

Donor Engagement & Pipeline Benchmark Report

Deep insights into the state of donor engagement and pipeline development from 140+ fundraising organizations.



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Introduction

Fundraising teams continue to navigate a complex and rapidly evolving donor landscape. Economic fluctuations, shifting donor expectations, and increased pressure to demonstrate impact have made it more important than ever for advancement teams to adapt their strategies and strengthen their pipelines.

To better understand the realities fundraising teams are facing, we gathered insights from more than 140 organizations across higher education, nonprofit, and K-12 sectors. Our goal was to uncover how teams are engaging donors, what challenges are most prominent, and which strategies are proving most effective in building and sustaining long-term donor relationships.

This benchmark report brings together what advancement teams are experiencing across the industry -highlighting trends in donor engagement, communication, stewardship, and pipeline development. These insights aim to support fundraising professionals as they refine their strategies and deepen their connection with donors.

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Donor Engagement & Pipeline
Benchmark Report

Executive summary

We sought to better understand how fundraising organizations adapt their donor engagement and pipeline-building strategies to meet rising growth goals and donor expectations. The results offer a clearer view of how teams are evolving their approaches, where they are finding success, and the opportunities that exist to reach donors in new and meaningful ways.



AI as a fundraising tool remains early and exploratory

Just 8% of fundraisers say using AI to automate donor engagement is currently one of their most effective tactics. Most fundraising teams are still early in their AI journey, with only **12%** saying they actively use it to enhance donor engagement and fundraising efforts.

Showing impact resonates with donors, but the formula to engagement is elusive.

The majority of fundraisers say that impact stories are the type of content that generates the most engagement from donors. However, nearly a quarter (**22%**) of teams continue to cite donor responsiveness and measuring outreach effectiveness as top challenges.

Outreach is still primarily digital, but with unexpected channels on the rise.

Donor outreach continues to be driven by digital channels: social media is used by **8** out of **10** fundraisers, and 59% of teams now use video as part of their communications mix. At the same time, traditional channels remain strong—direct mail is used by **85%** of fundraising teams, reflecting continued interest in more personal, tangible outreach.



Internal team processes are inconsistent or not fully established

Just **1** in **10** teams say their portfolio handoff process is smooth, and **42%** report having no formal process in place. Many teams also lack a defined number of contact attempts before disqualifying a prospective donor, and **21%** cite manual processes or limited automation as a top challenge.

Setting the stage

Today's fundraising landscape

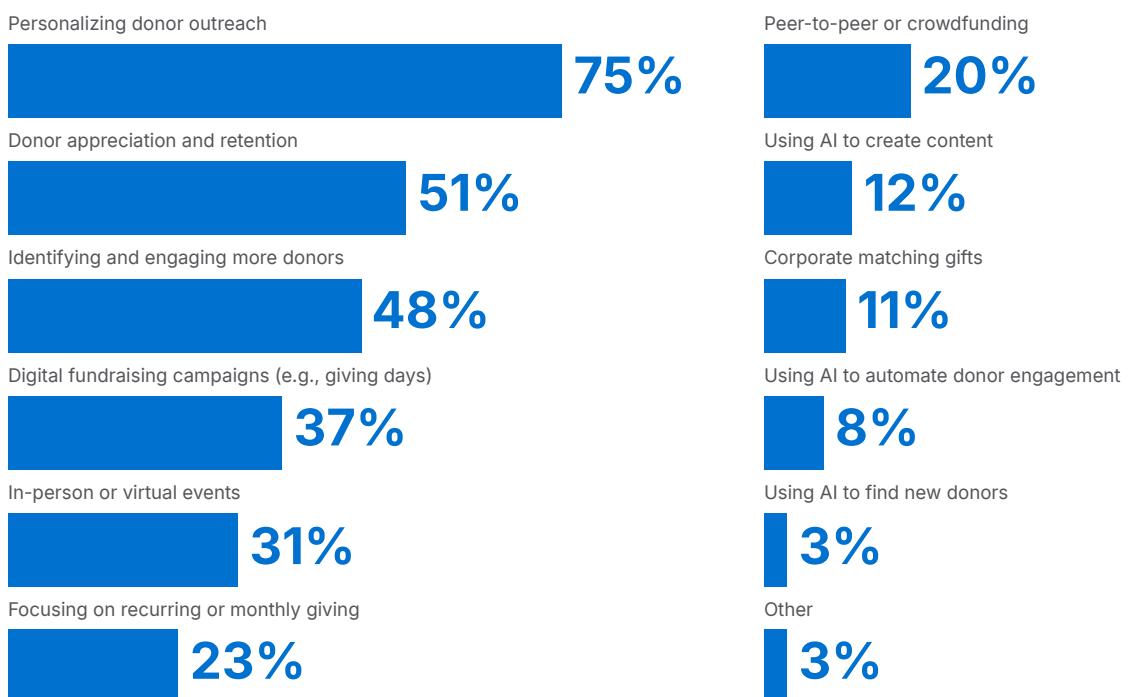
The rise of the “mega gift.” The growing importance of in-person engagement. The rapid expansion of AI across industries. Fundraisers are becoming increasingly agile, adapting to a constantly shifting landscape of donor preferences, giving methods, and digital-first communities. These insights offer a clearer view of what fundraising teams are prioritizing for both immediate and long-term success.

Money raised and retaining donors remain key metrics, but the amount and size of gifts skyrocket in importance

Metric	2024 level of importance ranking	2025 level of importance ranking
Dollars raised	#1	#1
Donor retention	#2	#2
Total number of gifts	#9	#3
Average gift size	#8	#4
Donor upgrade	#4	#5
Engagement metrics	#3	#6
Qualify for major gifts	#5	#7
Number of contacts per year	#7	#8
Number of visits per year	#6	#9

The personalized donor experience remains one of teams' most effective strategies, but there is still a disconnect between AI tools and true personalization at scale.

What fundraising strategy has been most effective for your team in driving donor engagement and results?





Teams struggle with donor discovery and pipeline management, but there are improvements with staffing and resources.

What is your team's biggest pain point?

24%

New donor discovery and pipeline management

22%

An improvement from one third of respondents from previous years

22%

Donor responsiveness or measuring outreach

21%

Manual processes and/or lack of automation

11%

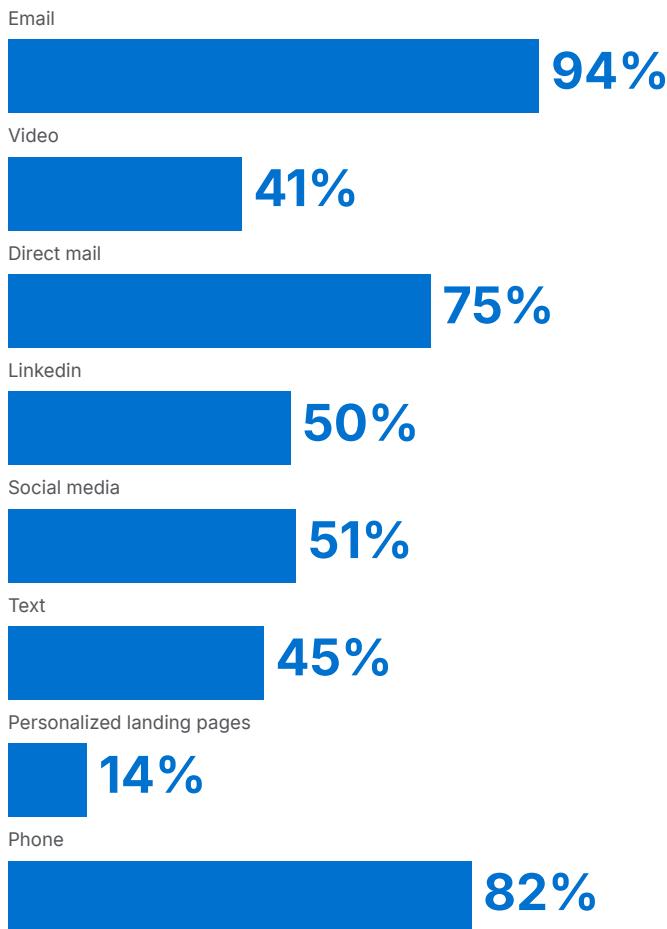
Lack of resources or budget

Donor engagement

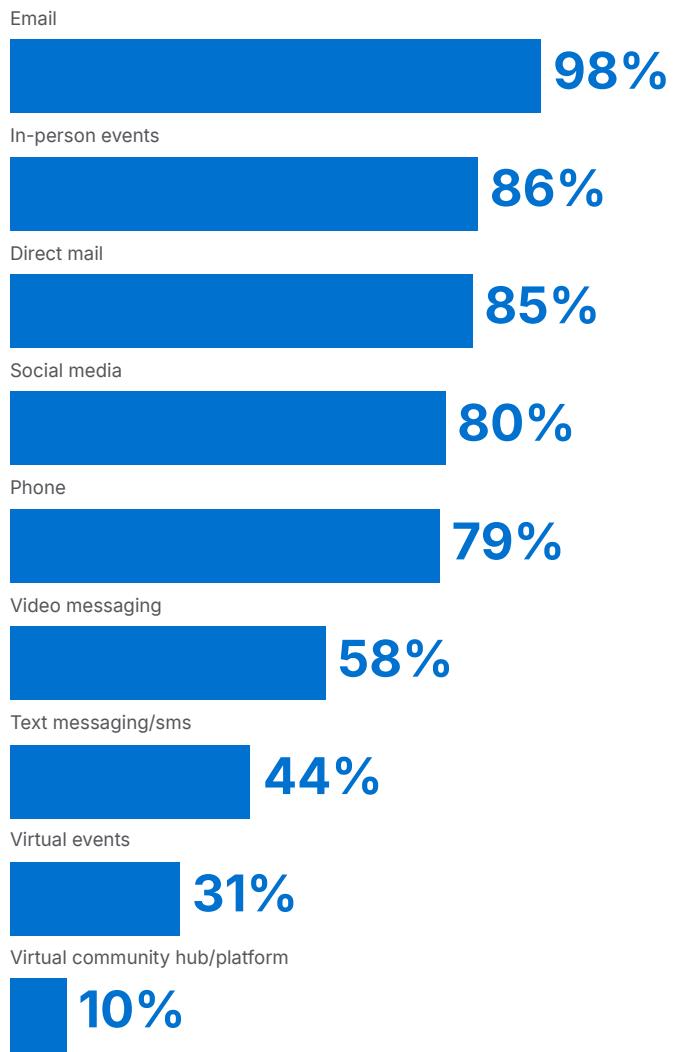
From emerging new channels to the growing use of AI for personalized experiences, reaching donors in meaningful, measurable ways continues to be a moving goalpost for fundraising organizations. Fundraisers are doubling down on digital-first channels, yet some traditional channels are seeing renewed momentum.

Outreach is still trending digital, with social media leaping in popularity to 80% of teams using it and video up 18%. Perhaps surprisingly, snail mail is also on the rise.

2024 donor engagement channels



2024 donor engagement channels



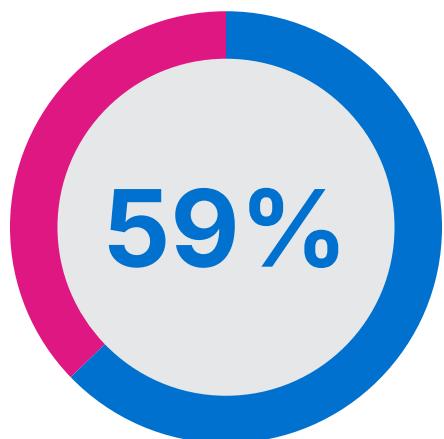
Most teams reach out to a donor between one and six times per year, but the frequency is increasing.

How often do you reach out to an individual donor?

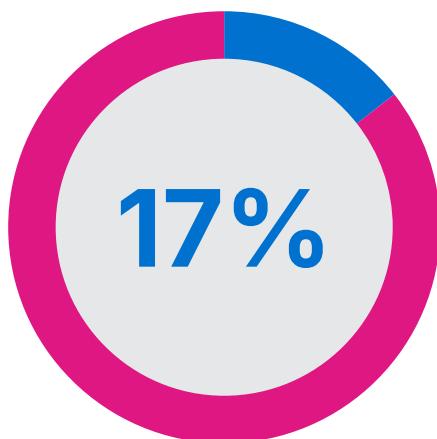
Frequency per year	2024	2025
4-6 times	49%	42%
1-3 times	28%	33%
7-10 times	11%	16% ↑
10+ times	13%	6%

Donors crave authentic, impact focused updates from the missions they support.

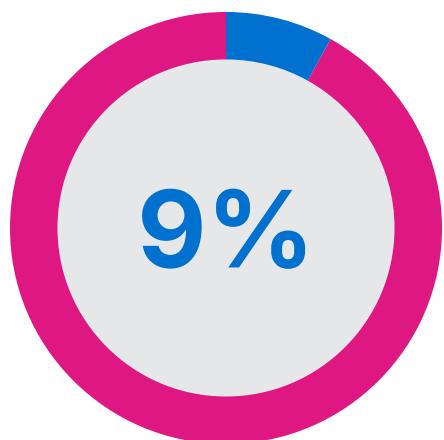
Which type of content generates the most donor engagement?



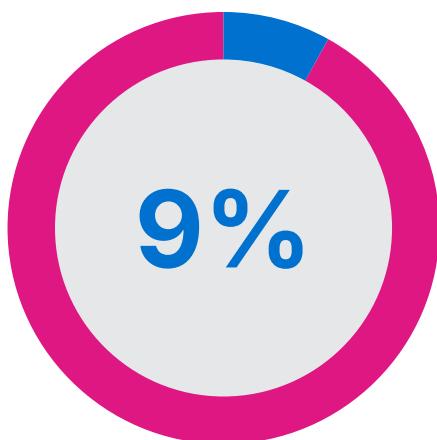
Impact stories



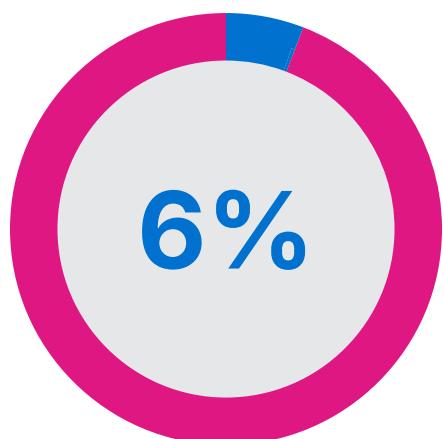
Event invitations



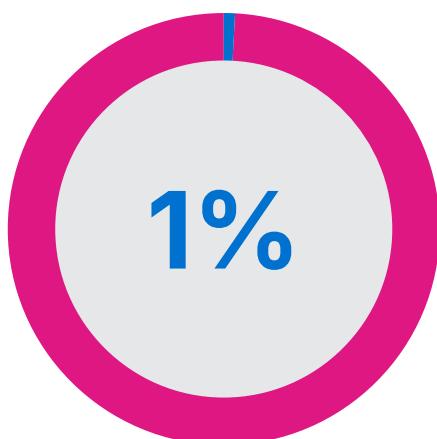
Advocate / awareness campaigns



Program updates



Others



Volunteer opportunities

Donor pipeline development

Most teams are understandably hyperfocused on reaching their annual fundraising goals, so building a strong, sustainable and predictable donor pipeline can sometimes fall by the wayside. Survey results show that while it remains a top focus for three-quarters of fundraising teams, gaps in formal handoff processes and donor discovery can still hinder growth.



Building a strong, sustainable pipeline remains a priority for most teams—but competing demands can impact the focus.

How big of a priority is donor pipeline building?

48%

One of our top 3 priorities

24%

One of our top 10 priorities

14%

Unsure

9%

The #1 top priority

7%

It's not a priority

78%

say it's one of their top priorities, compared

84%

reporting the same previously.

While most teams say their pipelines are stable, more than a third feel it's declining or unpredictable.

What is the current state of your donor pipeline?

54% **Stable**

Consistent with little change

7% **Uncertain**

Fluctuates without a clear trend

18% **Declining**

Fewer new donors and lapsing supporters

11% **Strong**

Steady growth with new donor acquisition

Most teams rely on past giving history and wealth screening to zero in on high-potential donors but have yet to use AI to automate this process.

How do you identify high-potential donors within your portfolio?

48%

Analyzing past giving history

24%

Wealth screening tools

14%

Recommendations from board members or peers

14%

Reviewing engagement metrics (e.g., event attendance, volunteer activity)

48%

Recommendations from board members or peers

24%

AI tool

14%

Other

A closer look

The untapped potential of process.

Just **10%** of teams say their portfolio handoff process is smooth, and a staggering **42%** of teams say they have no formal process at all. Related, a majority (**58%**) of teams don't have a set number of contact attempts before disqualifying a prospective donor. This highlights an opportunity for fundraising teams to streamline and scale pipeline building activities through internal processes and workflows.

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42%
of teams

42% of teams have no formal handoff process

6 in 10
teams

have no set number of contact attempts

Benchmarks

Portfolio details

Most mid-level and major gift portfolios are relatively small but vary widely across organizations. Ask amounts also vary widely, but the majority of mid-level asks don't exceed **\$1,000** and most major gifts are between **\$5** and **\$25k**.

Major gift portfolios

Average donors per portfolio	28%	Less than 100
	36%	100-199
	10%	200-249
	4%	250-399
	3%	400+

Major gift portfolios

Average donors per portfolio	31%	Less than 250
	18%	250-499
	14%	500-999
	5%	1,000-1,999
	6%	2,000+

Major gift portfolios

Range of ask amounts	12%	\$1,000+
	18%	\$5,000+
	16%	\$10,000+
	16%	\$25,000+
	10%	\$50,000+
	6%	\$100,000+

Mid-level gift portfolios

Range of ask amounts	49%	\$1,000+
	9%	\$5,000+
	5%	\$10,000+
	4%	\$25,000+
	3%	\$50,000+
	11%	N/A
	11%	Don't ask for specific dollar amounts

Methodology

Methodology

This report represents findings from over 140 respondents who represent fundraising professionals at higher education, K-12 and nonprofit organizations around the world. Questions covered topics including donor engagement channels and tactics, donor pipeline development, technology usage and team productivity. Donor database sizes of respondents' organizations ranged from 100 to over 100k.



Type of organization

42%
Nonprofit

42%
Higher education institution

15%
K-12 institution

1%
Nonprofit

Amount raised previous fiscal year

7%
\$250m or more

2%
\$100m-\$249.9m

6%
\$50m-\$99.9m

7%
\$25m-\$49.9m

8%
\$10m-\$24.9m

15%
\$5m-\$9.9m

35%
\$1m-\$4.9m

10%
\$500k-\$999k

8%
\$100k-\$499k

2%
Less than \$100k

About Gravyty

Trusted by more than 2,000 leading organizations worldwide, Gravyty is a donor & alumni 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. 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](https://www.gravyty.com)