

The Five Types of Donors and Potential Donors

Once you completed the previous worksheet, you probably noticed that it isn't easy to fit your donors into a single category. After all, people have different lives, interests and values. The entire point of the Donor Experience Framework is to identify these differences and adjust your messaging so that it directly aligns with varying types of donors.

This fits in perfectly with our fishing parable. If you're trying to catch bass, you'd typically use a different strategy than when fishing for catfish or trout. Knowing what you're fishing for helps you choose the most effective strategies, and this is true for donors and potential donors as well.

Fortunately, you don't have to figure out these differences on your own. When you look at donors from every organization or church in the world, you end up with five basic types. Understanding what drives each of these donors - and potential donors - is exactly what you need to increase giving in your ministry.

1. Non-Donors (“Patty Potential”)

The **first group of donors** you need to understand aren't donors at all, but they very well could be in the right situation. You can refer to this donor persona as “Patty Potential” - because the potential exists for these individuals to become repeat donors. They may have given in some manner - such as volunteering - but not in a monetary way that you can track.

Your goal should be to move non-donors to the first-time donor step. To do this, you'll need to give them a compelling reason to give. They need to be told "why" they should donate. This is often accomplished through inspiring calls to action for specific needs. Think “school supplies for low-income students” or “shoes for children in need.”

It's also necessary to make giving easy. This means offering various ways to give — ranging from an offering plate to CryptoDonations. This simplifies giving, and once a non-donor gives for the first time, the ball is rolling in the right direction.

2. First-Time Donors (“Mitch Momentum”)

The **second type of donor** has given to your church once before, but they haven't followed up with additional gifts. Think of this donor persona as “Mitch Momentum” - because such an individual is already moving in the right direction. To turn these folks into at least sporadic donors, you need to let them know their one-time gift was appreciated.

You can accomplish this in a variety of different ways, but in every case, you want to show them that their donation had an impact. You can include evidence of such impacts in thank-you videos, emails, confirmation pages and even personal notes.

Images and videos that show children receiving backpacks, the completion of a new school in an impoverished community, or local homeless people being treated to a Thanksgiving meal can be very powerful. In the end, donors want to know their gift had an impact.

3. Sporadic Donors (“Spotty Spencer”)

The **third type of donor** that you should understand has given to the church more than once, but their gifts are sporadic and unpredictable. You can refer to this donor persona as “Spotty Spencer” since you can’t really anticipate when their next gift will come. One of the best things to do in this situation is offer automated giving.

By providing sporadic donors with an opportunity to give without thinking, you’re improving the Donor Experience and making it easier for them to donate to what they care about. They may be hesitant at first to sign up for recurring donations, but if you keep expressing gratitude for every financial gift they send your way, they’ll eventually come around.

4. Recurring Donors (“Reliable Ralph”)

The **fourth type of donor** helps keep the church doors open through their consistent giving. The donor persona of “Reliable Ralph” has either set up recurring giving to your ministry or faithfully places a check in the offering plate every week, month or other timely interval. Recurring donors are great to have, but it’s still possible for them to move forward on the DonorExperience Map.

To accomplish this, you’ll need to send out messages appealing to their generosity. Imagine for a moment that you receive an email thanking you for your faithful giving and pointing out the tangible effects of your gifts. Then the message explains how help is also needed with a big church project - such as the building fund.

In that single message, they told you how important you are to the ministry's continued success and how to become even more invaluable. Your church should follow this strategy. Help donors understand the impact of their giving and then ask them to move to the next level. This is a key strategy in the DonorWERX Communications Plan.

5. Impact Donors (“Vital Victoria”)

Impact donors are the **fifth type of donor** in your ministry, and we often refer to this persona as “Vital Victoria.” That’s because these individuals give to special church funds or projects **in addition** to their normal tithing. They are vital to your congregation’s continued success, but there is one more thing they can do to help.

The next logical step for impact donors is to become legacy donors. This conversation should take place in a one-on-one setting. Ask how they'd like to invest in the church in the long run, and inquire about any special programs or projects they're passionate about. You can then ask if they've done any estate planning.

It's at this moment that you should let the donor know how they can leave a legacy donation behind that will impact the church long after they've gone on to the Promised Land. Make sure to describe how the gift will directly benefit what the donor is passionate about, and explain how this will allow your ministry to continue doing God's work.

Going Forward

Now that you understand your donor types, you need to learn the giving metrics at your church. Once you have this information and a grasp on targeted messaging to your members, you'll actually be able to look at concrete measurements that show your ministry grow in real-time.