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# Participating in a giving day can be a gamechanger for nonprofits.

These community events can help your nonprofit reach new people in your community, spread the word about your work and mission, help your nonprofit achieve its funding goals - and even win some prize money along the way.

# Running a successful giving day campaign is part art, part science.

In this guide, we'll break down the basics of giving days on Mightycause, the elements of a successful campaign, strategies that will help you win prizes and engage donors, and how to follow up with donors to keep them invested in your work.

# Ready? Let's get started.





# A Giving Event isn't just any old fundraiser. It's a special event, with its own rules and culture to consider.

So, how do Giving Events work? What are the rules? How do you get ready to participate in a Giving Event, and what kind of campaign is best?

# **Giving Days & Giving Events 101**

## A Giving Event or a giving day is an online giving marathon.

The goal of a Giving Event is usually to bring together nonprofits and communities. But make no mistake -- Giving Events are competitive events. The Giving Event host works to inspire friendly competition between the participating nonprofits to win prizes, by raising the most money and bringing in the largest number of donors.

# **Giving Event Lingo**

Leaderboards, Golden Tickets, Toolkits, oh my! If it all sounds like inside baseball talk to you, don't worry. This breakdown of common Giving Event lingo will help you get acclimated to the wonderful world of Giving Events.



**Host:** The "host" of a Giving Event is usually a community foundation, or other nonprofit group that aims to bring people together around a common cause, such a community or area of work. The host is usually where the Giving Event begins -- the event is their brainchild. They work to plan and publicize the event, onboard nonprofits, secure sponsors and prize money, devise the prize structure, set the goals, and are the driving force behind the event.



Platform: The platform (in this case, Mightycause) provides the technology to support the Giving Event. Since Giving Events are big online happenings, the platform's role is as important as the host's role. The platform has to be easy for nonprofits and donors to use, look great, and most importantly, function well. The platform needs to be able to handle a lot of traffic and activity on the event, and be able to handle the complex needs of the Giving Event host and the nonprofit. The Giving Event host chooses the platform.



**Participant:** That would be you! A Giving Event participant is a nonprofit registered to raise money during a Giving Event.



**Registration:** To participate in a Giving Event, nonprofits must fill out a registration form to opt into the event, as well as ensure that they meet the criteria for the event (set forth by the host). Registration is the first step in Giving Event participation. Sometimes, Giving Events will have a registration fee that helps the host cover some of their costs.







# **Giving Event Lingo**



**Sponsors:** Most nonprofits are familiar with the concept of sponsors. For a Giving Event, a "sponsor" is usually a company or individual that has helped provide prize money for the Giving Event.



Leaderboard: The leaderboard is really the center of the Giving Event -- this is where the competition kicks in. It's common for Giving Events to have multiple leaderboards, where nonprofits compete against other nonprofits of a similar size and capacity, or category. There is typically prize money available for the nonprofits who are in the top spots on a leaderboard. So, it's important for participants like you to understand which leaderboard you're competing in and how to fundraise strategically to climb to the top!



**Golden Tickets:** Just like Willy Wonka's Golden Tickets, these are random prizes nonprofits can win throughout the Giving Event. At the end of an hour, the platform will choose a donor who gave during the previous hour at random to win a Golden Ticket. That means that the nonprofit they donated to gets a prize! The host determines the size of the prize. Golden Ticket hours are listed in the Rules & Prizes, and tracked on a table on the live Giving Event site.



**Power Hours:** Power Hours are short-term competitions among nonprofits that happen during the Giving Event. During a Power Hour, nonprofits compete to either bring in the most money or the highest number of unique donors in the space of that hour. There's a prize for the nonprofit that wins. The host determines whether a Power Hour is for the most dollars raised or most unique donors, as well as the prize for the winner.







# **Giving Event Lingo**



**Team fundraising:** A team fundraiser is an organized peer-to-peer campaign, where an organizer (who can be an individual, business or the nonprofit itself) gathers a group of individuals to engage in peer-to-peer fundraising. The team of fundraisers work toward a collective goal, and compete on a leaderboard on the team page. For a Giving Event, a team can be a powerful way for nonprofits to increase their reach and mobilize a group of supporters to raise funds for them on a day when every bit of help counts! Learn more about team fundraising.



Matching Grants: We'll go into matching grants more in-depth later, but a matching grant is a donation from a grantor who agrees to "match" donations up to a certain amount, during a certain period of time. For instance, a nonprofit's board chair may offer a \$5,000 matching grant, and specify that they will match all donations 1:1 from 8am - 12pm on a giving day to help drive donations. Mightycause has a tool that allows nonprofits to enter matching grants, so they are displayed and calculated on a nonprofit's page or a fundraiser.



Organization Profile: Each organization has a profile page, which is tied to their EIN. Lots of nonprofits use their organization profile as their main donation page during Giving Events, but from your profile, you can connect fundraisers and team pages. This is where you'll put basic information about your work.







# **Giving Events on Mightycause**

## Mightycause is the industry leader in Giving Events.

We've been hosting them since before some of our competitors even existed! On Mightycause, we are actively involved in every step of the Giving Event. We don't just provide the technology -- we provide expert project management and guidance for Giving Event hosts, training for participating nonprofits, technical support for the host, participants, and donors, and strategic support for participants.

We've designed our platform so it's easy for users of all skill levels to create robust, dynamic pages to raise funds for their nonprofit or their favorite cause. Here are just a few of the perks of participating in a Giving Event with Mightycause:

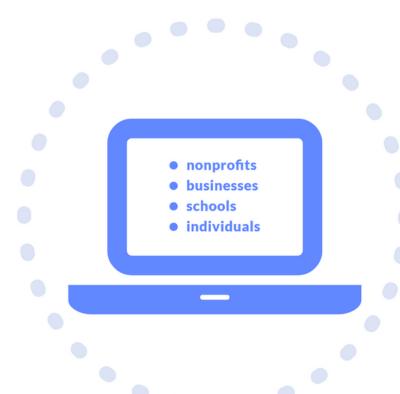
- Easy, on-page editing. Building your page on Mightycause is simple and convenient. Instead of piecing together your page from menus and screens where you upload photos and write copy, you can do it all on your Mightycause page, so you can see how it looks.
- **Detailed donation reports.** You'll have full access to donation reports, with all your donor's contact information. You can easily export full reports, which you can upload into your donor database.
- Automated receipting. We'll send the tax receipts to your donors so you don't have to. You're welcome! (And, yes, you'll be able to insert a custom message on your receipt so your donors are automatically acknowledged seconds after completing their donation.)
- Mobile-Responsive Technology. More people are using their smartphones to give to charity than ever, and Mightycause's site is fully mobile-responsive, so your page looks great no matter what size screen it's being viewed on.
- Optimized Checkout Process. A convenient and easy checkout process is paramount for online donations, as donors may opt out of a complicated, cumbersome or outdated donation process. Mightycause is designed to get your donors in and out quickly and easily.







# **How Do Giving Events Work?**



# Register

Nonprofits or fundraisers register for the Giving Event to become eligible for prizes and exciting promotional opportunities.



# Run the event

During your event, donors give to particiating fundraisers on your Giving Event website. Donors can also schedule donations before the event.



# **Spread the word**

Mightycause's Giving Event training equips you with promotional tools and skills to reach supporters on social media, email, and more.



# **Get funds**

After the Giving Event, the Mightycause Charitable Foundation disburses funds directly to participating nonprofits so they can continue their mission.

GIVING EVENT BASICS





There are hundreds of giving days across the U.S. each year. Chances are, there's already one in your town. These events focus on localized Giving Events to gather the community together to raise funds for local nonprofits in a 24-hour period.

Most are hosted by community foundations or other community-centric nonprofits such as regional United Way chapters. These foundations usually incentivize nonprofits to participate with competitions and prize drawings throughout the day. The competition is typically displayed publicly, with leaderboards showing different categories of nonprofits on the giving site and who's in the lead throughout the day.

Plus, many hosts put a lot of marketing muscle behind giving days - you can typically find ads on your local tv and radio stations and blanketing social media in the month before the giving day. Many will also invest in media placement opportunities such as morning news shows and newspaper articles. This can help bring in new donors, some of whom seek out opportunities just like this to give their yearly donations.

# THE BOTTOM LINE: RAISING MONEY

According to the Knight Foundation, the average giving day in a community raises about \$1 million. *In one day*.

The largest giving days can raise as much as \$30 million in just 24 hours for nonprofits in their community. The longer a Giving Event has existed, the more ubiquitous the brand becomes in the community. This brand can help make these events some of the largest days of giving for nonprofits in their area.

For nonprofits new to online fundraising or giving days, setting a modest goal can be a realistic marker of success. But, for bigger nonprofits that usually rise to the top of the leaderboard, setting a goal to win can motivate donors to give more than they originally intended. Plan to debrief the campaign like you would any other and set your goals for next year.

Of course, like any other campaign, the amount of money raised depends largely on the amount of effort a nonprofit is willing to put into the campaign and promoting their participation. Ahead of giving days on our platform, Mightycause provides training sessions to help participants start marketing their participation to donors early and bring on ambassadors to help them grow their donor pool. Plus, we'll provide tips to help you keep up engagement and social media best practices, too!



It may not seem like an obvious case for participation: You'll compete for funds from the same donors against other nonprofits in your area, and you're already overloaded with your own fundraising appeals so why should you add another thing onto your plate? The reasons why your nonprofit should participate in a giving day are actually pretty obvious.

## The "Why" Is already Answered

Unlike most fundraising appeals, where you need to provide a sense of urgency as to why you need funds for this campaign now, the urgency is already built into the campaign: It's 24 hours, and you're competing with other nonprofits to raise funds and win prizes. Since the host group will be promoting the Giving Event itself, you'll spend less time explaining to prospective donors what the event is about.

So, you can spend less time focusing on the "why" and more time focusing on the "what": What does your nonprofit do and what will a donor's donation enable? Focus your promotional efforts on storytelling and honing in your key messages, instead. Focus on gathering the most compelling stories of your work and making them ready to share on a variety of mediums, such as Facebook, Twitter and your blog.

# THE CASE FOR PARTICIPATION

### Be part of a larger conversation

Ride the momentum of this day of giving! Use the hashtag to stay involved in the conversation happening on social media and bring new followers to your page. Get media attention from local news outlets writing about the event by proactively let them know about your nonprofit's participation -- you may be able to get an extra shoutout.

Many giving days have brand ubiquity in your region, so just being able to mention that you're a part of the giving day will add a positive perception to your nonprofit from donors. With all the publicity around giving days, your nonprofit should take advantage of the news and be part of the movement. There are so many opportunities available to nonprofits for Giving Events that might not be available otherwise.

## Bring in new donors

New donor acquisition is a costly endeavor with a pretty low success rate (compared to re-engaging lapsed donors). Time after time, nonprofits spend money on marketing campaigns for new donor acquisition to no avail.

Since marketing for Giving Events largely comes from the hosts, you can bring in new donors in a much more cost-effective way. Focus on expanding your network by taking advantage of the publicity, the hashtags on social media and any in-person events surrounding the day of giving. You can expand your reach even further by engaging peer-to-peer fundraiser. Plus, you can look to your peer nonprofits for their tips and best practices for bringing in new donors for this event.

# THE CASE FOR PARTICIPATION

### Up your social media game

By now, you should know the importance of social media for your nonprofit: It's a low-cost way to reach a large audience and an easy platform for your message. Effectively using social media means that you're able to reach out to your followers and ask them for help spreading your message. It should be a meaningful medium to acquire new donors, raise funds and get other forms of support from your followers.

In order to effectively use social media, you must have a robust audience first. Since giving days largely focus on online donations, one of the most important pieces of giving days is the virality of them. On Mightycause, donors are prompted at several points to share their impact on social media. Since most of your donors will be coming from online avenues, be sure to share on social media consistently. At the very least, you'll increase your engagement and bring in at least a few new followers to your page.

#### Win Prizes for Your Nonprofit

Who doesn't want to win extra money for your nonprofit?! Participating in a Giving Event present your nonprofit with lots of opportunities to win extra cash to fund your programs and services. The competition can energize your donors by creating urgency and the ability to help your nonprofit win prizes, and at the end of the day, Giving Events are a unique opportunity to win extra money just by fundraising.

# GIVING EWENT PART THREE

# GIVING EVENT PLANNING

Like most fundraising efforts, what your nonprofit gets out of it depends on what you put into it. A Giving Event may only last 24 hours, but the nonprofits who rise to the top and exceed their fundraising goals typically put months of work into the event.

When you've registered for a Giving Event, here's how to get the process rolling.



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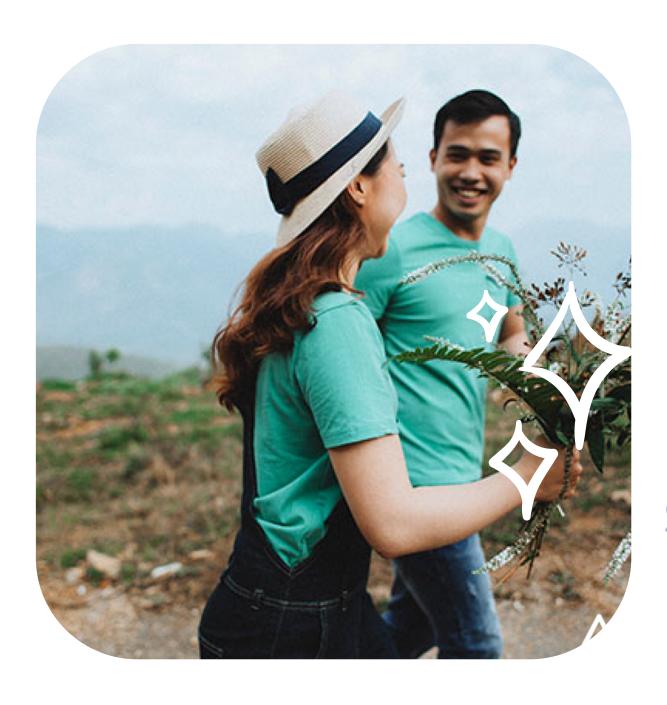
# PLANNING PRO TIPS

# **Choose a Point Person**

Nonprofits that are awesome at Giving Events tend to have on person steering the ship. This person understands the ins and outs of the event, knows their way around the Mightycause platform, attends trainings and leads the campaign. Choose someone at your nonprofit who has not only the time to make the event a success, but also the know-how, time management and strategic planning skills to pull it off!

# **Understand Rules & Prize Structure**

You can't win a game if you don't understand the rules. Before you start planning your campaign, read through the Frequently Asked Questions and Rules & Prizes page on the Giving Event site. (Don't worry if the prize structure isn't there yet -- often, the prizes are announced a little while after registration is opened!)



# **Utilize the Nonprofit Toolkit**

Every Giving Event has a cache of resources for nonprofits participating in their event. It's usually available on the Giving Event site. It contains everything from social media and email templates to logos.

Read and use the Nonprofit Toolkit! It is your best friend.

# Sign Up for Webinars

Mightycause training webinars are totally free to your nonprofit, and will help you get a leg up on the competition. So, there's no reason to skip them! Sign up (they webinars are listed in the Nonprofit Toolkit page) and make use of the free training!

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Good fundraising campaigns have a "hook." Something that draws people in, involves their emotions and makes them care about your cause. When you're planning your campaign, the first thing you'll want to do is determine what your angle is.

# **Fundraise for Something Tangible**

One of the biggest challenges of online fundraising is that people generally prefer to give in-kind donations. It's actually one of the biggest conundrums in modern fundraising. A food bank can take a \$10 donation and turn it into twice the amount of food than \$10 worth of canned goods provides, but people still prefer to donate the cans. The process of picking out the cans, purchasing them, dropping them off at the food bank and knowing that it will end up on someone's dinner table provides more satisfaction for the donor. Similarly, disaster relief organizations need money when they are assisting after a disaster, but people want to provide goods. They donate blankets, teddy bears, laundry detergent, bottles of water, clothes -- and this overabundance of goods is sometimes referred to as "the second disaster." It takes valuable time, money, space and energy to manage the influx of in-kind donations. But even when disaster relief organizations tell people this, and ask for money instead, people still send teddy bears and socks. Because it feels better than sending money, even if it is less helpful.

So, how to nonprofits get around this and fundraise successfully online?

The answer is simple: focus your campaign on something tangible. Make a real-world project the focus of your Giving Event campaign.

Maybe you're trying to get the funds together for a kitten nursery at your animal shelter. Or your roof needs repairs. Maybe you need a mobility van for your nonprofit that helps senior citizens. Or, you can simply add suggested donation amounts to your Mightycause page that are tied to tangible objects -- "\$XX provides XX meals for families in need."

Whatever your angle is, tie it to something real-world and tangible for donors. You'll do this both in your campaign's messaging, and utilizing the donation descriptions on your Mightycause page.

Using this technique instead of treating it as a general, abstract fundraiser will help your nonprofit craft a campaign that resonates with donors and drives them to donate.

# Stay on schedule!

Your Giving Event's Nonprofit Toolkit contains a timeline and checklist to help you plan. Print it out and mark the important dates on your calendar to keep your campaign on track!

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# ONE GIVING EVENT OPTION: START A FUNDRAISER

A lot of nonprofits like to use their organization profile for a Giving Event. But to help give your campaign more of a "hook," we recommend setting up a separate fundraiser. That's because your organization profile is designed to be a year-round, evergreen profile for your nonprofit. A fundraiser page is designed for campaigns-specific messaging.

While you can ultimately do what you feel makes the most sense for your nonprofit, here's why we recommend setting up a fundraiser page.

Fundraising Goal: On a fundraiser, you can set a fundraising goal, which will be tracked prominently on your page so visitors can see, at a glance, how close you are to meeting your funding goal.

**Deadline:** You can set a deadline on a fundraising page, which adds a sense of urgency to donations and helps inspire people to donate now instead of tomorrow or next week.

Campaign Storytelling: Your organization profile is designed to tell the story of your nonprofit, but a fundraiser page is designed to tell a story about your campaign. It's a shorter, more focused page where you can dig deep into why you're raising money and participating in this Giving Event. It's optimized to get people to donate.



It's tempting when you're gearing up for a Giving Event to want to discuss every single awesome thing your nonprofit does. After all, the event is getting media attention! All these new people will be finding out about your nonprofit! But this approach can backfire. When you throw too much information at donors, they retain less of it and may tune it out entirely. That's why focused, simple messaging works best for a giving day.

# Hone in on Your Message

- **Pick a focus.** Focus on a particular program or aspect of your work. Pick something that is easy to understand, tugs at the heartstrings, and lends itself well to good storytelling.
- Write talking points. What are the top things you want people to know about your nonprofit, or the program for which you're fundraising? Distill these into 3-5 key messages or talking points, and use these to build your page, your emails, your social media posts and beyond. Focusing on and repeating essential information makes your message more likely to stick with donors.
- **Keep it simple.** "Brevity is the soul of wit," they say, and so it goes for fundraising. Keeping the message and the language you use simple ensures that people who are new to your cause can understand what you do and what you're fundraising for, and that they won't be turned off by jargon.

# GOAL-SETTING

# An important part of succeeding is setting realistic goals for yourself.

So, how do you go about setting goals for your Giving Event campaign?

## **Be Realistic**

Don't shoot yourself in the foot with a crazy fundraising goal! Look at your last fundraising campaign. Pull the following information: How many donors gave? What was the average gift size? How much did you raise total?

This information can help you determine what an appropriate fundraising goal is for your nonprofit. If your last fundraising campaign raised \$8,000 over the course a month, then a \$50,000 goal is probably not achievable. Set a goal you can achieve, and if you go over it, great! That looks better than setting a lofty goal and then failing to deliver. Be realistic about the size of your donor base and your reach when considering your financial goal.

## **Think Beyond Dollars**

While funding goals are important, Giving Events are usually about much more than dollars raised. Hosts create Giving Events with the intention of helping nonprofits build capacity, acquire donors and gain valuable fundraising experience. So think about other goals your nonprofit can work to achieve.

Maybe you'd like to give peer-to-peer fundraising a try for the first time, or dip your toe into your first team campaign. Or, perhaps you'd like to get your board and volunteers involved in fundraising. Perhaps setting a goal for acquiring new donors and reaching new people. These goals are measurable, and will be helpful to your nonprofit long after the Giving Event is over.

#### **Measure Results**

It's rare that a Giving Event happens one year and one year only. Typically, these are annual events, and your nonprofit can use each year's event to get better and more focused in your online fundraising. One way to ensure that your nonprofit sees growth each year is so make sure you understand where your campaign succeeded, where it struggled, and how you can improve next year.

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# SPREADING THE WORD PART THREE

The Giving Event host works to drum up excitement in the community for the overall event, and works to secure media coverage, but it's the job of each participating nonprofit to promote their own campaign to their donor base and social media channels.

Nonprofit that win prizes and rise to the top of the leaderboard during a Giving Event don't take a passive approach to letting their channels know about their campaign. They plan months in advance, create and schedule content, and ensure that they're hitting their audience from all channels.



# **Email Strategy**

It's increasingly hard to be seen on social media channels. That makes email marketing extra valuable to your nonprofit on a giving day -- you have a direct line to your supporters! No algorithm will prevent your email from making its way to their inbox. Here's how your nonprofit can use email to drive traffic to your Giving Event fundraiser.

#### Make a Plan

There is a science to email marketing. Sending emails on the fly simply won't get you the results you want. So, as part of your planning process, think through your email strategy for the Giving Event. Here are a few of the things you should consider when plotting your email marketing strategy:

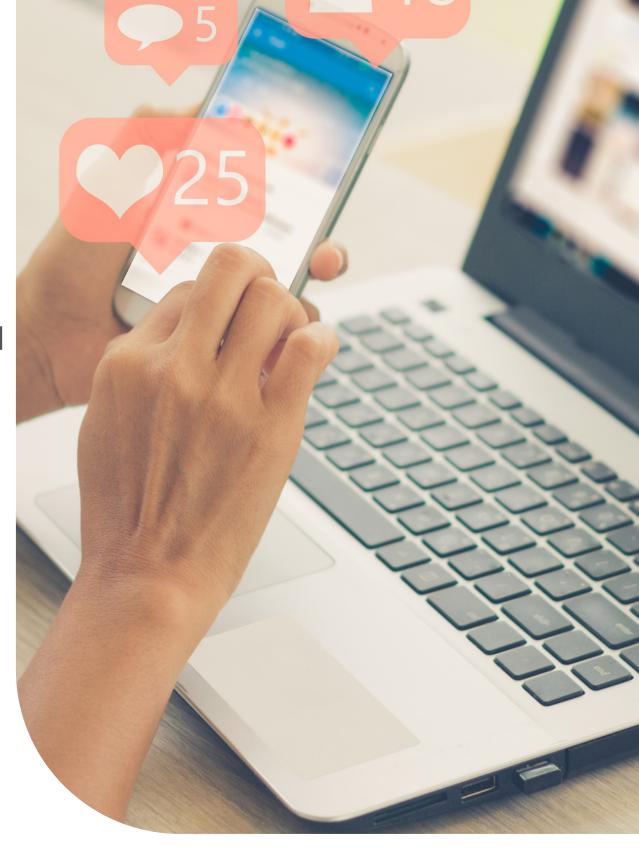
- **Segmentation:** You can send one email to your whole list of contacts, but we highly recommend splitting your list into different groups ("segments"). This will allow you to craft emails that feel personalized to a particular group, and therefore more likely to get the response you want.
- **Timing:** Make sure you understand your Giving Event's prize structure so you can schedule emails to go out during any Power Hours! Plot out when you'd like to send emails so you send traffic to your Mightycause page at strategic times.
- Make it mobile-friendly: More people than ever are checking their email and browsing the web on their phones, so make sure the template you choose is mobile-friendly. Mightycause is fully mobile-responsive, but to increase the likelihood of people going to your mobile-friendly page to donate, make sure the email looks good on mobile as well.
- A/B test: Leading up to the event, when early donations open, experiment with variables in your emails to see what gets better results. Testing different subject lines, CTA button text, color and placement, and even email lengths can give your valuable information about tactics that work so you can optimize your emails on the big day for maximum opens and clicks!
- **Test:** There's nothing worse on a high-stakes day like a Giving Event than realizing an email has a broken link or your personalization field went out with "Please donate, [DONOR NAME]." So test! Best practice is to have at least two pairs of eyes check your emails. Copyedit, test links, and be sure to test the email on different devices and in different browsers, too.

# **Social Media Strategy**

Social media is an important component of most Giving Events. It's a quick, easy way to get in touch with your supporters. And a solid social media plan is one of the keys to success!

#### **Best Practices**

While the execution can vary from platform to platform, there are some general social media best practices you'll want to ensure you follow.



- Assign a Social Media Manager: Maybe you have a social media manager on staff, or maybe you'll need to recruit a volunteer. However you do it, make sure you have one person leading the charge on social media for your Giving Event!
- Schedule what you can ahead of time: Services like Facebook's Publishing Tools and Tweetdeck allow you to schedule your posts ahead of time, and paid services like Hootsuite and Buffer can help you plan posts in advance. Save yourself some stress by scheduling your key content and key posts ahead of time, and save liveposting for celebrating fundraising milestones.
- Implement an editing process: Just as with emails, it's important to have at least two people take a look at what you've got scheduled. Check for typos, make sure links, photos and videos work, and have people double-check the messaging for you.
- **Use Giving Event hashtags:** Most (if not all) Giving Events have their own unique hashtag. Use them! It's not only how Mightycause and the Giving Event host track posts about the event, but it can help you join in on the online conversation!
- **Be responsive:** Interactions are important on social media, so don't just post and run! Make sure your social media manager for the Giving Event is available to respond to comments, tweets, thank people for shares and retweets, and monitor the day's activity on social media.
- **Utilize tagging:** Got a sponsor providing a matching grant? Working with another nonprofit? Tag them! It can help you expand your reach, and you never know, if you tag the host or Mightycause in a post, you may get a share or retweet.
- Go where your audience is: Spend time and energy where it counts the most. If you have 5,000 followers on Facebook and only 50 on Instagram, make sure you're spending the most time and effort on Facebook. A Giving Event is not a great time to explore new platforms or build an audience -- you want the biggest impact for your efforts.

#### **Events**

Hosting an in-person event is a great way to drum up excitement and make meaningful connections with your supporters in the community. Hosting a happy hour at a local restaurant, having a special event at your own location, or running a benefit day at a local business can make a huge difference in your Giving Event bottom line!

And remember that only online donations count for Giving Event totals, so make sure there's an easy way for people to donate at your event.

## Media

The Giving Event host will be doing media to promote the event, but that doesn't mean you can't have your own media plan. Reach out to your media contacts to let them know what you're doing, what makes your campaign special and awesome, and see if you can get some media coverage!

# Fliers, Signs, and More!

If your lobby gets a lot of foot traffic or you're in a prime location, try creating fliers and signs to help advertise your campaign. Your Giving Event host may even be able to help with some marketing collateral, so be sure to ask.

A strategy that may also work to help get the word out in your community is recruiting volunteers to help put posters, fliers and signs up in the community, or even hand them out directly to people in your community on the Giving Day.





One thing you'll want to consider when gearing up for your campaign is what kind of content you'll need. Content is what will get people emotionally invested in your cause, and it's what you'll build much of your promotional efforts around. So, what do you need?

# **Necessary Content**

- Images: Images are essential storytelling tools, so when you're planning your campaign, pull together all of the images you could potentially use in your campaign. If you need new images, reach out to staff and/or volunteers to ensure you have what you need. Some nonprofits may also want to work with graphic design volunteers to create logos, taglines and more.
- Video: "Don't tell me, show me!" Video takes this advice literally and can be a huge way to inspire support. It doesn't need to be an Oscarworthy production -- most smartphones can do impressive camerawork, and there are plenty of free editing tools you can use to put together a slick, attention-grabbing video about your campaign.

This content can serve a dual purpose. It makes your on-page storytelling more robust and impactful, and it can also be used in your marketing efforts for the Giving Event. Adding a thank you video to your nonprofit's custom Thank You page ensure that you're putting you're going above and beyond to show appreciation to donors. Mightycause makes adding content easy with user-friendly image uploads and easy video embedding, and gives your multiple opportunities for dynamic storytelling.

