

Planned Giving Websites Do Not Close Planned Gifts. **You Do.**

By Viken Mikaelian

I shop at Wal-Mart sometimes – there’s one around the corner.

More often than not, my fellow shoppers have carts overflowing with gadgets. I wonder if all that stuff will ever get used, or will end up gathering dust in basements. Once you’re inside a superstore like Wal-Mart or Costco, it’s tempting to buy as many things as possible, whether you need them or not, because everything seems so cheap.

A Full Shopping Cart Does Not Close Gifts

It’s like going back to the all-you-can-eat buffet for your seventh helping of cottage cheese, stuffing balls and pickled beets. You really don’t need more, but since you’ve already paid for it...

Today, fundraisers are faced with a battery of e-marketing tools. Many are tempted to put their hands on everything they can get. A friend in the gift-planning business told me, “A vendor promised me that they can give me tools to contact 2000 prospects with the push of a send key. And it’s cheap!”

Well, not quite that cheap. What they didn’t tell you are the costs after you press that send key, and that, in fact, it can be quite expensive. Consider lost opportunities when most of your e-mail blast gets deleted or spammed out, especially when it annoys

some of your prospects (and it will). We have a great article on this topic at www.virtualgiving.com titled *Planned Giving E-mail Blasts: The E-marketing Tool That Bites You Back*.

So, do your prospects want a barrage of spam from you? Are any relevant messages that actually sound like your institution getting through? *Who cares?* You’re using up an “all-you-can-eat” package of e-marketing tools in a deal that you’ve already paid for, so...

The “Human Moment”

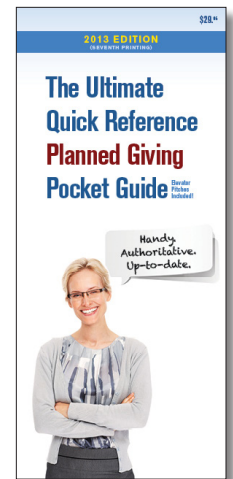
We tell our clients, “Don’t hide behind the tools!” There are certain things that a gadget can’t do well (like kissing your children).

We know that planned giving websites will not close planned gifts. They can get the prospect in the mood, but gift closing requires “human moments”, a term coined by Edward M. Hallowell, psychiatrist and senior lecturer at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Hallowell writes that the human moment is “an authentic psychological encounter that can happen only when two people share the same physical space. It has two prerequisites: people’s physical presence and their emotional and intellectual attention.”

It’s like needing to hug your spouse or kids: your well-being depends on it (theirs too).

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Every fundraiser needs this planned giving pocket guide.

Over...

The human moment is a quality of interaction you don't get from computers, emails, or even the phone.

Often the computer encourages superficial attention to streams of data, but talking face-to-face demands focused emotional and intellectual involvement that is uniquely satisfying.

"In-person contact stimulates an emotional reaction," explains Lawrence Honig, a neurologist at Columbia-Presbyterian Eastside, a New York hospital. Bonding hormones are higher when people are face-to-face. Some claim face-to-face contact stimulates dopamine, the attention and pleasure neurotransmitter, and serotonin, the neurotransmitter that reduces fear and worry.

Working at the computer or talking on the phone for a long time is exhausting. The brain starts to crave rest from input overload and fuel from human contact.

(As the use of communication technology has risen, consultants have begun flying more... wonder why?)

The "Why" is More Important Than the "How"

At VirtualGiving.Com, our products speak for themselves and they *will* get you results. However, it is more important to understand our philosophy above (the "why").

If you make this paradigm shift you will be able to close more gifts faster and with less effort. If you don't make this paradigm shift, we'll be just another vendor instead of your partner.

Our tools work to make your life simpler. Their development is based on research outcomes and facts, and part of that research is our first-hand observation of the day-to-day practices of planned giving officers and individuals like yourself. The most important thing is for you to apply shoe leather; i.e., visit prospects.

We put our experience to work to help you disseminate information and engage your prospects. We know what mailings produce results, when are the best months to mail, who you should target. We know what should be said on your website and why certain phrases compel prospects. We know why it's important to keep planned giving plain and simple. We know where you should focus and how you will know that your program is working.

We deliver truly customized services with "human content," not a smorgasbord of products packaged as a "deal." The result is carefully tailored to your needs so that you can close more gifts.



I hope you found this white paper stimulating and useful.

My mission is to make available to you the best know-how, insight, and tools so you can keep yourself, your career, and your organization *permanently* ahead of the curve.

Contact me. Let me know how you're doing. And let me know how I'm doing.

Let's improve and succeed *together*.

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