

Fundraising challenges for NGOs in the age of 'Digital Darwinism'

By [Michelle Govender](#)

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Technological changes impact virtually every aspect of our personal and professional lives. It has fundamentally changed the face of how we transact and the pace at which we expect things to happen, and more efficiently than ever before. But finding and retaining the skills-sets to embrace and exploit the technology remain a key challenge for all business, and even more so cash-strapped non-profit organisations (NPOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).



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In an age that has been dubbed 'Digital Darwinism', the pace of technological change is advancing so rapidly that individuals and organisations are struggling to adapt to the changes, let alone learn enough to exploit them. More than ever before NGOs are under huge pressure to adopt new technologies as a vital mechanism to survive and fund their work.

Allocating share of wallet

Cloud, crowdfunding, mobile, social communication, augmented reality, instant and mobile payment mechanisms – these are just some of the technologies that have dramatically changed consumer behaviour and how they allocate their share of wallet.

If fundraising strategies are to generate the hard-earned cash needed to fund NGO work, then NGOs need to figure out how technology is changing the face of fundraising, and how to engage donors beyond a 10-second attention span. Technology is changing consumer behaviour dramatically, and that means NGOs have to change with them in the manner that they fundraise, market, and share information.

Key tech trends that non-profits need to engage with:

Mobile: The future is all about mobile, and that means transacting needs to follow suit. More and more people are moving away from their PCs to being more mobile and 'on the go'. That means you have to ensure your content and message is optimised for mobile functionality, especially when you consider that almost 50% of all emails are read on mobile devices.

Being mobile-savvy has never been more important.

Data and analytics: Data is by far the most valuable asset of any organisation. This means that the quality of data going into an NGO has to improve, and we have to move away from a 'capturing' mindset to an 'analysing' one. More than ever NGOs can research which communications channels their donor base prefers, which messages and approaches are more effective, how to increase recurring giving and understand the donor's propensity to donate. The ability to extract 'intelligence' from data and translate this into actions will determine which NGOs are successful and sustainable in an increasingly discerning consumer market.

Cloud: Cloud provides a secure, highly available, managed, cheaper environment for organisations to operate without the costs associated with cumbersome IT infrastructures. This becomes even more important when you consider the move to mobile and the need to access your critical documents on the go, anywhere, anytime, as well as sharing data and information from any place. Cloud could prove to be a gamechanger for NGOs to access services that may have proven too costly a few short years ago. To this end, Microsoft has long promoted the development of cloud services and the use of innovative technologies by NGOs. Microsoft is donating over \$1bn in cloud services to 70,000 NGOs around the world in the next three years as part of its 'Public Cloud for Public Good' initiative, supporting NGOs to enhance operational efficiency, network security and overall service quality, so that they can provide even better community services to countless people.

Social media: From live tweeting of events to sharing of donor pages, social networks have become the communication channels of choice for emerging generations who will become your future donors. They have become pervasive across business and personal use with channels like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter providing access to huge networks of potential donors, volunteers, supporters, media and so on. Make sure your website and marketing communications integrate seamlessly with social channels and put an intelligent, consistent and impactful social content plan at the top of your priority list.

Crowdfunding: Of all the innovations in fundraising over the past decade, one of the most impressive has to be crowdfunding. Crowdfunding websites allow your non-profit to set up an online fundraising campaign based around a fundraising page, and accept money directly from that page using the website's own credit card processor. This approach taps into the collective efforts of a large pool of individuals — primarily online via social media and crowdfunding platforms — and leverages their networks for greater reach and exposure. For NGOs, the ability to collaborate and network beyond their immediate borders is a massive benefit.

Video: Tell compelling visual stories that capture the hearts and imagination of your audience with video. The use of video in content marketing is on the rise, evident in the fact that YouTube is now the second largest search engine on the web. It also demands more consumer attention than any other medium. Statistics also show that audiences are also 10 times more likely to engage, share and comment on video posts than any other content. Video is also the most powerful way of evoking emotions online.

These are just a handful of technologies that are impacting the NGO space. While we're not suggesting that the tried and trusted traditional channels are no longer relevant, they need to be augmented with greater digital integration. NGOs need to

engage a far more diverse audience of donors than ever before. Some are comfortable in more traditional media, while a much bigger and perpetually growing number are happier with the speed and agility that digital platforms provide. The point is that NGOS need to engage across multidisciplinary channels, and ensure an integrated approach to engaging their current and future donor audience.

Attracting and retaining in-demand, experienced digital experts in the cash-sensitive NGO environment is a key challenge, which is why NGOs need to collaborate with partners that can deliver the new skills that they demand. Internally, a new culture of fundraising innovation is also needed so that by thinking ahead, NGOs can take a more proactive response to digital technologies that allows them to actively shape their futures, rather than be shaped by it.

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