



Leading Through COVID-19

CARING FOR DONORS AND KEY CONSTITUENTS IN A TIME OF CRISIS

“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”

ARTHUR ASHE

In a time of crisis and uncertainty, philanthropic organizations must maintain a focus on the care of their donor families.

With many restrictions enforced to prevent increased health risks, you are limited in what can be done with and for others. There are no special events, large-scale gatherings or meetings. People are working remotely, handling tasks through computers and phones. As the importance of “social distancing” increases, one-to-one meetings won’t occur. It is likely the list of things that you cannot do will grow considerably in the coming days, leaving many philanthropic organizations wondering how



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to care for donor families. However, a combination of leadership, team members and technology can help health philanthropy leaders successfully focus efforts during crisis moments to engage donors and their families.

It is important to map out a proactive plan for strengthening and sustaining valuable relationships with your organization’s donors now and during any crisis:

- 1 Check in with your donors.** A call, email or postcard lets them know you care about them as part of the health organization family and can also thank them for their support. Any

purposeful, caring message makes them feel connected and cared for by your organization.

2 Share good works with the community.

Partner with your marketing team to share the good works that continue to happen within the health system. To be responsive to the pandemic while also promoting good, focus highlights on the hospital's great response, readiness and proactive services provided to the community during these trying times. Marketing may be the driver in this effort, but the philanthropic team can contribute ideas and forward links of uplifting stories, photos and videos.

3 **Keep your friends close.** Ongoing discovery outreach is essential in building and managing progressive pipeline development. Continue stewardship of prospects and donors, but also connect with legacy society members, board members and volunteers to convey appreciation and continue relationship cultivation. Include an uplifting story of great work happening to care for the community in these tough times.

4 Stay focused on relationship-based giving.

Members of the philanthropy team are key connectors with the community who foster collaboration to achieve the community's philanthropic goals while representing the health care organization's needs. This is a time of great need. Donors are looking for ways to help. Some want to be problem solvers or innovators. Some may want to provide loyalty contributions to support the care and work of clinicians. Learn what individual donors want to accomplish and their thoughts on the response and leadership of the health organization in the current environment. If donors' goals align with your organization's needs, they will partner with you despite a period of upheaval.

5 Consider your internal stakeholders and partners.

Show appreciation to all team members—from leaders to clinicians to housekeeping to nutrition services—who are on the frontline going above and beyond to address the current health crisis. Partner with marketing to create and post signs of appreciation in the halls. Temporarily replace patient testimonials with employee stories of dedication, including a call to action for employee giving that continues to provide support. Help release dollars from employee emergency funds to address immediate needs like child care support and family meals. Authentic recognition and support goes a long way in cultivating internal relationships and a culture of gratitude.

6 **Take care of your philanthropy team.** Many are worried about the impacts of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Showing grace and patience during these times can help ease your team's fears. Thank those working remotely in order to reduce exposure. Begin virtual meetings by recognizing challenges, sacrifices and efforts made by the team. Continue to show appreciation and consideration for what each team member may be experiencing.

While metrics are key in setting and reaching goals, it's important to note this time of uncertainty will undoubtedly interfere with these objectives. While implementing these considerations may not help meet your 2020 metrics, they can help you, your team, and your organization remain rooted in relationship-based values. Make it a priority to use these strategies to bring some joy into very difficult times.

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