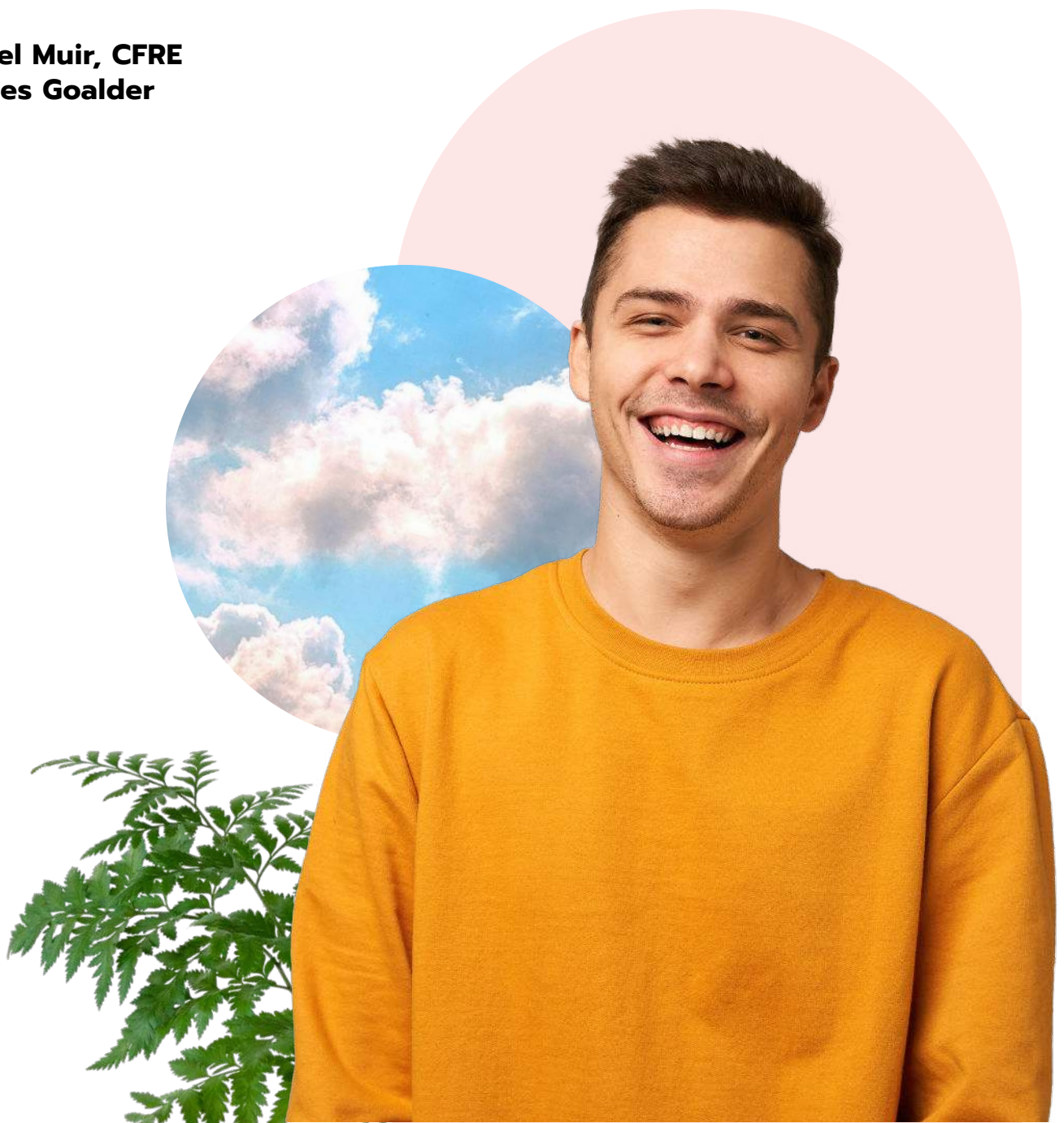




DONOR EXPERIENCE REPORT

Family Promise

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



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Introduction

First impressions are everything when it comes to a prospect visiting your charity’s website to make a donation.

Your website is more than a welcome mat. It’s the most powerful tool you have to inspire and motivate people to support your cause.

A compelling, well-designed homepage with strong visuals and a clear call to action inspires confidence and donations.

But that’s just the first step.

A thoughtful, meaningful gift acknowledgment and stewardship process is the magic formula to convert a first-time donor into a loyal donor.

A study by The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) found that only 19% of first-time donors will give again. Yet [studies show](#) that if you can get a donor to make three or more gifts, your odds of retaining them skyrocket as high as 60%.

How do Family Promise nonprofits stack up?

This Donor Experience Report explores the giving process among 50 Family Promise 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 Family Promise 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 stacks up to your peers and understand 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

22% of Family Promise affiliates in this study offered multiple payment options for donors.

62% of Family Promise affiliates invited donors to cover transaction fees associated with their gift.

32% of Family Promise affiliates preselected for donors to cover the transaction fees for their gift.



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

The biggest miss, by far, in the Family Promise online giving experience was restricting donors to give only by credit card. As many as 39 of the 50 organizations studied did not offer donors the opportunity to give using [PayPal](#), [Venmo](#), [Apple Pay](#), or [GooglePay](#).

Why is that such a game-changer?

[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%.

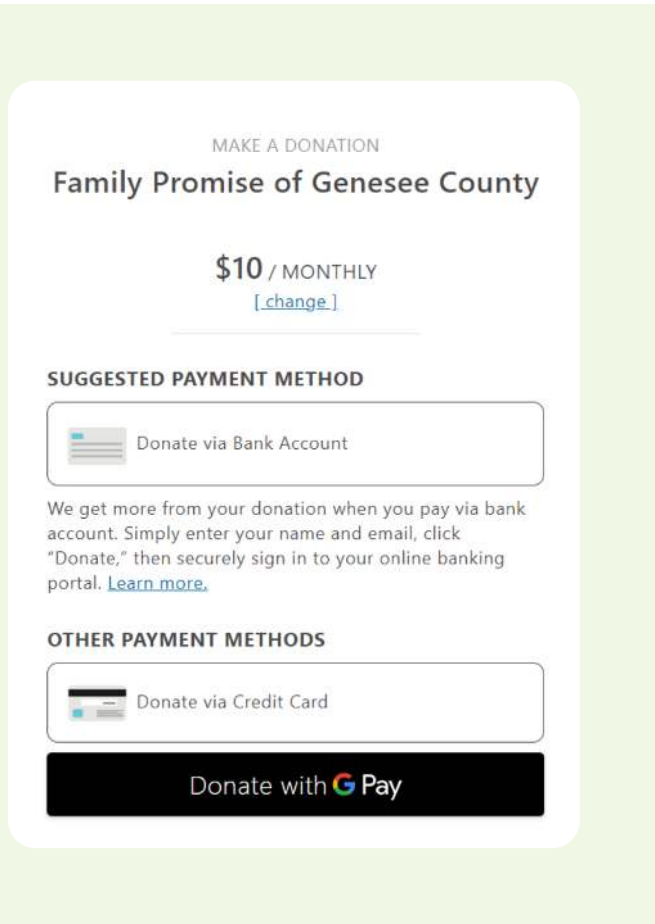
Think about it. How many times have you left the house, gone to a store, picked out your items, and made it to the cash register only to realize you left your wallet at home?

Not a problem if the store accepts Apple Pay. But if they don't, you have to leave the store, go home, get your wallet, and drive back.

Donation conversions increase by more than 32% when you offer multiple digital payment methods.

Want to boost your odds of converting a gift by 32%? Edit your checkout to accept digital wallet options like PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, and GooglePay.

Equally as important, especially when it comes to monthly giving, is offering donors the opportunity to give through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), as shown in the screenshot below:



Why is encouraging donors—especially monthly donors—to give via EFT so important?

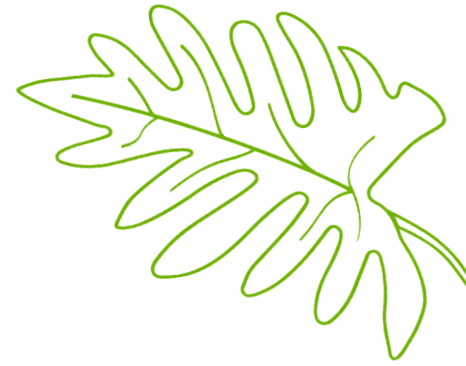
Even though credit cards are good for several years after they're issued, according to Harvey McKinnon's book, [How to Create Lifelong Donors Through Monthly Giving](#), "3% of credit cards expire every month, and they are canceled when lost, stolen or hacked into."

Everyone should offer donors the option to pay the transaction fee if they wish to. Not doing so is a missed opportunity since over half of donors opt to cover the fee; in some cases, [65–92%](#) of donors cover it.

To avoid any controversy, make sure it's optional and include a rationale for how donors' covering the fee helps you save on admin costs and increases the impact of their gift. For example: "Make my gift go further by adding 3% to cover processing fees," or "By opting to cover this small transaction fee, you'll be helping make an even bigger impact."



Gift Designations



60% of Family Promise affiliates did **NOT** offer donors the option to make a memorial or tribute donation.

82% of Family Promise 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 with such broad appeal as Family Promise.

Family Promise organizations are an easy choice for bereaved families who might suggest well-wishers make a donation to honor the loved one they lost.

Kudos to Family Promise of Hawaii, seen in the screenshot to the right, for including the recipient's **name and email address** to notify the honoree or family members of the person being memorialized.

To take this up a notch, they could also include an optional message for the honoree or family of the person being memorialized, as seen in the example below:

Should we offer gift designation options?

Allowing gift designations in memory or tribute is a must-have option for Family Promise affiliates, but not having a list of designated fund options is perfectly acceptable.

It's human nature to believe that the more options we offer people, the better. Practically speaking, having too many choices can overwhelm us and make us less likely to complete our gift. As long as you have a clear and compelling case for support on your donation form, you needn't complicate or add clutter with multiple fund designations—most of which your donor is not familiar with and which could (a) confuse them and (b) make them abandon the donation process.

Invite donors to receive more communications from you

88% of the Family Promise affiliates in this study did **NOT** give donors the option to receive further communications at checkout.

Among those that did, it looked something like this example from Family Promise Linn County:

Would you like to receive news and updates from Family Promise and the families we serve. *

Yes, please!

No, thank you.

If you use an opt-in box for future communications on your donation form, make sure it appears after the donor has made their gift and that it offers value to the donor. Signing up to “receive news and updates” is not as enticing as “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, make sure you take the opportunity to entice them to sign up in your thank you email.

Do I really need permission to email them 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 the donor 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. Secondly, I want your donors to get 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.

Saying thanks

100% of Family Promise affiliates sent a thank you email receipt.

18% personalized their email thank you receipt.

14% of Family Promise affiliates followed 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.

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

However, of the 50 Family Promise affiliates in this survey, only seven followed up to mail an actual thank you letter.

This is a glaring missed opportunity to make donors feel like the heroes they are for helping families facing homelessness.

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 your Family Promise affiliate in their wills or estate plans.

Recommended donor appreciation timeline



Since donors making a second gift to an organization are 60% more likely to give another gift, you can create 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.

Below is a [timeline](#) to help, 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. 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.

New donor cultivation timeline (first 90 days)



Picking up the phone to thank a new donor within 48 hours of their gift increases the odds of repeat giving [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 Family Promise affiliates aren't giving donors the meaningful welcome, thank you, and follow-up communications that let donors feel the impact they're making.

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

As Roger Craver said,

“It is the actions of the nonprofit that cause the good (or poor) donor attitude around higher giving, retention, and donor lifetime value.”

ROGER CRAVER

Author of [Retention Fundraising: the Art and Science of Keeping Your Donors for Life](#)



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.

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