Building a Donor Pipeline – Annual Giving in a Medical Professional Organization

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Learning objectives

- How to implement donor-centric efforts to grow and encourage annual giving from individuals.
- How to improve your donors' experiences resulting in improved loyalty and retention.
- How to strategically position your foundation given the strategic focus of the professional arm of the organization.
American Gastroenterological Association (AGA)

- **Global reach:** more than 16,000 members.
- Members impact every aspect of the practice and science of gastroenterology and hepatology.
- Leader in providing the most relevant news and information for the GI community.
AGA Research Foundation

- **Mission**: to raise funds to support young researchers in gastroenterology and hepatology.

- Over $50 million in research grants.

- More than 920 scientists have been awarded grants.
Our donor pyramid

- Major Donors
- Mid-Level Donors
- Loyal & Consecutive Donors
- Low-Dollar Donors
- Lapsed Donors & Prospects
Our donor journey in 2011-2015

- Donor makes a gift through the dues check-off
- Donor is stewarded through annual impact report
- Donor is solicited for year-end campaign

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OLD WAY

NEW WAY
Changing our annual giving engine

- Build awareness about the foundation’s mission and impact
- Recommit to direct mail and email fundraising investment
- Understand why current donors give and stop giving
- Understand why association members are not giving
Data we used to make our case

2011-2015 Annual Giving Revenue

2011-2015 Annual Giving Donors
Building our annual giving engine

- Targeting the right audience segments
- Crafting effective appeals
- Maximizing donation potential with remit forms
- Saying thank you promptly and in meaningful ways
- Optimizing critical features of our website
Targeting the right audience segments

- Gain deeper understanding of audience needs to make a gift
- Segment donor into multiple groups
- Scale back number of contacts as appropriate

Bottom-line - TEST!
Crafting effective appeals

- Show how donor can be part of the solution through their support
- Be emotional
- Be relevant
- Build connection with the mission

Giving is an emotional experience
Maximizing donation potential with remit forms

- Brand remit device to the foundation
- Use consistent logos and colors
- Include upgrade in ask string

If you don’t ask, they don’t give
Saying thank you in meaningful ways

- Showcase the impact of their support
- Capture their hearts and minds
- Inspire the next gift through the gift acknowledgments
- Leverage the power of testimonials

A good job of thanking a donor will not leave you with a 1-gift donor
Optimizing critical features of our website

- Redesign website
- Make it easy to give
- Show impact on website and donation page
- Tell stories

Your donors are your greatest asset!
Our Appeals: Before & After

Before: Organization Focused

After: Personalized Impact

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Our Ask: Before & After

Before: Generic

After: Based on Last Gift

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Our Inserts: Before & After

Before: Multiple stories

After: One story

Your Gift at Work
Featured Research Award Winner

The accomplishments of research award recipients remind us that everything we do as gastroenterologists is the result of research that showed us the better way to care for our patients.

The AGA Research Foundation awards program provides grants to the most deserving of investigators working to advance digestive disease research. Jay Thiagarajah, MD, PhD, staff physician, division of gastroenterology, hepatology and nutrition and instructor of pediatrics, Harvard Medical School, Boston Children’s Hospital, MA, is no exception. Get to know Dr. Thiagarajah, a 2017 AGA Research Scholar Award grant recipient, by reading his story.

Q&A with Dr. Jay Thiagarajah

How would you sum up your research in one sentence?
My work has focused on exploring hydrogen peroxide transport through aquaglyceroporins and the effect this has on wound repair and mucosal immune function in the intestine.

What impact do you hope your research will have on patients?
The goal of the proposed work is to better understand how these proteins work in the gut, which will lead to new ways of combating inflammation and infection.

What’s something interesting about your research?
Many of the good bacteria that produce hydrogen peroxide in my studies are found in yogurt.

What drew you to the field of gastroenterology?
The gut is a fascinating organ system and clinical gastroenterology has incredible variety.

Something you may not know about me is...
I grew up in countries around the world, including Nigeria, Kenya, Indonesia, Bangladesh and England.

In my free time...
I like to watch soccer and play sports with my three energetic kids.
Impact on Revenue

Revenue From Annual Giving

FY11-15

FY16-17

Total Raised  Number of Donors
Our new donor journey

Awareness → Engagement → Donation → Commitment
Alignment with the Association

- Role in advancing the field.
- Value to the professional arm.

- Commitment in contributing financially.
  – Advancing key priorities.

- Success tied to the Association’s success.
- Commitment to support the vision.

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Success factors to build pipeline

- Develop a communication strategy
- Communicate progress and impact
- Showcase value of donation

Understanding annual giving is a pipeline to mid-level and major gifts
Turn to a neighbor ...(10 min.)

1. What are some areas of your work that you would like to begin or improve in your annual/member giving?
2. What next steps would you take?
3. What data do you need to collect?
4. Who needs to buy-in?
Report out ...(10 min.)

1. Ideas for annual/member giving improvements?
2. Your next steps?
3. What data you need to collect?
4. Who needs to buy-in?
What to watch out for

- Bad data entry
- Lack of analysis of appeal letters/emails
- Outdated website
- Not sending prompt acknowledgment letters
- Lack of reporting on impact of gift
- Relying on donations from dues only
What’s next for us

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Long term measures for success

Annual Giving Metrics:

- Year-Over-Year increases in revenue
- Number and Revenue from dues-check off increasing
- Number of donors upgrading to mid-level giving
- Number of mid-level donors with a personal interaction
- Continuous stewardship and cultivation
How you can be successful?

Analyze
Plan
Test
Analyze again

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“Fundraising is the gentle art of teaching the joy of giving.” – Hank Rosso
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