



SPECIAL REPORT

Fundraising trends to watch in 2025

Key insights from industry pioneers on the future of fundraising and community engagement



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Executive summary

Faced with economic inflation, a polarizing political climate, and rising pressures on staff to do more with less, the most agile nonprofits and educational institutions are adapting to new donor expectations and aggressive fundraising goals amidst resource and budget constraints. To help you exceed goals despite mounting pressures and changes in donor behavior, we asked today's top voices in philanthropy to weigh in on emerging trends, challenges and opportunities for the year ahead.

Hyper-personalized donor experiences



Donors in 2025 will expect curated, personal communication from the organizations they support. To adapt to this shift and strengthen donor pipelines, fundraisers need to tap into AI and data analytics to tailor journeys based on interests, behaviors, giving history, and sentiment.

Community & relationships as a foundation



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Crisis & impact giving



A growing emphasis on social and environmental impact, especially from Gen Z and Millennial donors, will push donors to favor organizations that demonstrate alignment with these values. In parallel, donors want to see the impact of their support over time, offering opportunities for organizations to leverage storytelling and reporting to steward and nurture donors.

The evolution of AI & data hygiene



Data-driven insights and predictive modeling can help organizations identify high-potential donors while saving time and resources. But to see a meaningful impact of AI at scale, organizations must prioritize data hygiene and operational processes.

TRENDS

Shifts in donor expectations



SHIFTS IN DONOR EXPECTATIONS

Hyper-personalization

When you buy something online, you expect a prompt confirmation that includes your name and purchase information. Donors are people, too, and they have the same expectations when contributing a gift to your organization. As digital communication from brands becomes the norm, fundraising organizations must create donor-centric, hyper-personalized journeys.

“The continued rise of personalized, donor-centric fundraising powered by AI and data analytics will be key in 2025. This shift will include hyper-personalized communication based on donor interests, behaviors, and giving histories. Organizations that adopt these data-driven approaches will **build stronger, more meaningful relationships with donors**. However, nonprofits that fail to invest in technology to segment and engage donors effectively may struggle to maintain relevance and donor retention.”

Gayle Roberts, CFRM
Fundraising for Change



**93% of
donors**

say they would definitely or probably give again to a charity that gave a prompt and personal thank you.

Donor-Centered Fundraising
Penelope Burk

SHIFTS IN DONOR EXPECTATIONS

Show impact, build trust

In a world saturated with competing messages – especially in digital spaces – donors need to feel a connection to the causes they give to. It’s a fact: **97% of donors cite the impact of their gift as their main reason for giving** ([2024 Philanthropic Landscape, CCS](#)). With a rise in microdonations due to fundraising models like peer-to-peer fundraising, organizations are seeing higher numbers of lower level donors that expect to see as much or more impact reporting from their gift.

In 2025, fundraising organizations should seek to understand their donors’ preferences regarding when, where and how they share impact, and put plans in place to meet donors where they are. “Trust will become one of the most important, if not the most important, barometers of success that we can measure our sector by,” says **Tim Sarrantonio of Neon One**. “Donors don’t want to hear about dollars raised but instead impact delivered, so shifting narratives away from short term goals and toward big picture thinking is what will help nonprofits stand out.”

“Donors, especially Millennials and Gen Z, are increasingly expecting transparency from nonprofits regarding how their donations are used. They want to see **clear, measurable outcomes and evidence** that their contributions are making a real impact.”

Erik Tomalis

Virtuous



“The challenge is retention—nonprofits must quickly pivot from donor acquisition to building lasting relationships, especially as **‘rage giving’** becomes more prevalent in response to political and social upheaval.”

Anne Murphy

Empowered Fundraiser
Consulting & Coaching



“Younger generations **want to own part of the impact** – not just be a transactional vehicle to get it accomplished.”

Tasha Van Vlack

The Nonprofit Hive





SHIFTS IN DONOR EXPECTATIONS

Digital- and mobile-first interactions

Younger donors – primarily Gen Z and younger millennials – are digital natives. This means they expect and generally prefer a digital-first experience.

Email, social media, texting and giving days/crowdfunding are the top channels alumni donors use to give to their alma mater, according to over 500 alumni surveyed in a [Gravyty alumni trends report](#). Traditional channels like phone and direct mail were less likely to have prompted a gift. For organizations transforming to a digital-first approach, it can be hard to know where to start with new technology. The key steps will be to get organizational buy-in, evaluate based on specific needs and expectations, and develop an internal training and adoption plan.



“Board education is key. Many boards struggle to grasp the rapidly changing nature of donor behavior, especially across generations. Fundraising leaders need to advocate for the retirement of outdated approaches, like expensive galas, and **push for investment in digital-first strategies like upgraded CRM systems and frictionless giving experiences**. Board members must understand that the future lies in these digital investments, not traditional in-person events.”

Anne Murphy

Empowered Fundraiser
Consulting and Coaching

“Digital-first giving will become the default expectation as more donors move away from traditional forms of donation. Nonprofits need to **adopt seamless, user-friendly digital platforms** that meet donors where they are.”

Sabrina Walker Hernandez

Supporting World Hope



DEEP DIVE

The community factor

A critical factor in inspiring donors to not only give but to remain loyal supporters long term is meaningful and authentic engagement. A thriving community, over time, leads to a deep trust and affinity for your organization. In a recent [Gravyty alumni trends report](#), **over 93% of alumni who have donated to their alma mater engage with the institution via a virtual alumni community platform**, highlighting the correlation between an engaged digital community and philanthropic habits.

“Alumni and community engagement is becoming the foundation for sustainable, recurring donations. **Engaged communities don’t just donate—they advocate and influence others to give.** Organizations can use engagement platforms to track alumni or community members’ involvement, helping to segment and personalize outreach.”

Gayle Roberts, CFRM

Fundraising for Change



“**Nonprofits, large ones, will topple** if they cannot figure out community engagement.”

Tasha Van Vlack

The Nonprofit Hive

“This relates to alumni communities where it’s important to increase legacy culture and **decrease the sense of being remembered during fundraising only.**”

Tim Lockie

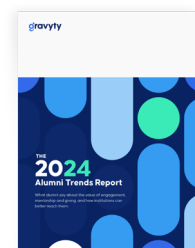
The Human Stack

REPORT

Alumni trends

Alumni are the lifeblood of any advancement program. We asked more than 500 alumni about their engagement preferences, behaviors and giving habits. This report uncovers actionable insights to guide more impactful alumni engagement programs.

[Get the report](#)



TRENDS

AI in philanthropy

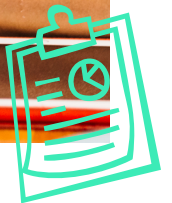
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AI IN PHILANTHROPY

Productivity, amplified

As AI matures, organizations are starting to understand the full potential of how it can streamline processes and enhance productivity. Fundraising is no exception. With the right AI tools, frontline fundraisers can leverage data-driven insights and predictive modeling to analyze your database, identify prospective donors, prioritize which donors to contact in which order and even draft donor outreach.

How will these capabilities impact fundraising teams as we look ahead to the future? When properly trained on the technology, AI can add immense value and improve outcomes: “With structured training, fundraisers can utilize AI to improve donor engagement,” says **Anne Murphy, Founder and CEO of Empowered Fundraiser Consulting**. “They can identify opportunities that are better aligned with donors’ interests, create more persuasive content, and strengthen their collaborations. AI will also help manage large portfolios, reducing overwhelm and increasing the capacity for strategic outreach.”



*“As AI becomes more sophisticated, nonprofits and educational institutions will be able to deliver hyper-personalized experiences. Instead of generic outreach, AI can segment donors into highly specific categories based on their interests, engagement, and emotional response (gleaned from sentiment analysis). **This leads to more meaningful and timely touchpoints**, fostering a deeper connection between donors and the cause they support.”*

Josh Hirsch

The Fund Raising School at Indiana University Lilly Family
School of Philanthropy



AI IN PHILANTHROPY

Agentic AI

Advancements in AI mean fundraising trailblazers are testing new ways to put these tools to use in an effort to reduce some of the heavy workload of automated and tedious daily tasks. Agentic AI – autonomous, AI-powered systems capable of reasoning and executing complex tasks without human intervention – is poised to significantly improve productivity of fundraising staff as it matures. [AI agents](#) draw from databases and networks and can also learn from user behavior, improving over time.



AI efficiencies

How might agentic AI play a role in a fundraising organization? It can drive both operational and strategic efficiencies for when it comes to donor engagement and retention, automating data entry and cleanup, and putting high-potential donors in gift officers' inboxes each morning – saving hours of administrative time and freeing fundraisers up to connect more personally with valued donors.

“[Agentic AI means] moving away from single-serving generative prompts to training models that can handle **70% of the routine lift on all things digital.**”

Tim Lockie
The Human Stack

“AI adoption will become essential. Organizations that resist AI or continue with outdated methods will be perceived as inefficient. Board members and donors will expect **AI integration as a marker of a well-run and future-proof organization.**”

Anne Murphy
Empowered Fundraiser Consulting and Coaching

AI IN PHILANTHROPY

Preparedness is key

While AI innovations carry the potential of exciting growth for fundraising organizations, leaders must be diligent about planning ahead and prioritizing internal training and buy-in before implementing a new AI-powered technology. In looking ahead to 2025, fundraising teams should leverage AI as a tool to improve and upskill versus replace any specific function. Organizations like [Fundraising AI](#) stress the importance of using AI ethically, responsibly and inclusively to maximize the positive impact on communities and causes.

The AI needs to be in the hands of someone **really good at marrying relationship-building to tech** to make it sing. An over reliance on AI to do the job of humans could be really problematic and damaging for this sector.”



Tasha Van Vlack
The Nonprofit Hive

Fundraisers will start using tools like ChatGPT discreetly, especially in organizations that restrict their use. This informal adoption will yield some productivity gains, but without proper training, it will remain limited. With structured training, however, fundraisers can utilize AI to improve donor engagement. With the pace of change being as rapid as it is across all aspects of our industry, every nonprofit should have a plan for their **AI adoption roadmap: assessment of AI benefits and risks, AI upskilling for all, AI council, and AI governance.**”

Anne Murphy

Empowered Fundraiser Consulting
and Coaching



AI IN PHILANTHROPY

The foundation of clean data

Technology can be instrumental in transforming fundraising and donor engagement efforts. But to leverage it effectively requires diligently managing data hygiene. While this isn't a new concept, advancements in AI and other fundraising technologies have placed a greater emphasis on cleaning donor data.

"Especially since the vast majority of focus of AI discussions right now are on public facing engagement, there needs to be a re-prioritization toward data hygiene, operational processes, and strategic prioritization before we see meaningful usage and impact of AI at scale," says **Tim Sarrantonio of Neon One**.

"In the next 18 months, organizations need to start curating unstructured **data into organizational wide knowledge bases** that allow strong culture with information connections. Essentially, we try to stop connecting the data, leave it in silos and start connecting around the information. For example, instead of sending everyone meeting notes, all the meeting notes are collected as part of the knowledge base."

Tim Lockie

The Human Stack



"For the time being, only those well-resourced nonprofits and universities will likely see major strategic changes because of predictive and generative AI tools. We haven't yet focused the **real energy on retention** and that's when things will get useful."

Tim Sarrantonio

Neon One



"Regardless of the continued development of AI, data are the basis for everything we do. Analysis of data can provide **invaluable focus for fundraisers** who otherwise may not know where to start. Data analytics lets you see both the forest and the trees."

Anthony Roberts

CCS Fundraising



DEEP DIVE

Next-gen generosity

Knowing who makes up your donor base is essential for crafting the right strategy to reach them and keep them engaged. The newest generations of donors – Millennials and Gen Z – open up new challenges and opportunities for fundraising organizations. Perhaps surprisingly, Gen Z donors might be the most generous base of supporters for nonprofits to date, leading the pack in giving frequency, donating an average of [11.4 times within 12 months](#). They are also considered digital natives, raised in a world of smartphones and social media.

In 2025 and beyond, the shift from traditional donor engagement methods to digital and mobile-first strategies will be critical. “Younger donors don’t give out of loyalty but rather through personal connection and shared values,” says **Anne Murphy**. “Expect large events like galas to fade in relevance as organizations focus on more authentic, impactful experiences. Digital transparency, mission-driven storytelling, and community involvement will resonate with younger generations far more than legacy approaches.”

“The Internet Generation(s) expect on-demand information, and they want the option to focus their giving. Where it used to be okay to say, ‘Look at all the great work our organization does; please support us,’ younger donors of today **want to pick and choose where their support is used.**”

Anthony Roberts

CCS Fundraising





“Younger alumni are far less inclined to make financial gifts on the basis of “obligation” or because they may have had a good experience at the institution. Rather, they want to **see the direct impact of their gifts** – individually or collectively: in concrete terms, how does their philanthropy help to advance the institution’s goals?”

Christopher J. Vlahos

Chris Vlahos Alumni Engagement Consulting

“Gen Z and Millennials **prioritize social impact, diversity, and transparency** in their giving. They are more likely to give through digital platforms, expect instant acknowledgment of their contributions, and want to feel connected to the cause they support. However, despite their digital fluency, there is growing evidence that they might appreciate receiving physical mail as a novelty, given that snail mail has been largely absent from their communication habits.”

Sabrina Walker Hernandez

Supporting World Hope



GUIDE

Next-gen phonathon

The now-standard approach to a personalized donor experience, the rising costs to hire student callers and shifts in both donor behavior are shaping the ways advancement teams approach traditional fundraising strategies like the phonathon. In this guide, get actionable steps on evolving your phonathon strategy to reach next-generation donors.

[Download the guide](#)



TRENDS

Emerging models of fundraising

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EMERGING MODELS OF FUNDRAISING

Get social

Social fundraising – a form of philanthropy that encourages supporters to create their own fundraising campaigns to raise money on behalf of a cause or organization – is undoubtedly on the rise moving into 2025, namely with younger generations of donors. In the years following the pandemic, peer-to-peer fundraising programs in the nonprofit sector saw growth, reaching [\\$1.1 billion in collective revenue](#) in 2023.

Social fundraising, sometimes known as community-driven fundraising or peer fundraising, relies on not only donations themselves but also the power of their supporters' networks to spread the word and advocate for their cause.



"Crowdfunding, peer-to-peer fundraising, and micro-donations will continue to grow in importance. These models align with the **desire for community-driven, grassroots support**, especially among younger generations who favor small, frequent contributions over larger, occasional gifts."

Sabrina Walker Hernandez

Supporting World Hope

"Social fundraising allows for broader reach and community involvement, especially with **Gen Z and Millennials**, who prefer peer-influenced giving."

Gayle Roberts

Fundraising for Change



EMERGING MODELS OF FUNDRAISING

Sustainable giving

As organizations find new ways to meet increasing giving goals, a trend is emerging with lower and mid-level donors: focusing on recurring or monthly gifts to build a sustainable giving model. This type of giving creates a reliable and consistent stream of income for organizations, helping them plan and budget more effectively for long-term projects and operational needs.

The predictability of recurring donations supports sustainability by reducing dependence on one-time gifts or seasonal fundraising campaigns, allowing nonprofits to focus more on their mission and less on constant fundraising efforts. Encouragingly, this type of giving is on the rise: while revenue from one-time online giving decreased by 5% in 2023, monthly giving revenue [increased by 6%](#) and accounted for nearly one-third of all online giving.

“Subscription models are becoming ingrained in consumer behavior, and the same logic applies to recurring giving programs. Donors now **expect the ease and convenience that come with automated, ongoing support**. Organizations that fail to offer simple, customizable monthly giving options will miss out on potential long-term revenue streams. Now is the time to invest in growing monthly giving programs, making them a seamless, core component of donor engagement.”

Anne Murphy

Empowered Fundraiser Consulting and Coaching

“Recurring giving is the clear powerhouse of sustainable foundational giving, but it needs to not be conflated with the subscription economy and instead framed as community building. There will also be a resurgence in discussions on what **“mid-level fundraising”** means as generational wealth begins to accelerate its transfer to Generation X and Millennials.”

Tim Sarrantonio

Neon One



EMERGING MODELS OF FUNDRAISING

Crypto donations

Crypto giving – the donation of cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin, Ethereum, or other digital currencies to charitable organizations – allows donors to contribute using their cryptocurrency holdings rather than traditional currencies like the US dollar or euro.

“While the initial promise of crypto donations has yet to be fulfilled, in light of new regulations advancements in 2024 and more mainstream use and acceptance, expect doors to open over the next decade to new, untapped wealth, offering tax-efficient giving for donors. Accepting cryptocurrency opens doors to **younger, tech-savvy donors** and diversifies revenue streams for nonprofits.”

Anthony Roberts

CCS Fundraising

Organizations can expect crypto to become a larger part of the conversation when it comes to fundraising channels. Giving via crypto is increasingly popular amongst donors due to its tax efficiency, security and global accessibility. According to The Giving Block, over \$2 billion is estimated to have been donated via cryptocurrency as of this year, and 56% of the top US charities accept crypto donations.





About Gravyty

Trusted by more than 2,000 leading organizations worldwide, Gravyty is a donor engagement platform that empowers institutions to deliver best-in-class digital giving, build thriving communities and fundraise more effectively.

Gravyty's AI-powered engagement and fundraising platform helps fundraisers engage members and alumni, 4x productivity and outreach, deliver a best-in-class digital giving program, and maximize dollars raised. Create fully customized giving day sites and crowdfunding campaigns, amplified by texting, email and video outreach tools. Capture every dollar available with retargeting campaigns, abandoned cart reminders, recurring giving options, matching gifts and more. Build a sustainable, scalable donor pipeline with AI-powered donor discovery, integrated digital giving data, portfolio saturation and smart prompts to reach the right people at the right time.

Learn more at gravyty.com

