

Lack of engagement blamed for charity donation crisis

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A focus on wallets rather than relationships is seeing many charities that rely on 'opportunistic' donations such as collection tins on the street facing a battle of survival as organisations that have worked engaging with their audience continue to attract pre-recession donation levels says community development specialists at Abelard Management Services.

Amidst reports that charities such as NSPCC, Shelter and Oxfam are suffering from the sharp decline in donations, specialists at Abelard believe that a lack of engagement has meant that smaller voluntary organisations now face the biggest challenge as people become conscious of the aggregate cost of small expenditure and choose to redirect donations to their personal needs instead.

"In the charity sector, engagement with the audience is absolutely critical. Charities that have a following of committed contributors who are engaged with the charity and share their concerns will be far more successful in the current climate. They are able to maintain conversations with their contributors and maintain buy in to the cause. That helps them make decisions, often hard decisions, about where to make cuts in the use and application of reduced funds", explains William Buist, MD of Abelard Management Services.

Buist, a specialist in rapidly improving trust and common fellowship in teams and communities, believes that whilst tougher times do mean that contributions will fall, they also mean that opportunities to make better use of the money that is available will also be available to those charities which can embrace the emergence of the 'Societal Web'.

"What matters most right now is the impact of the charity and the outcomes they achieve. The best charities will achieve as much as they ever have (or more) in a recession economy, but they can't do it alone. Their success lies with a loyal and committed audience who recognise the needs and values they hold as important", explains Buist.

Well-connected charities will be able to tap into goodwill, time and contributions of personal effort, as well as focusing simply on getting cash in. The challenge in the current environment is how to tap into the strong goodwill that still exists for the charities but that can't now be met through cash donations. It's a time to be innovative", adds Buist.

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Editors' Notes:

William Buist is Managing Director of Abelard Management Services, which specialises in building trust in teams and communities within its corporate and SME client base. William has had a 22 year career in Insurance, including serving as Head of Business Risk Management and Chief Underwriter for Lloyds TSB Insurance, where he also engaged with a number of consultations with Government on behalf of insurance industry bodies.

In 2001 he became a director of a consultancy company that focuses on supporting corporate teams delivering major change, where he has achieved substantial success with many medium and large clients.

William personally focuses on online community development, social networking and collaborative development within and between businesses. He is also president of the Ecademy Life Members Community – a premium global group of Entrepreneurs and Business Owners.

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