



DONOR EXPERIENCE REPORT

Disability Advocacy Nonprofits

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Introduction

Stellar customer experiences are profoundly meaningful. Customers expect them every time they interact with a brand. In fact, customers often rate satisfying customer experiences higher than they do price and product.

Delivering a top-notch giving experience to your donors is just as important.

Why? Donors have the same expectations interacting with a nonprofit as with a for-profit. They expect prompt, personalized communications that show genuine appreciation. These communications are not just a formality but a powerful tool to make donors feel valued and connected. Equally as important, they expect you to tell them how their gift made an impact.

But what about disability advocacy nonprofits?

This experience is critical for disability advocacy nonprofits, where we must deliver both fantastic client experiences and donor experiences.

This Donor Experience Report delves into the crucial first 30 days of a donor's interaction with disability advocacy nonprofits nationwide. This initial phase is pivotal as it sets the tone for their future engagement and can significantly influence their decision to make repeat gifts.



What we researched and why



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 determine how you stack up to your peers in your space and understand how factors like your donation process, gift acknowledgment, and follow-up communications influence donor behavior and repeat gifts.

We reviewed the following areas:

- Was the donor given the opportunity to choose to cover transaction fees?
- 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?

In this study, we donated \$25 to 50 disability advocacy nonprofits across the US. This study examined the giving process and donor interactions across this segment to gain insights to improve the donor experience.

Online giving experience

80% of disability advocacy nonprofits did **NOT** offer multiple payment options for donors.

50% of disability advocacy nonprofits did **NOT** give donors the option to pay the transaction fees associated with their gift.

30% of disability advocacy nonprofits forced the donor to pay for transaction fees associated with their gift.

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

The majority of the 50 disability advocacy nonprofits in this study had homepages that lacked a brightly colored donate button and any call to action to give. This is a huge missed opportunity. Where, how, and how much to give need to be obvious and compelling on the homepage.

A staggering 80% of these organizations did not offer multiple payment methods (for example, PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, Google Pay, credit card, and bank transfer). Providing a variety of payment options is not just a convenience for donors but can also potentially increase the amount of donations. By limiting payment options, disability advocacy nonprofits are leaving money on the table and making it harder for donors to give.



The Arc of Oconee County features a **brightly colored donate button** that stands out on its homepage.

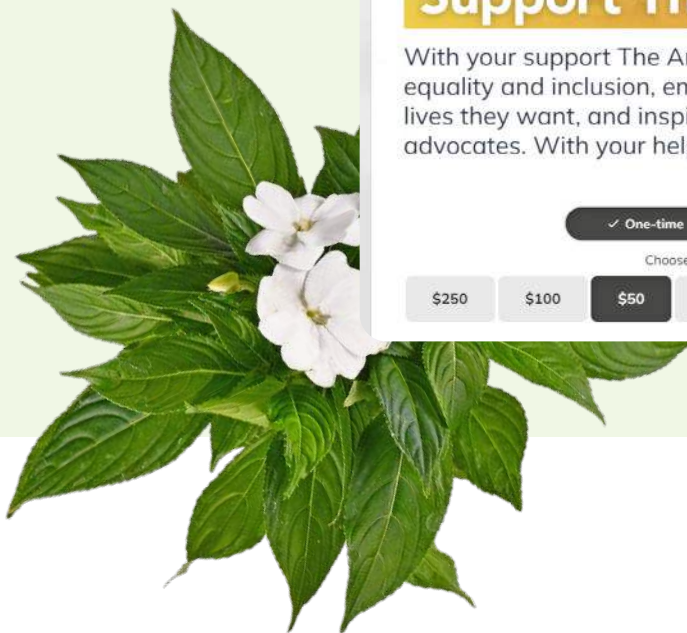


Half of the organizations in this study didn't give donors the option to pay processing fees. Offering this option is not just a matter of convenience for donors, but it can also enhance their giving experience. All charities should provide donors with the option to pay the transaction fee if they wish to do so. Not doing so is a missed opportunity since over half of donors opt to cover the fee, and some platforms report this happening 65–92% of the time. This can potentially increase revenue.

A surprising 30% of the disability advocacy organizations in this study made paying the fees associated with the donation mandatory. To avoid any backlash, make it optional. Include a rationale for how this helps you save on administrative costs and increases the impact of their gift. For example: "Make my gift go further by adding 3% to cover processing fees" or "If you opt to cover this small transaction fee, you'll be helping make an even bigger impact."



The Arc of Oconee County has done a great job pre-filling a **suggested giving amount** on their donation form.



The Arc

Support The Arc

With your support The Arc is leading the fight for equality and inclusion, empowering people to live the lives they want, and inspiring a nationwide movement of advocates. With your help, we grow stronger.

One-time Recurring

Choose a one-time amount

The most popular gift designation is memorial or tribute gifts. This is a must-have for nonprofits in the disability advocacy space since friends and family of a loved one with disabilities would naturally want to give in their honor. Equally important is offering memorial giving since disability advocacy organizations serve a population with a lower life expectancy than the general population and may have many prospects who want to give in memory of their loved ones.

The right way to do tributes and memorials

When someone opts to donate in honor or in memory of someone else, your platform should prompt them to fill out the honoree's information so that the donor can properly and promptly recognize them, as shown in the Arc of the Upper Valley's donation form.

This form asks if the gift is a tribute or memorial.

Next, it asks if the donor would like to notify the recipient.

Then, it invites the donor to write a note and ask for the recipient's mailing address and email to ensure they can forward the message to the recipient.

Offering donors the ability to make memorial or tribute gifts requires a platform that prompts donors to share their information so you can properly recognize them.

* What would you like the note to say?

Happy Birthday Becky! You make life more special and fun. Thank you for showing me life's big and small wonders. I love you! Your lil sis

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Where Should We Send the Notification?

* First Name * Last Name

Becky Smith

* Street Address

1333 Rocky Ridge Road

Street Address 2

Apartment, suite, etc. (optional)

* City

Austin

* State / Province * Zip / Postal Code

Texas 78731

* Country

United States

Email Phone

beckysmith@icloud.com 5128886118

Donate Once

✓ The Arc of the Upper Valley's donation form makes it easy for donors to make an honorary or tribute donation.

Invite donors to receive more communications from you

88% of disability advocacy organizations did **NOT** offer donors the option to receive further communications from them at checkout.

If you add an opt-in box for future communications on your donation form, make sure that it displays after the donor made their gift and offers value to the donor. Signing up to “receive a monthly newsletter” is not as enticing as “click here to get exclusive offers and special invites” or “click here to stay updated on all the ways your gift is making a difference.” If the donor doesn’t elect to sign up after making their gift, entice them to sign up in your thank you email.

Do I really need to ask permission to email them in my donation form?

When donors make donations and share their email addresses on your form, the [CAN-SPAM guidelines](#) allow you to email them. (Yes, you can email them even if you did not expressly state that you would email them when they filled out your form.)

As a fundraising consultant, I advise leaving out the question of receiving future emails from your donation form.

Why? For starters, you want to streamline the process for donors to make a gift, and any non-critical fields can slow them down or, in the worst case, lead them to abandon the check-out process.



The Arc of Knox County did ask, and they did a good job asking this question after the donor had already done the most essential thing—completing their gift.

The screenshot shows a credit card payment form titled "Credit Card". It includes a "Card Details" section with a card number field (masked with "link" and "9629") and a "Cardholder Name" field (containing "John Doe"). Below these fields is a checkbox labeled "I would like to receive occasional updates about Arc Knox County." which is checked. At the bottom of the form is a "CAPTCHA" section and a yellow "Submit" button.

Secondly, I want your donors to receive a prompt, meaningful, and personal thank you from you. If that comes through email, asking for their opt-in and having them decline to grant it could jeopardize that.

How should I invite donors to sign up to hear from me?

Give everyone—donors included—frequent and compelling reasons to give you their email addresses. Consider how you might entice them with an item of value, content they want, or take an action like a pledge.

Here are some ideas for items of value that website visitors could download that are specific to disability advocacy organizations:

- **Guide to accessible activities** in your community.
- **Transition planning toolkit** to help individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families navigate major life transitions by sharing advice on transitioning from school to adulthood or moving to a new living environment.
- **Assistive technology resources** that compiles a list of assistive technology tools to support individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- **Inclusive recipe collection** that solicits favorite easy-to-follow recipes from clients.
- **Advocacy starter kit** that provides an introduction for individuals and families interested in advocacy. It could include tips for self-advocacy, advice on communicating with policymakers, and resources for getting involved in disability rights campaigns.



Saying thanks

100% of the disability advocacy organizations in this study sent a thank you email receipt.

2% made an actual phone call to thank the donor.

68% did **NOT** personalize their email thank you receipt.

80% did **NOT** follow up with a mailed thank you letter.

An immediate email gift acknowledgment is essential; it informs the donor you received their gift. However, it doesn't tell the donor how their gift made a difference. Research 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.

Therefore, it's not enough to simply thank a donor; we must report back to tell them how their gift made a meaningful impact.

80% didn't follow up with a mailed thank you letter, and 68% of the thank you emails had no personalization. Those donors are unlikely to give again.

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 bottom line.

This is a missed opportunity to make donors feel like the heroes they are for helping people with intellectual disabilities.

The bright spot in this study is that one disability advocacy organization was thoughtful enough to call its donors to thank them.



Recommended donor appreciation timeline



Since donors making a second gift to an organization are 60% more likely to give another gift, I recommend you craft a 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.

Here's a timeline you can use to get started that's loaded with personal touches to show you 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—the invitation is the cultivation. Even if your new donor doesn't come for a tour—and even if they don't answer your call and you have to leave a thank you voicemail message—it still makes 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 to you again?

Summary



Sadly, this study revealed that most Disability Advocacy organizations aren't giving donors a meaningful welcome, thank you, and follow-up communications that let the donor feel the impact they are making.

The good news for any Disability Advocacy organization reading this report is that you can quickly implement a new donor cultivation timeline to change all that!

The opportunity to surprise and delight donors simply by saying thank you is easier to put in place than you might think.



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



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