

Start the New Year Right with a Year-Round Donor Engagement Plan



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The year-end [fundraising](#) season is now behind you, but do you have a year-round communications plan so you can connect and engage meaningfully with your donors? Let's discuss seven ways you can make the most of January and beyond.

1. Thank Your Donors in January

Start the new year right by thanking your donors who made year-end gifts. If you met a fundraising goal or a challenge match during your year-end campaign, be sure to acknowledge that.

If you can, try to personalize the thank-you to acknowledge repeat donors, donors who have upgraded their gifts, first-time donors, and new monthly donors.



2. Review Your Donor Metrics to Assess Your Performance

Crunch your data and assess how your different donor groups behaved during the year-end fundraising season. Donor groups to focus on are

- Active donors
- New donors
- Lapsed donors who became active
- New monthly donors
- Donors who upgraded their giving level

Also identify any multichannel donors — donors who previously gave in a different channel and have now switched to another channel.

3. Convert Your Highest-Value Donors into Monthly Donors

Once you've identified these high-value donors, plan a campaign in late January or February to invite them to become [monthly donors](#). Monthly donors have better long-term value for the organization and are deepening their commitment. Be sure to treat those donors in a special way so they feel the love.

4. See If It's Time for a Midlevel Giving Program

As your fundraising program matures, January is an important time to determine if your organization is ready for a midlevel program. Your decision would depend on how many donors are giving more than \$250 in any fiscal year. Such a program might have a special name and come with special perks.

At the core, a midlevel program is a technique to deepen your engagement with a very special group of generous donors. Think about how you want to communicate with this group of individuals. They could be invited to a quarterly conference call with organizational leaders, or they might attend a special issue briefing. They could also receive a special newsletter.

5. Map Out Your 12-Month Communications Strategy

January is an important time to map out your communications plan for the year. Strive to achieve balance in your communications between fundraising, cultivation, and engagement. Do a communications audit to assess what your audiences receive. Donors, supporters, and volunteers have different interests and levels of commitment. Create a [communications plan](#) that matches with audience interests.

6. Plan Your Fundraising for the Year

Most organizations have fiscal years that don't end in December, so you'll need to determine if and how you'll meet your fundraising goals for the year. Your communications strategy for the year will likely include several more fundraising campaigns. Discuss how you'll approach each of your donor groups to ask for an additional donation and what would be the best timing for those fundraising campaigns. Take advantage of [events](#), media exposure, and campaign launches to engage with donors again throughout the year.

7. Develop a Strategy for Dealing with Donors Who Didn't Give During Year-End

This topic speaks to many aspects of the fundraising challenge. These active or recent donors either weren't inspired to give or simply couldn't afford to. It's important to continue to cultivate their interest in the organization through your year-round communications practices. Be sure to include these individuals during your upcoming fundraising campaigns and remind them that they've given in the past. Getting a second gift is always easier than getting the first.
