

Case study

Take your individual donors to the next level

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The Young Vic opened in 1970 as a place in which younger directors, designers, actors, writers and technicians could work alongside the world's great theatre artists to present exciting productions at the lowest possible seat prices.

Over the last forty years, the company has established a powerful reputation both nationally and internationally. In particular, the Young Vic has begun to be recognised as the major theatre in this country in which young directors can develop and practice their art.

The Young Vic has a highly diverse and engaged audience, enjoying work of the highest quality at low prices. The Development department wanted to build upon the enthusiasm and support it received from its audience to build its, already strong, database of individual donors. Given the extremely successful artistic programming during the past two years, and the overwhelmingly positive reception, this presented an optimum opportunity to engage individual donors.

Objectives

- Enhance relationship with existing donors
- Review donor tiers and respective benefits
- Increase numbers of individual donors, and raise level of commitment for existing donors

Target groups

- Current audiences
- Existing donors
- Referrals from existing donors
- Previous donors

Process

Through listening to their current donors the Development department re-evaluated the benefits of the higher level donor scheme ('Soul Mates'), to make the most appealing and engaging offer – as well as ensuring that they were not investing important resources (both human and financial) in delivering benefits in which the donor was not interested.

Outcomes

In the last two years, the Young Vic has doubled the number of its 'Soul Mates' and Individual Giving makes up an equal proportion of their funding to Corporate Giving. Subsequently, the Development department has also identified that the tiers of the 'Soul Mates' scheme are too widely spread, and that the jump between a donation of £1,500 to £5,000 is too great. If they are to successfully move people 'up the ladder' this needs to be more manageable.

Key points for effective practice

The Young Vic has worked hard to develop a nuanced approach to their Individual Giving scheme through careful and continuous communication with existing donors. It is important to take note of how each of your donors likes to be communicated, i.e. whether they like their updates to be short and succinct on email, or if they'd prefer a less formal chat on the phone.

As a result, the Young Vic has successfully reviewed the benefits for the different tiers of this scheme. For example, a high proportion of donors are interested in pre-show talks and so the Development department can build an increased number of these events into future programming.

These are the type of events that can be delivered for a nominal amount, but bring the donor great pleasure and engage them further with the work and the organisation.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is important to remember that although all of the perks are appealing to a potential donor, ultimately they want to feel as though they are making a philanthropic gift, i.e. the sum being directed to the charity should be significantly greater than that which is being spent on donor benefits.

Individual Giving has been less badly affected by the financial climate in the last few years, as opposed to Corporate Giving/Sponsorship, and therefore is well worth investing resources.

Additional information

<http://www.youngvic.org/home>