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volunteers wanted
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3 strategies to boost year-end fundraising starting now

Start preparing for year-end now

Believe it or not, year-end is already around the corner. Across the nonprofit sector, fundraising staff are setting and finalizing the plans that will lead them to success in the last months of the year. Many organizations saw giving hold flat or slightly rise in past years, but some are concerned by shrinking donor retention — especially among small-dollar donors.

One thing everyone can agree on? The stakes this year are as high as ever. Now is the perfect time for organizations of all sizes and missions to plan, test, and implement strategies that will set them up for success during year-end. That's why we've compiled this greatest-hits list of three proven techniques nonprofits can start implementing now to take their year-end fundraising to the next level.

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Strategy #1: Converting volunteers into donors

Volunteers are essential to many nonprofits' long-term success — and not just in terms of monetary generosity. Double the Donation has shared that in a survey of nonprofit supporters, 76% of respondents said they donated to the nonprofits they volunteer with, and 68% volunteered with the organizations they donated to. It's clear: Volunteers are likely to offer support in multiple ways for a deeper level of involvement. The experience you give them can encourage them to expand their support.

Whether your organization already has a thriving volunteer program or is focused on growing one, it's important to lay the groundwork now to convert volunteer energy today into financial support later. Let's walk through four effective techniques for turning volunteers into donors.

1 Optimize volunteer recruitment and registration

A positive experience at the beginning of the volunteer journey sets the tone for future interactions. Build a strong foundation by providing all of the details supporters need to choose to participate, including:

- The event's location and runtime
- Tasks and responsibilities
- Accessibility information
- Volunteer incentives
- Expected outcomes and the impact they'll help create

Once you've caught the interest of potential volunteers, streamline your registration process so signing up only takes a few clicks. Set up automated email and text messages to thank each volunteer for registering and remind them as the event draws near. Finally, extend your recruitment reach even further by making it easy for them to share your event with their personal networks.

Pro tip: If you're looking for new volunteers to join your program, Bonterra's volunteer management capabilities facilitate the acquisition process by allowing nonprofits to tap into a network of over 5 million supporters eager for opportunities to contribute. Recruitment through this public network has been proven to lead to a 30% reduction in no-shows!

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2 Prioritize volunteer appreciation closer to year-end

Cultivation is crucial for successfully turning your nonprofits' volunteers into donors. Demonstrate your appreciation for their time and effort before asking them to deepen their engagement by donating.

To prepare for a successful donation pitch at year-end, first acknowledge your supporters' contributions to your organization's success. During and after each event, thank volunteers for their support and get permission to publicly spotlight key individuals in your nonprofit's social media posts or newsletters. As the end of the year approaches, you can show additional appreciation by:

- Hosting a party or virtual celebration for volunteers.

- Sending handwritten thank-you notes.

- Arranging one-on-one coffee meetings.

Pro tip: Bonterra offers comprehensive tools that enable your organization to easily manage volunteer shifts, send event reminders, track attendance, and follow up with supporters.

3 Personalize your donation requests to turn volunteers into donors

Once you're ready to make the ask, make volunteers feel valued by personalizing each donation request. You can do this in three steps:

1 Start with a personalized thank-you

Use your nonprofit's tracked volunteer data to customize messages according to supporters' past contributions. This allows you to acknowledge and appreciate how much time and effort they've already invested in your organization. Begin your message with a personalized greeting like:

Hi Jane!

First of all, thank you so much for being such an amazing volunteer. With your help, we've been able to complete over 4,980 calls to at-risk seniors across the state to ensure that they have timely access to essential services.

2 Communicate specific needs

While your volunteers may be familiar with your organization's mission and work, help them better understand your funding needs by offering relevant details like your budget and fundraising goals. Try adding specific data to your message, such as:

Five years ago, our organization delivered 110 million meals to 1.7 million seniors. However, since then we've seen more and more seniors face food insecurity every year.

Ensuring that no senior in our community goes hungry requires emergency funds, so we're raising $100,000 by December 31st to deliver an additional 12,000 meals.
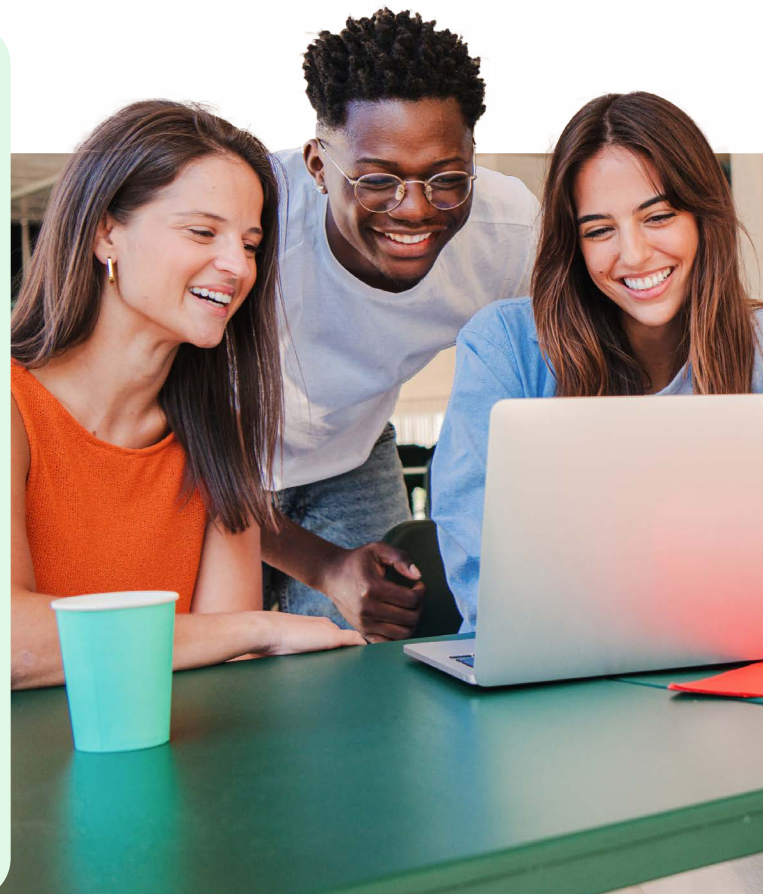
③ Demonstrate the impact of donations and volunteer hours

Your nonprofit's volunteers are already dedicated to furthering your organization's mission, so explain why their financial support is needed alongside their current efforts. End your message with a call-to-action:

As a volunteer, you're one of our most powerful advocates for ending senior hunger, and you've seen first-hand the impact we've had on our community. In one week, our organization is participating in a global day of giving to continue to fund our meal-delivery program. We're $10,000 away from reaching our goal, and we need your help to ensure that we can continue providing this vital service.

4 Turn your volunteers into fundraisers

Each volunteer has a personal network of friends, family, and acquaintances who often share similar beliefs and values. Empower your volunteers with the right tools to fundraise on your nonprofit's behalf. Peer-to-peer fundraisers are valuable opportunities to raise more money, engage your volunteers more deeply, and bring in new support for your organization.

Pro tip: Make it easy for supporters to invite their networks to sign up for a shift. Bonterra enables volunteers to efficiently connect with their own friends and fellow supporters. More than 20% of supporters who have taken action through our supporter engagement solutions have come from a bring-a-friend feature, and almost 40% of supporters have taken action with the same people multiple times.

Strategy #2: 5 vital fundraising metrics to evaluate and improve

Most of us monitor our own personal health indicators and make lifestyle changes based on indicators that matter to us. This is also true for your nonprofit's fundraising program: You need access to the vital signs that tell you whether your donor file is healthy or whether it needs resuscitation.

Predictive analytics now give fundraisers of all data skill levels the ability to do this type of assessment. You can optimize the work you're already doing by tracking key metrics across channels, and then moving those metrics to meet your goals.

This worksheet will give you the real-world metrics fundraisers should be monitoring to achieve success at year-end and all year round.

5 fundraising vital signs

#1: Average gift

Average gift is the most commonly tracked revenue metric. The average gift can be tied directly to how much it costs to obtain a donation. This metric should be benchmarked in two ways:

- Average first gift (revenue generated from new donors)

- Existing donor average gift (revenue generated from donors who have given in previous years)

The first gift is almost always the most expensive to acquire and has a direct relationship with future value (or the long-term value of the donor that gave the gift,) while typically existing donors have a higher average gift than first-time givers.

Calculate average gifts:

Average first gift	
Revenue from first gifts ("join gifts")	$300,000
÷ Number of gifts	10,000
Average first gift	$30

Existing donor average gift	
2024 revenue from donors whose first gift was not in 2024	$5,000,000
÷ Number of gifts	80,000
Existing donor average gift	$62.50

#2: Change in revenue

This simple metric should be tracked against both the Consumer Price Index and the sector average. Understanding if your organization is keeping pace with the ever-increasing costs of fundraising, as well as the pace of growth for other nonprofits, is vital to long-term sustainability.

Calculate change in revenue:

2024 gross revenue	**$300,000**
- 2023 gross revenue	**10,000**
Change in revenue	**-$250,000**
÷ 2023 gross revenue	**$2,250,000**
% Change in revenue	**-11%**

#3: Donor file growth

Your file's growth score evaluates the number of donors added to the file compared to the number of donors lapsing. This metric is essential to:

- **Balance** your donor acquisition and reactivation efforts.
- **Target** your donors who are at greatest risk for attrition.
- **Implement** strategies for preventing future donor attrition.

Pro tip: Keeping stakeholders like your board of directors up to date on your donor pool doesn't need to take hours of manual work. Bonterra lets you schedule selected reports to be emailed to specific people at set intervals. That means sharing regular, timely updates takes just a few clicks.

Calculate donor file growth:

New donors	**1,000**
+ Reactivated donors	**1,200**
= Donors added	**2,200**
÷ Donors lost (donated last year but not in current year)	**2,500**
= Growth score	**0.88**

A growth score of less than 1 means the file is shrinking.

#4: Donor retention

Donor retention determines how reliable and predictable your donors are by calculating how many donors are committed to your organization and how many have become inactive. You'll need to understand how many donors continue to give in order to succeed at fundraising in the future. The donor retention metric should be evaluated for two populations:

- **New donors:** a donor who has made their first gift to your organization

- **Existing donors:** a donor who has given to your organization at least once per year in the last two consecutive years

Calculate donor retention:

New donor retention	
2023 new donors who gave again in 2024	**300**
÷ 2023 new donors	**1,000**
New donor retention	**30%**

Existing donor retention	
2023 existing donors who gave again in 2024	**52,700**
÷ 2023 existing donors	**99,000**
Existing donor retention	**54%**

Pro tip: If your goal is to increase donor retention, you can use multiple channels to meet that goal and give supporters a smooth, tailored experience. Boost donor retention by fine-tuning your digital strategy and putting it into action with your fundraising and engagement platform.
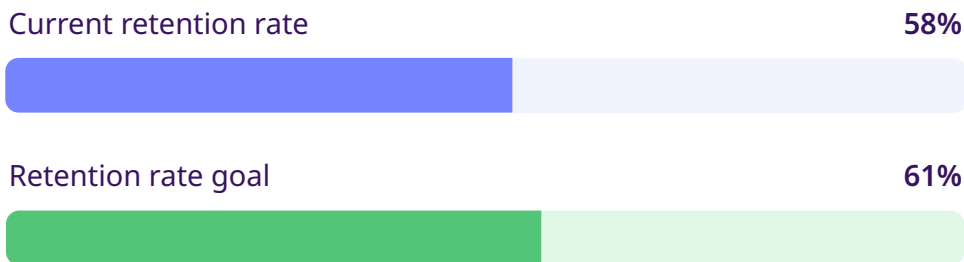
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#5: Five-year donor lifetime value

Lifetime Value (LTV), perhaps the most important metric for a fundraiser, indicates how much gross revenue you can expect from your donors over the first five years. This metric is essential for nonprofits that want to calculate how much they should be investing in new donor acquisition. It's also important for tracking the development and growth of your current donor file.

Calculate donor file growth:

First five years of revenue	**$3,150,000**
÷ Donors acquired	**40,000**
Five-year lifetime value	**$78.75**

Moving the metrics and planning for year-end

Current retention rate   **58%**

Retention rate goal   **61%**

$189,544

additional gross revenue if goal is reached

Once you've done these calculations (or used Bonterra Fundraising and Engagement to do them for you), you'll be able to identify priority areas to focus on during year-end. Whether you focus on upgrading donors, improving new donor retention, or improving existing donor retention, using data to inform your fundraising strategy will help you set clear objectives and prioritize outreach correctly, to achieve your goals.

Pro tip: Make your year-end planning simpler than ever by using Bonterra's predictive analytics-powered fundraising optimization features to easily calculate the revenue changes you can expect when you increase these metrics.

Strategy #3: Building community for success on GivingTuesday

GivingTuesday is the biggest fundraising day in the world, and it's a prime opportunity to kick off your year-end fundraising push with a 24-hour Giving Day event. With thousands of other organizations running GivingTuesday campaigns as well, it's important that yours stands out. To attract and keep the attention of your community and succeed with your campaign, your organization needs effective marketing materials, engaging campaign activities, and the right tools to run a limited-time event.

Here are the four most important strategies and technology tips you can use to achieve success.

1. Align your GivingTuesday event with a region or network

Your organization can choose to run an individual Giving Day event or participate in a collaborative one. No matter which path you take, you can connect with supporters by running a statewide or region-based Giving Day, like #GiveBigPittsburgh in Pittsburgh, PA, or NEPA Gives in Northeast Pennsylvania.

By keeping your Giving Day focused within a specific region, you can appeal to a group of supporters with personal ties and connections to the participating nonprofits. This means your base will be more likely to become involved and invested in the success of your day.

Pro tip: Using Bonterra's Fundraising and Engagement solutions, you can create a branded website that will be recognizable to donors and nonprofits and represents your local community. You can also make that website mobile-friendly so you can reach as many donors as possible, whether they prefer to use a computer or their smartphone to keep in touch or make a gift.

For national organizations with affiliates or chapters in different states, like Clubhouse Giving Day and Horizons Giving Day, coordinating your efforts for a nonprofit network Giving Day can be just as powerful. This type of Giving Day was designed to support organizations that operate on a national scale with affiliates or chapters providing services in local communities. Typically, these affiliate organizations are widely spread and vary in needs, size, and capacity, but still work toward a common goal or mission.

> "We were impressed with Bonterra Fundraising and Engagement's mobile responsiveness and the ease of the donor experience when making a donation."
>
> —Christine Herlin, manager of nonprofit and customer relations, I Live Here I Give Here

2. Recruit peer-to-peer fundraiser participants to spread your GivingTuesday campaign

Peer-to-peer fundraising is an effective way to raise awareness for your organization and grow your community. In this format, supporters can create mini-fundraising campaigns and collect donations on behalf of your organization. This format helps you access your supporters' networks of family and friends, which is helpful because if a new supporter sees their friend or family member is involved, they'll be more likely to give.

Pro tip: Keeping stakeholders like your board of directors up to date on your donor pool doesn't need to take hours of manual work. Bonterra lets you schedule selected reports to be emailed to specific people at set intervals. That means sharing regular, timely updates takes just a few clicks.

By empowering your volunteer fundraisers with the tools to set their own goals, tell their own stories, and get their networks involved, you'll be giving them a fun and easy way to support your organization and broaden your reach.

> "
> Utilizing Peer-to-Peer Fundraising for our Giving Day not only allowed us to engage key stakeholders such as our board of directors, physicians, and hospital staff, it allowed us to greatly expand the reach of our cause far beyond expectations."
>
> —Tiffany Bloss, Schuyler Health Foundation, Cayuga Health

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3. Promote friendly competition

Playing a game is a great way to make GivingTuesday fundraising enjoyable and form a community. For organizations using Bonterra, their peer-to-peer fundraisers can form teams. These teams then compete to raise the most money for the campaign. This is an effective — and fun — way to motivate people to collect donations and spread the word about the campaign.

Consider trying the "challenge" format for your competition. This is when a sponsor offers a gift that can be unlocked by meeting a fundraising goal. Once it has been set, funds will be released to your overall total once your goal has been met. This creates a sense of teamwork among donors to "unlock" those extra funds for your organization.

Pro tip: Bonterra helps staff keep the energy and enthusiasm up with branded visual tools like leaderboards, campaign tiles, and heat maps that show funds raised and let donors compete to help you reach fundraising milestones. Dashboards that update in real time help staff track your progress toward your Giving Day goals.
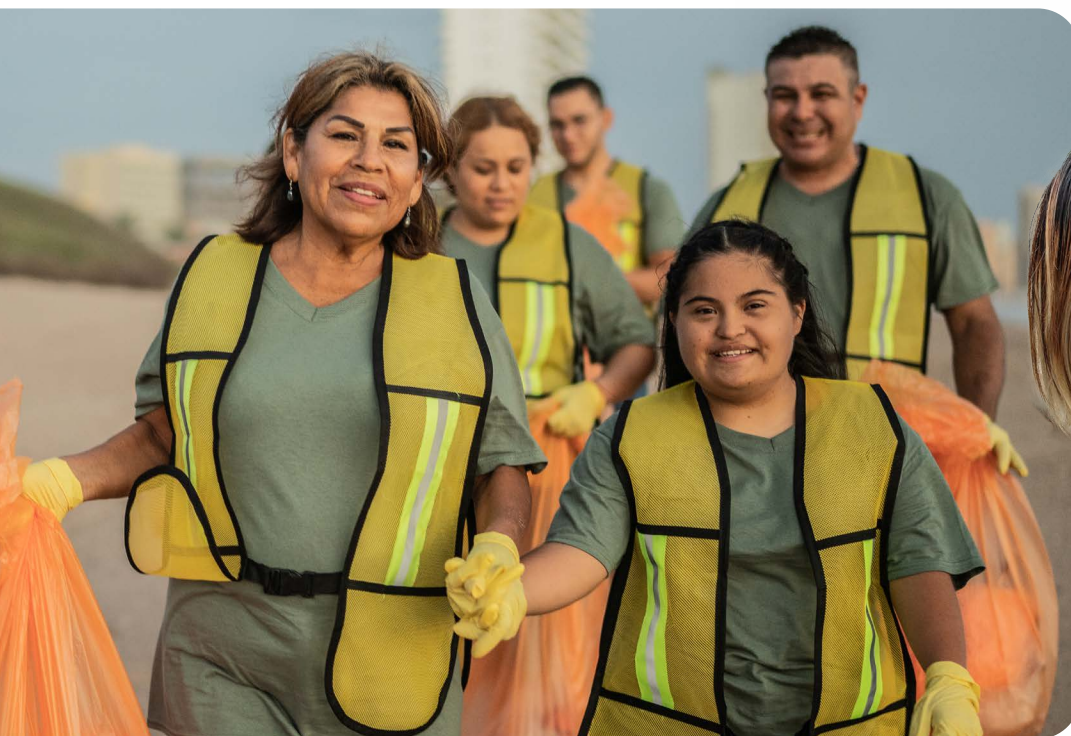
> " With Bonterra, we no longer have to run a report to see the progress of our Giving Day. The numbers are updated in real time and quick analysis makes a huge difference!"
>
> —Danielle Mason, Saint Mary's College

4. Try a matching challenge

[According to Double the Donation](#), 84% of people say they're more likely to donate if their gift will be matched. Consider partnering with businesses, [board members](#), or major donors to launch a matching challenge. These benefactors can pledge to match donations up to a specified amount based on donations received during your campaign. This encourages donors to give more because they're able to see that their gift can make an even larger impact.

Pro tip: Fundraising and Engagement packages include our workplace matching gift functionality unique to the Bonterra ecosystem. This lets donors find matches for their gift and make a bigger impact in just a few clicks.

The impact of Giving Days

Organizations of all types and sizes can tap into the urgency and community spirit of Giving Days to build their supporter lists, convert that support into donations, and ultimately raise more for their missions on GivingTuesday and beyond.

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3 final reminders

As you launch your year-end campaign, here are three last tips to remember:

1. **Lead with gratitude.** Then, use your GivingTuesday results as a natural segue into your year-end fundraising efforts.

2. **Don't be afraid to ask GivingTuesday donors to give again at year-end.** Remind supporters that there's still time to make a final donation to help your nonprofit reach its goals for the year, but monitor your response rates for drop-off to avoid overwhelming supporters with asks.

3. **Periodically share information about a specific need you're working to meet.** This helps supporters understand the impact of their gift, which improves their experience and encourages loyalty.

Now is the ideal time to implement a new fundraising strategy (or three). Done right, any of these techniques — converting new donors from volunteer opportunities, assessing your donor file health, and building community around a Giving Day — can help you raise the funds and build the support you need to advance your mission at year-end and beyond.

Talk to us to learn more about how these strategies can work together in Bonterra Fundraising and Engagement, a platform that's designed to meet nonprofits' needs.

Request a demo

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