviours at different times of the year. Their priorities for support – like any other aspect of their character – will likely evolve through their life. They might even be employed by a charity too. Each will have their own unique characteristics that you must cater to.

Research conducted by Avanade and Accenture identified key needs that most supporters have in common in varying degrees and defined the key trends in the charity sector:

360° view: *“I want my charity of choice to have a better understanding of me.”*

Loyalty: *“I want my charity of choice to be able to recognise me for my contribution.”*

Transparency: *“I want to know where my money is going and how it is getting used. And sometimes I want to target my money at particular projects.”*

Purpose: *“I want to feel part of a community, connected to like-minded people and feel I am making a difference.”*

New rules: *“I want to own the rules of giving.”*

To know your supporter, you must first build a 360° view of them as a person and their interactions with you over time. This information can potentially be augmented by external sources, like social media profiles. It is this behavioural data that will give you the insight into their values and needs that becomes the foundation on which a close relationship is built.

Build loyalty with hyper-personalisation

By having and maintaining the data that describes your supporters, the first fundamental building block of a deeper relationship is in place. This foundation must then be leveraged intelligently to demonstrate to the supporter that you know them, that you are listening to them and that you are aligned to them. This happens through the “hyper-personalisation” of every interaction that you have with them.

Whereas “personalisation” might mean including the supporter’s name in email communications, displaying projects and causes that the supporter has expressed an interest in on the website, or sending subscription-based mailshots, hyper-personalisation goes much deeper. Hyper-personalisation is what builds loyalty. It’s what converts the occasional giver to the committed giver. And it’s the route to building affinity with your supporters.

Hyper-personalisation is using the data that you have, to predict what it is your supporter wants to do next and make it easy for them to do it. And by extension, hyper-personalisation is also an effective “nudge” tool. Let’s say your data suggests that committed donors who subscribe to your global causes newsletter are likely to go to your website and make a larger one-off donation when you publicise a disaster-response appeal. Then immediately following such an appeal, when these donors log on to the website, they should be presented with, for example:

“Thank you for being a committed giver. As you’re aware we are fundraising for XXX. Your previous donation for appeal YYY over and above your normal support enabled us to ZZZ. If you could donate the same amount to this appeal, then we’ll be able to ZZZ. Click here to allow us to collect the same amount on top of your regular direct debit for one month only.”



35%

of Amazon's consumer purchases come from product recommendations based on past purchases.

Not only does this make the task of giving easier for those who came to the website with that intention, but it can act as a nudge for those who came with the idea of only learning more about the appeal.

Hyper-personalisation is a new approach to supporter engagement. It has long been a success in the world of retail. For example, McKinsey estimates 35% of Amazon's consumer purchases come from product recommendations based on past purchases, demographic affinity and seasonal trends. Through automation hyper-personalisation it helps you:

- Consider which channel is best to use when.
- Determine what message will resonate the most with the supporter now.
- Account for the wider values of the supporter (for example, eliminating paper mailshots to those who are environmentally driven).
- Demonstrate that you know your supporter.





Provide purpose with community and transparency

An individual's choice of causes to support is deeply personal. Once that choice is made – as in any endeavour in life – a sense of connection is often sought. Supporters like to feel part of a community, part of a movement, to engage in a shared sense of purpose, and to share any downstream successes.

Charities can tap into this desire for community spirit by providing virtual digital communities, where like-minded people can connect and collaborate. Aside from engendering a sense of belonging, which in turn fosters loyalty, community hubs are invaluable sources of information and sentiment. If a feedback loop is created between community sentiment and charitable activity, then loyalty is further amplified through supporter empowerment.

Community hubs also play well into the groundswell of regionalism amongst supporters. Many donors and volunteers want to make a difference within their local community. Whilst the capacity of a charity to make a local difference is limited and must be managed, community hubs can play an important role in crowdsourcing the most deserving candidates, and subsequently subsidising local projects through crowdfunding within the same group.

If a charity is going to raise funds for a local project, while having a portfolio of other projects and appeals, then supporters who donate for a single issue expect their donation to be used for that cause and not diluted across the portfolio (notwithstanding organisational running costs). The same applies to single-issue appeals and disaster response fundraising – supporters expect their one-off donations to reach the intended target. Today's technology allows for monies to be traced from source to destination, and donors expect charities to be able to demonstrate that they are an effective conduit for their support. Those charities that can demonstrate this are best positioned to encourage committed giving.



Help supporters ascend the 'Ladder of Engagement'

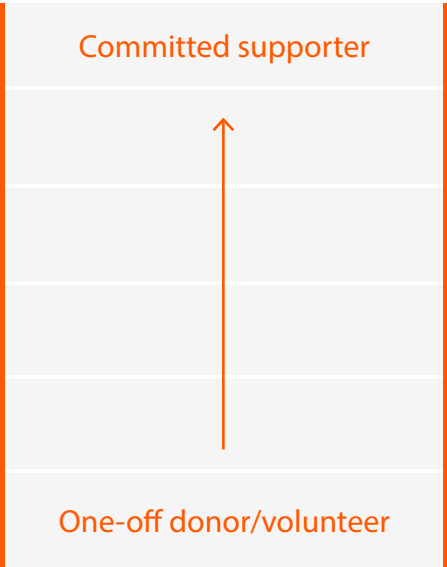
Maintaining the status quo of an existing supporter base isn't an option. Because of the natural attrition of supporters and competing charities clamouring for the same resources, there's an implicit need to nurture potential and existing support and to move each supporter as far up the "Ladder of Engagement" as possible. Nonprofits need every supporter to give more time and money, more frequently.

Imagine the Ladder of Engagement as a place where the one-off donor or one-off volunteer stands on the bottom rung while the committed supporter who augments their normal support with exceptional giving is standing atop the ladder, with a linear progression of support moving up the rungs. It should be every charity's ambition to move every supporter up that ladder one or more rungs at a time – and minimise movement in the opposite direction.

By knowing your supporters and understanding their behaviours, you have a base of evidence that shows what triggers a supporter to move from one rung to another. It could be a certain demographic with a defined giving pattern that is compelled by a specific type of appeal; it could be a successful nurture campaign comprising layered messaging resonating with a particular age group.

Having the insight makes it repeatable. Having a repeatable process means that process can be measured, refined and optimised. Introducing and analysing measures means there's science and method behind supporter recruitment, retention and nurturing. Science and method bring predictability, and predictability is the bedrock of revenue-dependent organisations.

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Get to know the 'Know Your Supporter' technology platform

Knowing your supporter means applying the personal touch. But nonprofits need to operate at scale. With the technology at our disposal today – and the commoditisation of advanced customer engagement, analytics, and automated intelligence tools – personal and scale are not mutually exclusive. What was once the purview of cash-rich retail giants are now mainstream and accessible to all but the smallest of charities. It's in every nonprofit's interest to use technology to do the heavy lifting of nurturing a vast and diverse supporter base. Technology can do it at speed, scale, and is adaptable to changing market dynamics.

The core of a 'Know Your Supporter' Technology Platform would typically comprise a Supporter Relationship Management system (or a CRM in the parlance of other industries), a data and analytics platform, a marketing and campaign platform, and a finance and operations system (or ERP).

Emerging technologies can also play an important role in the supporter relationship. Machine learning can predict supporter behaviour from observing what's gone on before; chatbots underpinned with artificial intelligence can provide scale to facilitate donations or address service queries in times of high demand; and blockchain can ensure immutable transparency of the monies from donation to the point of deployment.



Summary

The competition for support amongst nonprofits is now at its highest. More and more causes are fighting for the same pool of money, volunteer time and advocacy. Supporters are much more attuned to the world we live in, the issues we face, and feel a bilateral responsibility to local and global issues. The digital citizen is better informed than any past generation and – like in the retail space – has a wealth of assets at their disposal for informed decision-making.

gives you a seat at the fundraising table, tapping into the individual is the conversation opener. By knowing and understanding the needs, motivations, and nuances of the donors and volunteers, nonprofits can establish and nurture a long and mutually profitable relationship with their supporters.

For a nonprofit, if tapping into the zeitgeist

Technology for Social Good: Empowering non-profits through digital technology.

At Avanade, we care about the people and communities where we work and live. We want to bring the power of the cloud and digital technology to nonprofit organisations to digitally transform their workplaces and accelerate their social impact.

We know that nonprofits and the social sector face systemic challenges in using technology. They lack scalable industry solutions and technology talent. In addition, they face accelerating financial pressure stemming from the lack of affordable technology services – cloud services in particular. Couple this with the increasing need for cybersecurity and the demands of donors for more transparency, and it's easy to see that systemic change is needed.

We can help bring about the change needed and make a genuine human impact with our [Technology for Social Good](#) program, which consists of relevant and repeatable solutions, tailored to the specific needs of the nonprofit sector. Solutions include *Donor Management and Fundraising, Volunteer Management, Grant and Award Management, Sourcing and Supply*, to name a few.

Our goal is to become a trusted partner to nonprofits for delivering Microsoft technologies globally. As Microsoft's leading alliance partner, we can provide relevant and repeatable technology services for IT strategy, delivery and training for the non-profit market – helping to create significant social impact through the power of technology.



About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences on the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals bring bold, fresh thinking combined with technology, business and industry expertise to help make a human impact on our clients, their customers and their employees. We are the power behind the Accenture Microsoft Business Group, helping companies to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and transform products, leveraging the Microsoft platform. Avanade has 38,000 professionals in 25 countries, bringing clients our best thinking through a collaborative culture that honors diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation.

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