

## **The truth is, your event – whether in-person or virtual – is just the tip of the iceberg.**

Yes, the event should raise money and awareness and be energizing for your organization. These are all good reasons to have events. But even better is the opportunity it presents to meaningfully connect with people who have the potential to become major donors to your organization. It is one thing for a person to buy a \$50 ticket or contribute \$100 for your giving day. But if you have a great follow up strategy for your virtual event, those small gifts could lead to gifts of much greater significance for your organization, gifts that take a whole lot less work than planning an event.

## **So, what does a great event follow-up strategy look like?**

Like most things in fundraising, it depends. It depends on the event, your donor base, the make-up of your fundraising team, and even the types of opportunities you have to get more involved. So you're going to need to take the basics I present here and customize the strategy to your organization. (By the way, if you send me your follow-up strategy in [New Fundraising Pros](#), I'd be glad to give you feedback. My gift to you.)

## **Your follow up strategy starts with your thank you letter.**

You should already be doing this, but in case you're not, my formula for an effective event follow-up letter is to include each of these elements:

- Thank You for Specific Gift
- Result of the Event
- Impact Story
- Credit to the Donor (and thank sponsors if appropriate)
- Thank You Again
- Personal Signature
- Invitation to Connect or Get More Involved (usually as a p.s.)

This letter should go out ASAP, but no later than a week after the event. You might consider including a survey with your letter to give you valuable feedback about your event - what people loved, what could go better, what touched their hearts. This will not only help you with future events, but is valuable data for your communications in general. The more you understand about why people love your organization, the better equipped you'll be to connect with them. So a survey is part two of your follow up strategy.



**Monica Pitts**

**MayeCreate Design**  
info@mayecreate.com  
Mayecreate.com  
(573) 447-1836



**Jaime Freidrichs**

**New Fundraising Pros**  
www.newfundraisingpros.com  
jaime@maximizingnonprofits.com

**All this is basic and not the heart and soul of your follow up plan. Because your best tool, the most important piece, the thing that will lead to bigger gifts, is the phone.**

For a week or two after your event, I strongly recommend setting aside one hour per day to make follow-up calls. Bonus points for recruiting board members, other staff, or volunteers to help you with this, but if you do, make sure you train them in what exactly you're listening for.

## What are you listening for?

Passion. Enthusiasm. Capacity to give. So what questions do we need to ask to uncover these hidden treasures? I'd ask open-ended questions similar to the survey, but add a few to go deeper.

- Where does your interest in [our mission] come from?
- What types of causes and charitable activities are you most interested in?
- Could you see yourself becoming more involved in our organization as a volunteer or coming to future events?
- Would you like to talk more in-depth in the future over coffee (in-person or Zoom) about what we do?

(Don't forget to start the call by thanking them for attending/giving at the event and making sure its a good time to talk before you start throwing questions their way.)

You don't need to ask all these questions. In fact, if you ask someone a bunch of questions in a row, it might start to start to feel more like an interrogation than a conversation. But you can have these questions in front of you and approach the conversation with the goal of determining how sincerely interested the attendee is in your organization and clues about their capacity to give. You'll be doing some deep listening on this call.



**Monica Pitts**

**MayeCreate Design**  
info@mayecreate.com  
Mayecreate.com  
(573) 447-1836



**Jaime Freidrichs**

**New Fundraising Pros**  
www.newfundraisingpros.com  
jaime@maximizingnonprofits.com

## **Objection: I don't have time to call everyone.**

I can already predict your objection to this. You'll say you don't have time to call all these people. I say you do. After an event, set aside one hour per day for two weeks to make these calls. That's it. Whoever gets called, gets called. If you don't make it through the whole list, you still talked to a lot of people. You can sort the event donors from largest to smallest and start at the top or if everyone gave the same amount like a ticket price, start at random. Get as far as you can in an hour and pick up where you left off the next day.

## **Leave a message for those who don't answer.**

Of course, a lot of people won't answer. Just leave an upbeat message thanking them for giving and requesting a call-back when they have a few minutes to answer a few easy questions. If they call you back, that is a great signal that their passion for your cause is high. The highest passion people are added to your prospect list for cultivating for major gifts.

If you really don't have an hour a day, you can spend 30 minutes, but know that the strategy will be only half as effective. If you can't spare 30, you should do 15. And seriously, if you can't find 15 minutes a day for this, you're probably not in the best position to plan an event in the first place!

## **When planning for any event, whether it is virtual or in-person, make a great follow up plan and give yourself time to do it.**

That's the secret I didn't get to share. I'm still kicking myself a little, but I hope this post makes up for it.

What questions do you have about making follow up calls? Does this sound like a doable strategy to you? Will you commit to making these calls after your next event, and build stronger relationships with your attendees? Let me know in the feedback form, or [via direct message on Facebook](#). I really want to hear from you.



**Monica Pitts**

**MayeCreate Design**  
info@mayecreate.com  
Mayecreate.com  
(573) 447-1836



**Jaime Freidrichs**

**New Fundraising Pros**  
www.newfundraisingpros.com  
jaime@maximizingnonprofits.com