

Not-for-Profit Industry

Converting Volunteers to Donors: Missed Opportunity for Most Nonprofits

It is not uncommon for nonprofits to look at volunteers and monetary donors differently. Both provide value and allow an organization to reach goals and obtain its mission. Oftentimes nonprofits target these donor types differently and design different communication strategies/campaigns between the two groups. Diversifying targeting and campaigns may be beneficial for some organizations, but what happens when a supporter fits into both categories? New data is providing insights into the relationship between volunteers and financial donors. The results may surprise you.

A [comprehensive study](#), performed by Fidelity Charitable, found that 87 percent of volunteers say there is a relationship between their volunteer behavior and the causes they support financially. The same study found that 79 percent of donors volunteer for a charitable organization, citing the interest in providing more than just financial support for a chosen cause. Finally, the study found that a mere 7 percent of donors have not volunteered, primarily due to time restraints and/or a preference for financial support. The data suggests a clear-cut relationship between volunteers and donors and implies that the same supporter often falls into both groups.

The Fidelity Charitable study is not the only report presenting these claims. A [donor engagement study](#) found that nearly 75 percent of the 1,136 donors surveyed claimed they are likely to or have volunteered in the past. Two-thirds of the donors surveyed volunteered in the past 12 months.



Volunteers have also been found to donate more than donors who do not volunteer. The Fidelity Charitable study showed that [volunteers donate 10 times more](#). The link between volunteers and donors means that organizations need to focus on retention, conversion strategies, and connecting volunteer and donor data.

RETENTION SUPPORTERS IS CRUCIAL

Donor and volunteer retention can positively or negatively impact each other. Since volunteers are potential donors and vice versa, losing one supporter can impact an organization in two distinct ways (labor and financially). In 2018, the average [national volunteer retention rate](#) was 65 percent, and the average donor retention rate was 46 percent. The value of a volunteer hour was \$24.69, and the average donor invests \$326 in an organization's mission per year. Thus, if the average volunteer commits [32 hours](#) to an organization per year and also donates the national average of [\\$326](#), lack of retention could mean a loss of \$1,118 in value per lost supporter.

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Nonprofits Can Retain Supporters by:

- > Understanding and meeting the expectations of volunteers and donors
- > Communicating with supporters regularly and providing value
- > Making “thank-you” a key aspect of their communication strategy
- > Personalizing the experience for each unique supporter
- > Investing in [reward and recognition](#)
- > Providing supporters with data/stories/examples of real-world impact.

CONVERTING VOLUNTEERS TO DONORS (AND VICE VERSA)

The truth of the matter is that most volunteers will also donate to an organization if they feel compelled to do so. The same is true with financial donors and the act of volunteering. Nonprofits need to develop and promote compelling reasons for volunteers and donors to cross those lines and become cross-categorical supporters. Unfortunately, most organizations do not take advantage of this cross-pollination potential.

A Few Strategies to Convert Volunteers into Donors

- > Treat volunteers with respect and acknowledge the value they bring to the organization
- > Provide volunteers with an outlet to share their stories and personal impact on the cause
- > Develop a process for asking volunteers to give
- > Make each volunteer experience memorable, organized, and valuable
- > Communicate how donations are impacting the organization positively
- > Invest in [volunteer management software](#)

A Few Strategies to Convert Donors to Volunteers

- > Communicate volunteer opportunities and how volunteerism impacts the organization positively
- > Integrate donation requests and volunteer opportunity promotion
- > Ask donors if they would be interested in learning about volunteer opportunities
- > Share volunteerism impact stories with financial donors

Cole, Newton & Duran's Not-for-Profit Practice

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Cole, Newton & Duran's team of professionals are involved in every stage of our client's engagement to ensure they are receiving high quality, responsive service.

Clients enjoy working with experts who help achieve their objectives. Clients receive industry knowledge and solutions they need to not only reach, but to exceed their strategic goals.

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CONNECTING VOLUNTEER AND DONOR INFORMATION

A [study](#) conducted by [VolunteerHub](#) found that connecting volunteer and donor information is one of the biggest struggles for organizations in the nonprofit sector. In fact, 30 percent of nonprofits cited connecting supporter groups to be their biggest challenge currently. Connecting volunteer and donor data creates an opportunity for organizations to understand, leverage, and optimize the relationship between giving types. Deploying volunteer and donor solutions that integrate also helps a nonprofit determine the impact of giving. Currently, only 30 percent of nonprofits measure impact, and many do not have effective tools in place to bridge the gap. Based on the clear-cut relationship between volunteers and financial donors, it is a win-win to invest in tools to leverage it.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The relationship between volunteers and financial donors has been proven and continues to grow year over year. Nonprofits that leverage this relationship can cross-pollinate supporters and create new value from their existing supporter base.

The preceding is an article by Eric Burger, marketing communications manager for [VolunteerHub](#), an organization that provides volunteer management solutions for nonprofits across the globe.

Contact Us

Cole, Newton & Duran's team of nonprofit professionals provide accounting, tax, and consulting services to a variety of organizations. If you would like to learn more about CND and how we can help your organizations with its financial needs, please feel free to give me a call.

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