

## Advancing Your Skills: Using Research to Improve Results

Nonprofit organizations are always looking for new donors, but it's often best to start with your existing donor base for the most effective and cost-efficient results. How much do you track and know about your existing donors? What information are you utilizing to engage, communicate and solicit? Good research doesn't have to be expensive—cost-effective options are available to help you refine your efforts. By doing the research, you can segment your list and target your fundraising approach to improve results.

### **TIP: Take Advantage of Public Information**

Source general information such as address, volunteer interests, board service, job title and even salary from public websites. Premium White Pages gives access to complete contact information. LinkedIn can provide current and past employment, board service and community service areas of interest. This can narrow down what additional websites to research to identify board and volunteer service. Employer websites can confirm job titles and a sense of salary or salary ranges. Facebook also can provide information about community interests and employment information.

### **TIP: Utilize Your Public Library**

Foundation Directory Online is helpful to research larger-capacity donors who may have private or family foundations. You can find contact information, funding interests, access to 990s and giving amounts. Information on application guidelines for private foundations will give you a sense about how these donors like to be engaged. The Foundation Directory Online is available for free at the Nonprofit Resource Center at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh—Main in Oakland.

### **TIP: Browse Nonprofit Annual Reports**

Once board service and/or volunteer service have been identified, researching nonprofit websites and annual reports will often mention past donation amounts. This information can help determine potential inclination, target and ask amounts.

### **TIP: Pay Attention to Donor Behavior**

Pay attention to the choices your donors make and respond to them in a similar way. If your donor always makes their gifts online, then send them thank yous, other communications and future solicitations electronically. Does your donor like to meet in person or do they prefer to communicate with you by phone, text or email? Are the gifts from the donor only or the donor and their spouse? Do they travel in the winter? Do they tend to make their gifts at the end of the calendar year or in the spring? By paying attention to their behavior, documenting it in your database and responding appropriately, you demonstrate in a very concrete way your respect and appreciation.