

RECOGNIZING SUCCESS

Communication about successful Donor Recognition strategies

Deciding Factors in Selecting the Technology for Electronic Donor Recognition Displays

by Robin E. Williams and Anne Manner-McLarty

Electronic displays can be web-based, stored on a central server or stand as an independent computer system. Decide what best aligns with the technology, IT support and budgets available to you. Usually, if the components are web-based, the organization must plan to engage the services of an outside resource for design, development, service and support. The hardware expenses are typically less for both web and server-based applications, usually only a monitor, speakers and connecting wiring. With an independent computer system, design and implementation is less expensive – possibly eliminating the need for a programmer, yet the cost of the computer must be included.

Analyze these four factors in decisions regarding interactive donor recognition venues for your organization:

1. Cost of equipment and implementation

For the most part these costs represent monies that are to be paid directly to consulting specialists and hardware providers. Whenever possible, outside resources should be engaged for the technical work and product selection. Although many organizations have staff in-house who tout an understanding of the technical and graphic design nuances of interactive media, fundraising organizations should be raising money and stewarding donors, not developing display content!

2. Initial content development

An effective method for organizing the content of the display is to create a storyboard of sorts. Define the audience, divide the content into specific messages and look for existing content that can be re-purposed. A specialist will benefit the process by sorting the information and marrying it to a specific delivery plan. Further more, ask for leadership regarding the pros and cons of electronic media as a donor recognition tool. This is a new practice, there is no “right answer” yet.

3. Plan for ongoing content management and support

Consider in-house staff expenditures to maintain the display after the initial installation. What processes will facilitate routine updates? What schedule will be established for the development of new content? Will there be appropriate time allotted to keeping the content fresh and engaging? And who will be assigned that task? Remember, the specific scope of this display is donor recognition. Do not let that primary message be lost by relegating this tasks to someone with the technical skill but not the experience and understanding to judge the nuances of donor stewardship. Again, a consulting specialist may be beneficial, at least during the planning phases. Look for a firm familiar with both the unique concerns of donor recognition and the technical requirements of an electronic display.

4. Reportability

How will you measure the success of your display? If being able to monitor how many users you have - much less what they look at or do while viewing the display - you will need to build in methods for gathering user statistics from the onset. Many web-based interactive programs offer this as standard practice. For other types of electronic activities, ingenuity may be required. Consider including a call to action distinct to the electronic message so that you can measure the number of responses. This may include a special offer, a dedicated link to online giving, registration for an event or newsletter that gathers user information, or the ability to forward data to another user. Again, an experienced consultant can guide you in ways to include tracking and data-mining features that will help you track the ROI of your project.

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