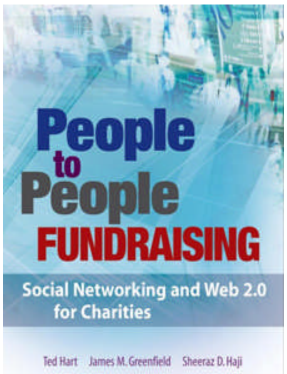

People to People Fundraising:
Crafting the Marketing Strategy to Make It Happen
By Katya Andresen and Bill Strathmann

The idea of people-to-people fundraising makes perfect sense: People don't give to organizations; they give because they feel a personal connection to someone or something.

But as the nonprofit sector tentatively steps from a strictly Web 1.0 world to a Web 2.0 one (and from one-way communication into a land of conversation), nonprofit organizations and the fundraisers within them need to know *why* this is the case and *how* to put that knowledge into good use—not to mention their organization's wallets.

What follows is a list of four principles that influence our giving and five ways to translate that know-how into action.

Why Does Personal Fundraising Work?

1. **It is based on a two-way relationship, not one-sided promotion.** When you think of a "relationship" in the context of fundraising, imagine that outreach activities are conversations between individuals rather than a speech from an organization. Here's how it plays out:
   - The person asks for help because they care about a cause.
   - The donor helps because they care about the person—either directly or through a shared friend or experience.
   - Two more things happen: the person who asked for help is inclined to say yes to requests from the people who contributed, as well as yes to requests from the charity to fundraise again.

   This approach is one of "concentrate and inundate" with people with a shared history and sense of friendly obligation.

2. **The personal fundraiser is an authentic and authoritative messenger.** Simply put: People crave what's true and credible, and therefore the messenger has become as important as the message itself. In addition to their credibility, personal fundraisers' experiences with your cause make the need easier to understand and far more compelling.

3. **People-to-people fundraising is based in story.** There is no more powerful form of communication than story-telling. If you have a good story, you have everything. Nonprofit work can be broad and complex and the urgency of your cause may prove difficult to relate compellingly. Donors tend to talk about our work through their own stories, making if specific and simple. That is a great gift to us.

4. **People-to-people fundraising translates impulse into action online.** Impulse is a uniquely human reaction to a need, a spark of interest and concern. We need to create it and then have a way for people to act on impulse before that spark fades. By enabling people to react immediately (to a donation ask, for example)—when they feel moved by the unfolding story—online giving likely increase the rates at which feeling is converted to charitable action.

Numbers 1-4 lay out why people-to-people fundraising is so appealing. You may now be thinking, "Now what?" (Or at least, "So what?") Here are five laws of marketing that will help you do your marketing job effectively, taking full advantage of people's natural tendency toward people-to-people fundraising.

1. **Make it easy.** Devotion to a cause may not mean your supporter is willing to spend a lot of time and energy. Make your fundraising campaign convenient and quick! Keep it simple on two levels: make it easy for people to do personal fundraising, and make it easy for that person's friends and family to support the fundraiser.

2. **Make it fun.** This does not always come easily to the nonprofit sector—we're used to dealing with serious social problems and sad stories of need. The fundraising efforts should be uplifting. Here are few approaches to infuse some fun into your campaign:
    - Let your supporters share personal information.
    - Use humor.
    - Give them instant gratification.
    - Let them use photos and videos.

3. **Make it popular.** We need to create "social proof" around our call to action. Social proof is the powerful idea that if we think everyone else is acting in a certain way, we're likely to act that way, too. Basically everyone's doing it, so you should, too! (Thanks, peer pressure.) Make sure your fundraisers know that others are already participating (e.g. "join millions of other generous Americans," or "hundreds of other concerned members in your community.")

4. **Reward your supporters.** After ensuring that your campaign is fun, easy and popular, you need to incentivize so that people actually do what you want them to do. Provide a reward that is immediate, personal, credible and reflective of audience values. This reward could be something tangible, like an iPod for a college student, or intangible, such as the act of making your donor a member of your organization's community who regular receives updates and text messages about your campaign's progress.

5. **Cultivate your growing circle.** You are creating an ever-widening circle of supporters when you engage in people-to-people fundraising. Don't forget to tend to each part of it! Seek out your superstars and involve them in future campaigns right from the start; treat them as a part of your organization. As for the network of supporters created by your superstars, make sure not to over-mail, to send thank-you's and to keep them abreast of where their hard-earned cash was spent—these folks cared about their contacts, not necessarily about you or your cause directly.

If you apply these rules, you will succeed, with great opportunities to create an ever-expanding donor base. Just keep this in mind: Don't go forgotten after the first gift. Fundraising is not a one-off effort. It's a never-ending process, just like any relationship.

This article is adapted from the chapter "People to People Fundraising: Crafting the Marketing Strategy to Make It Happen" in *People to People Fundraising: Social Networking and Web 2.0 for Charities*.

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