

Experts on How Technology Is Changing the Future of Fundraising



Mike Gianoni,
President and CEO, Blackbaud

How has technology changed fundraising?

Mike Gianoni: Not long ago, fundraising meant a letter in the mail with a return slip enclosed and the long wait that followed. Today, it's so much more. Donors can contribute with just a few taps on their phones and amplify their impact with peer-to-peer fundraising platforms that integrate seamlessly with social media accounts. Thanks to analytics, fundraisers know how to set realistic campaign goals and then engage donors, prospects and their greater communities to achieve them.

Bill Strathmann: Technology has leveled the fundraising playing field for small nonprofits who make up the vast majority of the sector. When reaching donors, direct mail was unaffordable, fundraising e-commerce was inaccessible and spreading awareness through social media was incomprehensible. Now, small nonprofits can manage donors with advanced technology that doesn't require an advanced technology degree. Even companies like Facebook and Google have incorporated fundraising technology that empowers any consumer to fundraise for any charity instantly. The time for small nonprofits has arrived.

Mike Geiger: Technology has been incredibly helpful for charities and their fundraising. It's allowed charities to find global audiences for their work by reaching potential donors around the world. It's also allowed charities to show their work and impact up close and personal through videos and other social media. And on the back end in the fundraising office, it's allowed fundraisers to work more effectively and efficiently

using better computer programs and online applications.

However, charities don't need to be on the leading edge of using technology, but they need to show they are keeping up and have a presence in the online spaces where their potential donors are.

Steve Spinner: Time is the most precious commodity when it comes to fundraising. Technology allows you to research in minutes what previously took hundreds of hours to do. It enables volunteers to have access to the same tools as experts and leverages data to make smart asks. Technology is a cost-effective turbocharger to any professional fundraising organization. However, with all that is good, privacy concerns should remain paramount and need to be carefully monitored and observed. That is the balance data analytics technology requires: Data for good, not for bad.

Jean-Paul Guilbault: Where and how we give has been transformed by both technology and business models. We have seen an increase in giving via mobile and online methods. Three out of 4 faith organizations and charities offered online giving as of 2017 — that's up 42 percent since 2015. When you have a fundraising idea with mass appeal, crowdfunding technology platforms and messaging apps are becoming the go-to in connecting with younger donors and their networks. Quickly emerging are the technologies of machine learning that will automate financial reporting, reduce fraud and increase transparency about where organizations spend their money.

Where do you see nonprofit technology in the next 5-10 years?

Mike Gianoni: We're in the fourth industrial revolution, blurring the divide between the digital world and real life. In the coming years, the most successful nonprofits will operate entirely from cloud-based platforms that enable their teams to collaborate from any location, operating from the same data — a single source of truth. In this age of digital transformation, we will see hyper-personalized communications through machine learning of supporter habits. And we will see less paper, more transparency and new levels of collaboration.

Bill Strathmann: In the United States, 75 percent of giving comes from individuals. That will continue, but new generations will soon replace boomers as the primary fundraising source as millennials (now already 22-38 years old) enter their income-generating years and as the \$30T great-wealth transfer begins. That means fundraising will be all about digital engagement and will follow the changes in consumer engagement we are already seeing today — the expectation for easy experiences, transparency, real-time communication and tangible results that can be celebrated virally. As a result, donor-nonprofit relationships will also shift to more subscription-based model programs and fewer one-off experiences — if nonprofits get it right.

Mike Geiger: I think the future of fundraising involves two different but related ideas: choice and technology. First, donors will continue to want to have more choices and options in how they engage with and support a charity. Simply giving a contribution once a year won't be enough for most donors, especially younger

supporters. Maybe they'll want to volunteer remotely online, maybe they'll want to start a social media campaign or maybe they'll start a video project talking about how the charity has helped them — the opportunities will be endless.

Steve Spinner: Fundraising in 10 years will leverage all the current achievements in data, tools and social media technologies. Over the next few years, these combinations of data, community and smart technology will revolutionize fundraising as we know it, making the interactions between staff, volunteers and donors more personalized, more intelligent and more effective than ever before. Fundraising organizations will be able to finally fully achieve their investment charters and, in many cases, make progress on changing the world. Companies not investing heavily in technology today will be left behind tomorrow. The game really is changing that big and that fast.

Jean-Paul Guilbault: Fundraising in 5-10 years will require bridging two very different generations and income sources with divergent expectations. Fundraisers will be engaging generation Z, where the give is no longer a cash donation from a pocket, but a swipe on a device. This is a generation that has been building social capital since birth and grew up on the internet. On the other hand, baby boomers are now the largest adult generation, and the wealthiest. This is the group that are the most generous and comprise 50 percent of what's given to charity annually. This generation has also incorporated technology into their lives, but what triggers them to give often starts offline. However, how they pay is very much online. ■



Bill Strathmann,
CEO, Network for Good



Mike Geiger,
M.B.A., C.P.A., President and CEO,
Association of Fundraising Professionals



Steve Spinner,
CEO, RevUP Software



Jean-Paul Guilbault,
President and CEO,
Community Brands