



DONOR EXPERIENCE REPORT

First Tee

By **Rachel Muir, CFRE**
and **James Goalder**



Contents

- 3** Introduction
- 4** What we researched and why
- 5** What did the data show?
- 10** Recommended donor appreciation timeline
- 11** Summary



Introduction

When COVID hit, donations surged. Yet, since 2021, donations and donors have steadily declined. On Giving Tuesday 2023, there were [10% fewer donors than the year prior](#).

Perhaps even more surprising, nonprofits experienced the most significant [trust decline](#) of any American institution in 2023.

What does this have to do with the donor experience?

Everything.

Building relationships with donors isn't optional in fundraising; it's the very definition of fundraising.

These sobering statistics on giving remind us that we must be engaging and personal to connect with donors. Tantamount to keeping our donors loyal is stellar stewardship.

How do First Tee nonprofits stack up?

This Donor Experience Report explores the giving process among 50 First Tee affiliates and how they communicate with donors in the most critical time in their relationship—the first 30 days.



What we researched and why



In this study, we donated \$25 to 50 First Tee affiliates across the US. This study examined the giving process and donor interactions across this segment to gain insights to improve the donor experience. This detailed analysis covers two primary areas: the online donation process and the 30-day donor journey following the gift.

This research aims to help you see how your giving experience compares to that of your peers and how factors like gift acknowledgment and follow-up communications influence donor behavior and repeat gifts.

We reviewed the following areas:

- Was the donor given the opportunity to cover transaction fees?
- Were the transaction fees included without a choice?
- Were multiple payment types offered (Google Pay/Apple Pay/Venmo)?
- Was there an option to pay towards a designated fund?
- Was there an option to give as a tribute or memorial?
- Was there an option to join a newsletter or other email communication?
- Did the donor receive a receipt for their donation via email?
- Did the donor receive a personalized or customized donation receipt?
- Did the donor receive a thank you letter in the first 5, 15, and 30 days after their donation?
- Did the donor receive a thank you call after their donation?
- Did the donor receive a personalized thank you email?
- Did the donor receive a newsletter in the first 30 days?
- Did the donor receive an ask to become a recurring donor?



What did the data show?

Online giving experience

34% of First Tee affiliates in this study offered multiple payment options for donors.

60% of First Tee affiliates invited donors to cover transaction fees associated with their gift.

26% of First Tee affiliates preselected the option for donors to cover the transaction fees for their gift.

How can we improve the donor's online giving experience?

The biggest mistake most First Tee affiliates made, 66% to be exact, in the online giving experience was only allowing credit card donations. Not offering donors the option to use their digital wallet and give via PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, or GooglePay leaves money on the table.

Why is that such a game-changer?

COVID rapidly accelerated digital adoption. In 2019, just 41% of customer interactions were digital, and seven months later, in July 2020, a whopping 65% were digital. (Source: RDK Group)

Have you ever gone to the grocery store, picked out all your items, and stood in line to check out, only to realize you didn't have your credit card?

If the store doesn't accept Apple Pay, you'll need to make an extra round trip to retrieve your wallet and make your purchase.

Studies show that making digital payment options available reduces donor checkout friction, builds trust, and increases unplanned gifts by 32% and repeat donations by 79%.

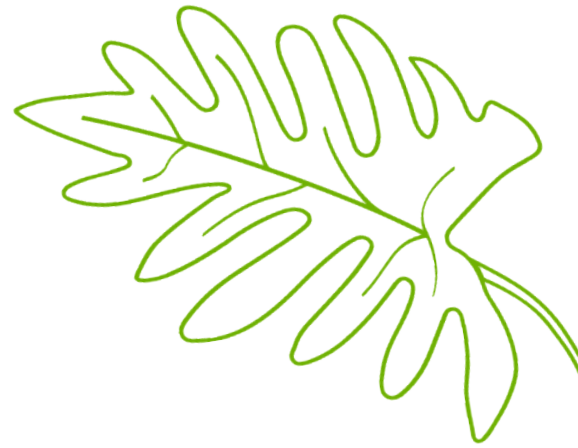
Yes, you can increase your donation conversions by 32% simply by adding digital wallet options like PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, and GooglePay to your donation form.



Gift designations

68% of First Tee affiliates did **NOT** offer donors the option to make a memorial or tribute donation.

74% of First Tee affiliates did **NOT** give donors the option to contribute to a specific fund.



How can we improve?

Not offering donors the chance to make a gift in tribute or as a memorial to another person is a missed opportunity, especially for a cause that's so popular with kids and families.

First Tee is an easy choice for anyone wanting to give in honor of an athlete.

It's critical that when you offer honorary or memorial giving, you capture the recipient's information seamlessly, as First Tee of South Dakota does on the right.



The screenshot shows a mobile-style form titled "Choose amount". At the top, there are navigation icons (lock, three dots, and a right arrow). Below the title, there are four tabs for frequency: "One-time" (selected), "Monthly", "Quarterly", and "Annually". Underneath are five buttons for donation amounts: "\$ 25", "\$ 50", "\$ 100", "\$ 250", and "\$ Custom Amount". A checkbox is checked with the text "Dedicate my donation in honor or in memory of someone". Below this is a section titled "In honor / memoriam" with two radio buttons: "In honor of" (selected) and "In memory of". There are four text input fields: "Honoree Name", "Person to notify", "Recipient Name", and "Notify this person by". Under "Notify this person by", there are two radio buttons: "Email" (selected) and "Postal mail". Below that is another text input field for "Recipient Email". At the bottom, there is a text area for "Message for the recipient (optional)" with a double-slash icon at the end.

Should we offer gift designation options?

Offering gift designations in memory or tribute is a great option for First Tee affiliates, but not having a list of designated fund options is perfectly acceptable.

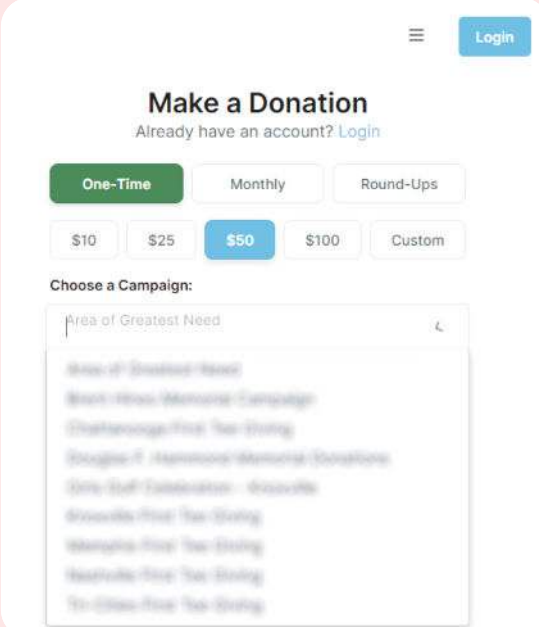
We tend to think that the more options we offer people, the better.

In reality, however, too many choices can overwhelm us and make us less likely to complete our gift.

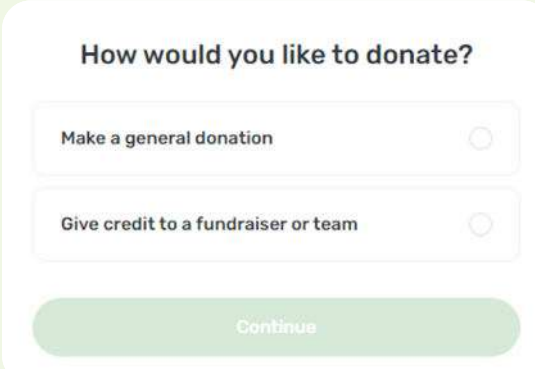
As long as your donation form makes a clear and compelling case for support, you needn't complicate or add clutter with multiple fund designations. Your donors may not be familiar with any of those options, and you risk confusing them or, worse, making them abandon the donation process.

The options for the First Tee affiliate seen on the right include nine different choices, all of which may be unfamiliar to donors.

If you have a small number (like two or three) of core programs that are donor favorites, you can offer them as designations a donor can select.

A screenshot of a 'Make a Donation' web form. At the top right is a 'Login' button. Below the title 'Make a Donation' is a link: 'Already have an account? Login'. There are three frequency buttons: 'One-Time' (highlighted in green), 'Monthly', and 'Round-Ups'. Below these are five amount buttons: '\$10', '\$25', '\$50' (highlighted in blue), '\$100', and 'Custom'. A section titled 'Choose a Campaign:' contains a search bar with the text 'Area of Greatest Need'. Below the search bar is a list of nine campaign options, each with a small icon to its left: 'Area of Greatest Need', 'Black Home Memorial Campaign', 'Chatterbox First Tee Giving', 'Douglas H. Johnson Memorial Donations', 'Doris Hall Celebration - Knoxville', 'Knoxville First Tee Giving', 'Memphis First Tee Giving', 'Nashville First Tee Giving', and 'Tennessee First Tee Giving'.

✗ This giving form includes too many fund designations which can confuse donors.

A screenshot of a 'How would you like to donate?' web form. It features two radio button options: 'Make a general donation' and 'Give credit to a fundraiser or team'. At the bottom of the form is a green 'Continue' button.

✓ Here's an example from First Tee of Birmingham, which offers the option of making a general donation or designating a gift for a team.

In this study of 50 First Tee affiliates, it's worth noting that three organizations had no working links to their donation page. Even if a generous donor wanted to give online, they couldn't give to these three organizations.

Oops! That page can't be found.

It looks like nothing was found at this location. Maybe try a search?

Search ...

✗ Actual error message received when attempting to donate to a First Tee affiliate.

The lesson? Test every step of your donation process on a desktop and a mobile device to make sure every link, every form, every landing page—every step—in your donor experience is a great one!



Saying thanks

92% of First Tee affiliates sent a thank you email receipt.

38% of First Tee affiliates personalized their email thank you receipt.

18% of First Tee affiliates followed up with a mailed thank you letter within 30 days.

Study after study on donor behavior tells us that the communications content that most influences whether a donor gives again is knowing the results achieved by their gift.

While an immediate email gift acknowledgment is essential because it informs the donor that you received their gift, it's only the first step.

Why?

You must report back to the donor and tell them how their gift made a difference. This is the key to getting another gift. It's also a critical step to building trust and a relationship with that donor.

It's not enough to simply thank a donor; we have to tell them how their gift made a meaningful impact.

However, of the 50 First Tee affiliates in this survey, only nine followed up to mail an actual thank you letter.

This is a missed opportunity to make donors feel like the heroes they are for generously giving their hard-earned dollars to First Tee.

When you consider that just 23% of new donors will make a second gift—and for donors giving less than \$100, that rate drops to 18%—you can see how following up with donors to tell them how their gift made a difference makes a significant impact on your revenue.

It costs 10 times more to acquire a new donor than to maintain an existing one, but when donors give loyally over time, their gifts increase, and they're more likely to name First Tee in their will or estate plans.



Recommended donor appreciation timeline



The first gift is just the start.

Since donors making a second gift to an organization are 60% more likely to give another gift, it's critical to have an airtight 'new donor honeymoon' for the first 90 days to show your appreciation and how their gift made a difference with personal touches before you make another ask.

Below is a [timeline](#) to help, loaded with personal touches to show your care and opportunities to learn more about your new donor, from a quick donor survey to an invite for a tour.

New donor cultivation timeline (first 90 days)



Keep in mind that the invitation is the cultivation. Even if you invite a new donor for a tour and they don't come—even if you have to leave a thank-you voice mail when you call to say thanks—it still makes an impact.

How much of an impact?

Picking up the phone to thank a new donor within 48 hours of their gift increased the odds of them giving again by [400%](#).

Who doesn't want donors who are four times as likely to give again?

Summary



Sadly, this study revealed that most First Tee affiliates aren't giving donors a meaningful welcome and thank you, or sending follow-up communications that let the donor feel the impact they're making.

The good news for any First Tee affiliate reading this report is that you can quickly implement a new donor cultivation timeline to change all that!

Bottom line, it's the actions you take at your nonprofit to deliver thoughtful, meaningful, prompt appreciation and cultivation that determine whether donors give more and stay loyal to your cause.



About the authors



Rachel Muir, CFRE

Rachel has worked every side of the Rubik's cube that is the nonprofit sector. When she was 26 Rachel Muir launched Girlstart, a non-profit empowering girls in math, science, engineering and technology in the living room of her apartment with \$500 and a credit card. Several years later she had raised over 10 million and was featured on Oprah, CNN, and the Today show. Today Rachel delivers workshops and offers a monthly membership, [League of Extraordinary Fundraisers](#), transforming people into confident, successful fundraisers. Learn more about Rachel at www.rachelmuir.com.



James Goalder

With almost 20 years of experience working in nonprofit technology and sales and relationship management, James brings the perfect blend of experience for his role as Partnerships Manager at Bloomerang. In addition to his work experience, James volunteers with Project Grows, a community farm in Virginia, serving on the Board and on Volunteer Nights with the organization.

Create a world inspired by giving



Tour Bloomerang

Donor Management
Volunteer Management
Online Fundraising
Event Management
Peer-to-Peer Fundraising
Auction Fundraising
Payment Processing
Email Marketing
Reporting & Analytics
Integration Hub



© 2024 Bloomerang® All rights reserved.

Bloomerang.com

 
@BloomerangTech

 
@Bloomerang

317.296.8100
9120 Otis Avenue
Indianapolis, IN 46216