
CMA: Christian Fundraising Insights Report 2017

Executive Summary

Full report available at www.cma.net.au/research

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This report explores research conducted with fundraising professionals of Christian organisations in Australia to understand their current strengths, challenges, and future needs.

Demographics of fundraising professionals

Fundraising professionals are commonly male Baby Boomers working in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane.

The fundraising professionals captured in this survey are predominantly male (66%), with almost three quarters (73%) aged between 41-65 years of age. The majority reside in major cities (84%) and come from the three largest states (NSW 34%, VIC 30% and QLD 26%).

Fundraising role

Fundraising professionals have divided attention between fundraising and their other roles.

Just one in four (27%) fundraising professionals can devote all their time and attention to fundraising. Three in five (60%), however, indicated fundraising is just one of several key responsibilities in their role. Two in five (43%) work in a paid full-time role and fundraising is only part of what they do. More than one in three (36%) fundraising professionals have spent less than two years in their fundraising role at their current organisation.

Fundraising staff

Three in five organisations (60%) have less than five FTE equivalent employees.

One in three (34%) have 1-4 full-time equivalent employees involved in fundraising roles/activities whilst almost one in four (24%) have 10 or more full-time equivalent employees involved in fundraising activities.

Fundraising figures and revenues

Half of fundraising professionals are reaching their fundraising goal figure.

Fundraising professionals report that in 2016, more than two in five organisations they represent (46%) had a total donation revenue of less than \$1M. The average size of regular donor giving in 2016 for the organisations represented in this survey is reported to be \$1,476. Almost half the fundraising professionals (49%) reached or exceeded their fundraising targets set over the last 12-18 months.

Fundraising activities

Regular donations, online giving and direct mail campaigns are the leading fundraising activities undertaken, however mobile phone apps and SMS appeals will feature more in the next 12 months.

The top three fundraising activities fundraising professionals are involved with are targeting regular donations (86%), online giving (85%) and direct mail (70%). Fundraising professionals see the key areas for potential growth as regular donations (68%) and major givers (55%).

In regards to digital giving sources, in the next 12 months fundraising professionals are most likely to incorporate mobile phone apps (18%) and text messages (18%) into their digital giving channels.

Fundraising challenges

Fundraising professionals feel challenged to improve regular giving and donor improvement in their organisations and teams and identified the ageing donor base as the leading obstacle they face.

The areas fundraising professionals agree that they need to significantly fix or improve are regular giving (79% somewhat or strongly agree), donor acquisition (82%) and moving existing donors up the donor pyramid (68%).

The most significant challenges facing fundraising teams are donor engagement (62%), fundraising strategy development (54%) and brand differentiation in a saturated market (41%).

The top three obstacles for increasing financial donations are an 'ageing donor base' (38%), 'competition from other ministries and/or large churches' (33%) and 'inadequate fundraising budget and/or staff' (30%).

Resources

Fundraisers indicated that their preferred development approach is to attend conferences or workshops, with just half having attended one in the last year.

In the last 12 months, the main resources fundraising professionals have been provided with are books, resources or journals/magazines (61%), CMA membership (56%), and conference or workshop for fundraisers (49%).

Fundraising professionals' top three most preferred methods for providing fundraising training are workshops and forums (46%), topical resources for fundraising training (38%) and fundraising networks (30%).

Future sentiment

Life in Australia is deteriorating according to almost half of fundraisers, however fundraisers' are optimistic about their organisation, but less so about the health of other Christian organisations.

The perception among two in five fundraisers (42%) is that life in Australia will be worse in five years' time, compared to now. A third (37%) think it will be about the same.

Four in five (80%) think their organisation will be better in five years' time than compared to now. One in six (17%) think it will be about the same and 3% think their organisation will be worse off in five years' time.

Key recommendations

Five areas of focus emerged from the data pertaining to fundraising teams and the fundraising function of Christian organisations.

1. Renew the focus on donor growth, acquisition and engagement

Donor engagement is the top challenge faced by fundraising teams and the top obstacle to increasing financial return is the ageing donor base. Equipping Christian fundraising professionals with new tools to better understand their donors, connect with younger donors, develop messaging that connects with donors, and use channels that reflect donor needs will be a key focus area in the years ahead.

2. Develop and implement strong fundraising strategy

More than half of fundraising professionals (54%) highlight that strategy development is a significant challenge for them (second after donor engagement at 62%). Supporting strategy development and implementation with skilled staff is critical for organisational growth.

3. Upskill entire organisation on the value of fundraising and becoming fundraising ambassadors

Fundraising professionals are actively seeking to inform and encourage their colleagues and CEO with their fundraising mandate. Driving a culture of passion, focus, and collegiality for fundraising is critical to ensuring that the entire organisation has a focus on growth. There are growing opportunities for fundraising teams and senior management teams to work together on agreed strategic outcomes and driving organisational passion for fundraising.

4. Drive agility in donor management systems

Time is a key asset that fundraisers indicate they are lacking. Over the next twelve months, fundraising professionals are seeking to focus on growth in regular giving, donor acquisition, donor retention, bequests, and moving donors up the donor pyramid. In order to execute on these targets, agility in donor management systems and tracking donor engagement are critical. These require ongoing investment in technology solutions.

5. Create space for fresh thinking and innovation to keep pace with donor expectations

Fundraising requires new and fresh thinking to keep pace with external challenges and growing competition within the sector. While Christian fundraising professionals are in a unique position to foster fresh thinking, many struggle to have the time and mental aptitude to focus on innovation. Just under half, for example (47%), state that they are not planning to add any new digital giving sources in their organisation in the next 12 months. Fundraising professionals must keep pace with the speed of change taking place in the external environment.