How to Turn Event Participation into Long-Term Donors

Marathons, walkathons and other athletic events can help nonprofits identify new donors. These events are an entry point for many donors with a lot of new opportunity. The idea is to take the new event donors and cultivate them into organizational donors and build long lasting relationships. Non-profits need to build relationships with event donors instead of just giving them an event t-shirt and seeing them the following year.

There are several steps when trying to gain new organizational donors.

1. **Identify the prospects.** Take a look at who participated in the event. At the point of registration, capture their information, how they heard about the event, why they support the organization, etc. Asking the participants why they support the organization is a revealing question. They might know someone involved or have some familiarity with the organization already. These donors are most likely to continue down the organizational path.

2. **Engage.** The key is to build relationships with the participants who are involved and may also be willing and interested in being a donor for the actual organization. You can ask participants if they are interested in hearing more about the work the organization does. You can get more comfortable with asking the participants these questions by being friendly and conversant year after year.

3. **Qualify.** There are several drivers that get people participating in events in the order from most likely to become an organizational donor to the least likely: affinity to organization, affinity to the mission, affinity to a person, affinity to the event and an affinity to a third party organization. Once qualification of a donor has occurred, cultivation can start.

4. **Cultivate.** Provide a call to action and personalize the experience of the donor.

5. **Convert.** Listening to your event donor is the best way to know when they are ready to become an organizational donor.

The best thing organizations can do is start small. You don’t have to approach all 5,000 donors. Take a look at the identify stage and select a small sample group. Try getting your feet wet and tweak for your organization, donors, messaging as you learn.