



How fundraisers can remain positive in a time of crisis

'There is a crack, a crack in everything – it's how the light gets in.' Leonard Cohen

As we all adjust to new ways of living and working, many of us are learning how inspirational acts of kindness have the power to pierce the gloom. Even in the most broken of circumstances, Cohen reminds us, there are spaces waiting for light and hope to poke through.

As fundraisers, there's an important lesson we can draw from this. Whilst the government has outlined a myriad of measures to ease the economy into a temporary 'sleep mode', we don't have to pull down the blinds and give in to slumber. In fact, we stand a far better chance of surviving the crisis, if we look forward to life beyond Covid-19 and are ready to act once restrictions are lifted. Whether this means approaching the coming months as an opportunity to sharpen our fundraising strategy, recalibrate activities or build important new partnerships, there are things we can do to minimise the impact of the virus. By thinking creatively and working collaboratively, we're more likely to make a full recovery and emerge feeling ready for whatever comes next. Because, when our lives do return to normal, the need to fundraise will be more urgent and compelling than it's ever been.

Working within the constraints of Covid-19

For now, fundraisers, like everyone else, have been asked to drop all social gatherings and many charities have taken the decision to furlough their staff. Understandably, there's a heightened sense of caution about proceeding with projects and it may no longer feel appropriate to ask high net worth individuals to consider making large personal gifts.

At Gifted, we understand that many organisations, including schools, are inevitably engaged in crisis management. Our great not-for-profit organisations, be they centres of cultural excellence or places of worship and learning, are fighting to survive so that future generations can benefit. But, when this crisis is over, these organisations will need to move forward with confidence and ambition – which means fundraising professionals doing all they can now, to prepare for healthy, more resilient futures. The financial crisis of 2008 taught us just this – those organisations who used the time effectively and didn't down tools, were the ones who thrived when the situation began to improve.

Preparing to come back stronger than ever

That's why we believe the next few months present the fundraising profession with an opportunity to come back stronger than ever. Across the country, charities have a chance to review what's been achieved over the last few years and honestly reflect on their successes and failures. The current situation provides an unwanted, but valuable period for fundraisers to consider their existing strategies, re-examine their prospect databases and determine what, if anything, they can do better, while they plan for the fundraising programmes and campaigns of the future.

We are fortunate to live in an age when most information is at our fingertips. This period of restrictive working may create some valuable space to spend more time on research and on establishing where future funding is likely to come from. It can also be a window to discover new networks and ensure that your future strategy is exactly right for your future needs. After all, social distancing restrictions have little impact on talking to prospects and seeking their advice, if not their support. Whilst the temptation may be to shy away from meaningful contact, we'd argue that now is the moment to engage and connect, rather than to step back. Tactful communications with your supporters at this time will continue to grow your existing relationships, rather than letting them go stale and expecting to be able to pick up where you left off.

We've also seen how important it is for charities to have effective online giving systems that have the capacity to bring in much needed funds right now and encourage important regular giving moving forward. Whilst investing in a bespoke online system can feel like a big decision for smaller organisations, it doesn't



have to be expensive. At Gifted, we've been keen to develop a package that's affordable, tailored and GDPR compliant, so that charities can plan for more resilient fundraising as the landscape changes.

Making sure that good things continue to happen

When this is all over, charitable institutions will need to be ready to fundraise. If we can overcome our fears and maintain our focus during this period of change, the organisations we cherish will inevitably bounce back. Those vital capital projects will go ahead and life-changing activities will be reinvigorated. Above all, development professionals will be well placed to resume their fundamental role of making sure that good things continue to happen and that society recovers.

To borrow from Cohen again, there may be fractures and fissures on all sides, but there are also shafts of light to be grateful for. Many charities have been buoyed by the overwhelming goodwill of their supporters stepping up and plugging the shortfalls, together with the promise of further help from large grant-making organisations. Whilst none of us would choose the present circumstances as motivation for change, they may just remind us that we're not alone and that a little positivity can go a very long way.

So, whether you're planning for a bursary programme, legacy campaign or a capital development, now is the time to reflect, prepare, and seek the advice you need to hit the ground running in the coming months. To help you with the next steps, we're inviting schools to [get in touch](#) and book a free, *heads together* online conversation with one of [our directors](#). We're also running two free webinars on 12 May and 19 May, for anyone who might be planning a feasibility study or currently caught in the midst of a capital campaign. For more details contact Julie.day@giftedphilanthropy.com

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