



The Secrets of Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Success

How network-powered campaigns can help you reach new donors and crush your online fundraising goals.

About this Guide

Let's face it: your long-term fundraising success is about more than just meeting a one-time dollar goal. It's about rallying your community, acquiring new donors, and increasing capacity for years to come.

Peer-to-peer fundraising can help you expand your reach through social connections and raise more money by amplifying messages through supporter-driven campaigns.

Sounds pretty great, right? But, how do you do it?

We're here to help.

This short guide will show you:

- What peer-to-peer fundraising is and why it works
- How to inspire your supporters to raise funds on your behalf
- What you need for a successful peer fundraising campaign

Ready to get started? Read on!



About the Author

This guide was written by Caryn Stein, Vice President of Communications and Content for Network for Good. Caryn leads Network for Good's training programs and is the editor of [The Nonprofit Marketing Blog](#). As a nationally-recognized speaker and coach, Caryn has helped hundreds of nonprofits improve their online fundraising strategy and donor communications.

What is Peer-to-Peer Fundraising?

Peer-to-peer fundraising—also known as personal fundraising, social fundraising, or simply P2P—happens when nonprofits empower supporters to raise money on their organization’s behalf. These types of campaigns allow causes to extend their reach far beyond their core network, raising awareness and attracting new donors.

These campaigns center around a passionate desire to make an impact on a problem or cause, and then “recruit” supporters based on a shared interest in the cause, the social momentum of the campaign, or in honor of the friendship with the original project sponsor.

Peer-to-peer fundraising is a powerful opportunity for nonprofit fundraisers because it allows you to tap into a much broader network than you currently have access to, through people’s most trusted sources of information: their friends. Many organizations are already using the power of their supporters and their networks to successfully amplify their message and increase the impact of their outreach.

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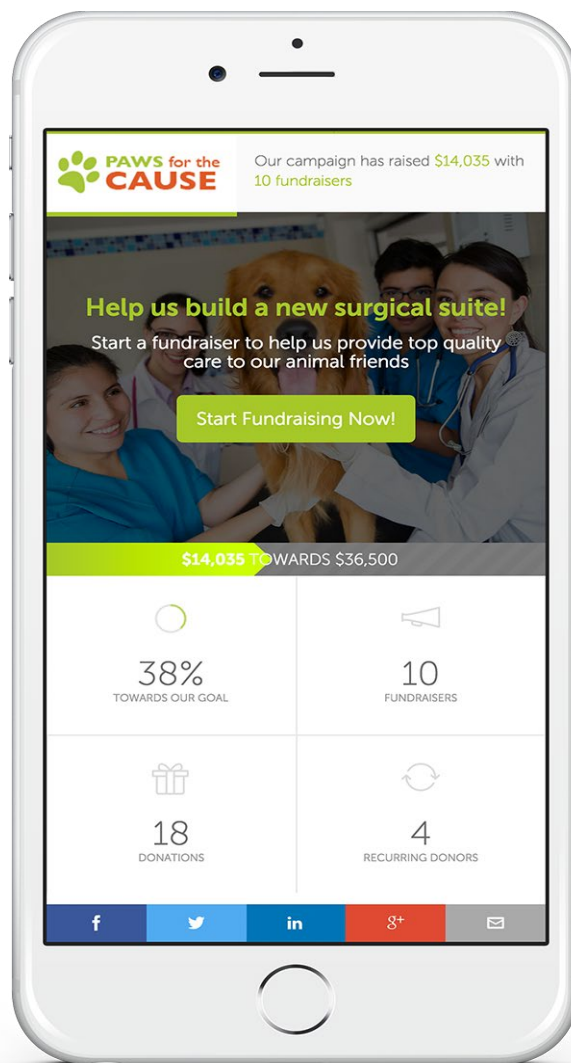
The Rise of Peer Fundraising

Peer-to-peer fundraising itself isn't new. People have been crowdfunding and raising money from their networks through events, contests, and marathons way before this type of online giving was fully established. However, the power of social media combined with personal networks—along with the ease of online giving—have enabled peer-to-peer giving to really take off in recent years.

The impact of peer fundraising and socially-driven campaigns has increased dramatically as the tools and communication channels that make it easy for donors to advocate on organizations' behalf have become mainstream.

Peer-to-peer fundraising has seen explosive growth over the last few years, with donation volume **growing 70% in 2014**. Better still, **the average donation amount for gifts through these campaigns has also grown year over year.**

Nonprofits who've enabled and empowered their supporters to become active fundraisers are reaping the rewards. Nonprofits who add these type of peer-to-peer campaigns to their fundraising portfolio actually end up increasing their core fundraising activity. So, peer fundraising doesn't cannibalize traditional donors or donations. Our research has consistently shown that peer-to-peer campaigns are additive to other fundraising methods, allowing nonprofits to grow both their revenue and their donor base.



Why Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Works

While giving is a highly emotional and at times deeply personal act, at its core, most giving is social. The inspiration to donate to a charitable cause is often prompted by personal experiences or ties, either to a cause or an organization. It's how we relate and give back to our community and how we seek to improve the world for our fellow man.



Giving is also social in that we are strongly influenced by our family, friends, and networks—as well as those we perceive to be our peers. When an appeal for funds comes from someone in our networks that we trust, we're more likely to act.

Here's why peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns can help you raise more money and inspire new donors to give:

Peer fundraising is based on a two-way relationship.

Traditional fundraising appeals are often broadcast messages. These one-sided promotions can move people to act, but they don't easily capture the emotion or relationship that can drive giving on a massive scale. Peer-to-peer fundraising puts the message in the mouth of the person who is most likely to prompt a donation: someone the audience knows.

The act of giving then becomes an appealing way for the audience to play a role in the relationship—to show that he or she is someone who cares about doing good, who wants to be a supportive friend, and who is a part of something larger than himself. This holds true for the fundraiser as well.

A personal fundraiser is often a more authentic and authoritative messenger.

People listen to other people. Messengers from outside an organization are often more credible than the organization itself. That's why an outside messenger, such as a donor that fundraises for an organization, has the potential to cut through the communications clutter.

The message is based in story.

There is no more powerful way to move people to action than through a compelling story. Storytelling often comes more naturally to supporters than to organizations themselves. Stories from people we know feel more personal and authentic than those told by an organization. The more authentic a message is, the more likely people are to act. The effect of these personal stories is a powerful recruiting tool when you are looking to spread your message and recruit new supporters.

Social norms are powerful motivators.

You may think that you left peer pressure behind in middle school, but what our friends, family, and colleagues do still holds strong influence over the actions we take. Humans tend to want to conform to the social norm—what we feel is the standard, accepted behavior. Peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns are a great way to establish a social norm of giving. When others see that friends, family, and their extended networks are coming together to support a good cause, it's hard to resist joining in. Think of it as peer pressure for good.

So, tapping into the social side of giving can make a big difference for your fundraising results, whether you implement some of these tactics in your next appeal, or decide to launch a more structured event.

Ready to add peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns to your toolkit? Read on for more tips on how to get started on and what to look for in technology that makes peer-driven fundraising easy and fun.

How to Get Started

Want to get started with peer fundraising? First things first: make sure you have the basics in place, along with a plan. Since you'll be communicating with two audiences at once—your fundraisers as well as the donors they recruit— you need to be organized and clear about your goals. Then, you must have the right tools in place to make it happen.

Before You Begin

How do you know if your organization is ready for a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign? Here are five things to consider:

You have a solid general online fundraising program.

Before branching out, nail the basics first. You'll have a sense for what works and what doesn't, plus you'll have many of the tools in place that you'll need for a successful peer fundraising effort. You must have a donor-friendly way to accept online donations from all donors, every day. You also want to make sure you're getting the most from your email marketing, social media, and your other communications channels to support your outreach.

When you've mastered the fundamentals, you can expand your online fundraising scope to include different types of peer fundraising campaigns.

You have 5-10 passionate advocates you could recruit to raise funds on your behalf.

Before adding peer-to-peer fundraising to your mix, think about the core group of supporters you will activate to become fundraisers for your cause. You may have more than 10 (which would be amazing), but having a handful of folks you know you can turn to will help get your campaign off the ground. Consider inviting these key advocates to join in the early planning of the campaign to ensure they're even more invested. If you don't have a list of ambassadors that comes to mind, spend time building those relationships now.

You have a concrete case for giving.

Ok, this is always important, but it's doubly so when it comes to peer fundraising efforts. Your case for giving will serve two goals: recruiting fundraisers and inspiring donors. You should be extremely clear on why someone should give to your cause, how the money will be used, and what impact a donation will have. Make it easy for fundraisers to understand how their network effect will amplify that impact. If you can't clearly articulate your case for giving, it's unlikely your fundraisers will be able to do so. (Need some help crystallizing your case for giving? [We have a guide just for that.](#))

You have board buy-in.

This is important for many reasons, but one of the most overlooked aspects of peer-to-peer campaigns is that they can be the perfect opportunity to involve your board (and your board's influence) in fundraising for your mission. They get to work their network, and you get closer to your goals. In many cases, these campaigns are simply a more structured way to enable what is likely happening already with events, house parties, and personal phone calls.

Of course, it's likely you're also going to need their stamp of approval for trying a new strategy and getting the tools you need to succeed with a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign.

You're ok with letting go of your message.

This is scary for most organizations, but remember: great peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns rely on the ability for your message to be carried far and wide by those outside your nonprofit. We know that donors are more likely to give when asked by a friend. There's a sense of trust and authenticity that is hard to replicate at an organizational level.

Prepare to equip supporters with communications tools and encourage fundraisers to add their personal stamp to their outreach for best results. If you're comfortable with loosening your grip on your message (just a little bit!), you'll be rewarded with loyal fundraisers and new supporters to welcome to your organization.

These steps are the essential prep work for your peer fundraising strategy. If you nail them now, you'll be set for a successful peer-to-peer campaign.

Identifying Your Ambassadors

Peer-to-peer fundraising is all about the messenger.

In a time where our trust in traditional marketing messages has dissolved, nonprofits have a great opportunity to rally supporters to speak on their behalf.

It's important to identify who might be a more relatable messenger and passionate fundraiser for your cause. Consider this: we tend to trust people we perceive as like us. Keep this in mind when planning your peer fundraising campaign. Your success will depend on the ambassadors you recruit and empower to spread your message.

So, who are some passionate messengers that wield more influence than you when it comes to your organization? Whom should you recruit to fundraise on your behalf?

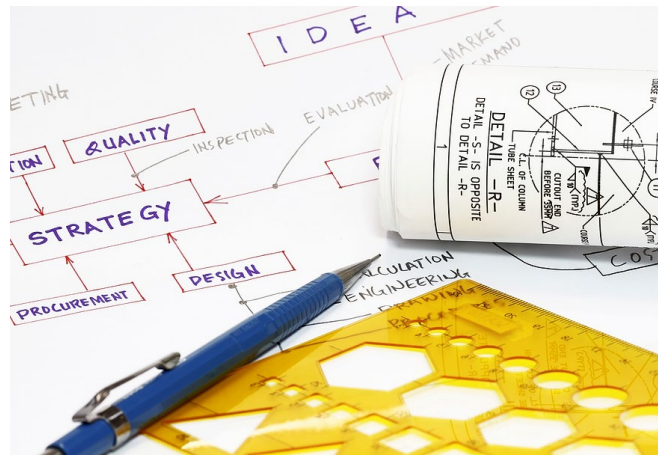
Here are ten ideas for different ambassador fundraisers:

1. People who have been helped by your organization.
2. Donors.
3. Volunteers.
4. Fans of your work.
5. Front lines staff (as opposed to official spokespeople).
6. People with first-hand experience living with your issue.
7. Board members.
8. Partners.
9. Alumni.
10. Local leaders.

Consider Your Social Strategy

Once you've identified the right fundraisers that will help you reach new networks and inspire more giving, you'll need a plan to recruit and keep them motivated.

Here are some tips for getting your ambassadors started and how to make the most of their efforts as you implement a successful peer-to-peer fundraising program for your nonprofit:



First: ask!


You probably already have a few passionate advocates who would make effective and enthusiastic fundraisers. That said, don't assume they'll instantly do so unprompted. Reach out to let your fans know about your peer fundraising plans and personally invite them to be a part of your campaign. A compelling recruiting message is a must, but remember that a personal phone call to a few key supporters can work wonders.

Tap into identity.

Think about why your supporters care about your cause, then remind them about the connections they have to the work you do. Encourage them to get involved by asking them to share their stories about how they came to support your organization. When a cause feels more relevant and personal, supporters are more likely to advocate and fundraise on your behalf.

Make it easy.

Offer your fundraisers [simple tools](#) so they can quickly spread your message and raise funds without a lot of effort. The easier it is to do, the more likely your fans will be to take up your cause and promote it to their social networks.



Give them easy-to-use fundraising pages, and simple social media sharing options. Once you have the tools in place, don't forget to give your fundraising army all of the information they'll need to promote your mission, including suggested social media updates, email templates, pre-written communications, and information on how donations are being used.

Be proactive.

In addition to featuring peer-to-peer fundraising tools on your website, make this donation tool a regular part of communication with your donors. Reach out to your biggest fans to invite them to start a fundraiser of their own. Create a friendly competition among your volunteers or community advocates to inspire and motivate them to share the opportunity to give to your organization.

Celebrate your champions.

Create a plan to recognize your peer-to-peer fundraisers. They're some of your most valuable supporters, so find ways to keep them close to your organization and celebrate their achievements. Mention your fundraisers in your nonprofit newsletter, create a special appreciation page on your blog or website, or host an exclusive thank you event for your online evangelists.

Cultivate your crowdsourced donors.

Those who donate through a friend's campaign will require a different type of donor retention strategy. Remember, they likely gave because a friend asked them to, not because they have an affinity for your cause. This doesn't mean you can't retain them as ongoing supporters, but they will need more education on your organization, why your work matters, and how they are a part of your success story.