

Nonprofit 911 – April 22, 2008

A Rookie's Guide to Online Fundraising & Marketing
with Charles Ball, Katya Andresen and Kirt Manecke
Sponsored by Network for Good

The MP3 audio transcript can be found at
www.fundraising123.org or www.nonprofit911.org

Jono Smith: Hello everyone! Welcome to the April 22 Nonprofit 911 sponsored by Network for Good. And, of course, Happy Earth Day! My name is Jono Smith and I'm the Marketing Director here at Network for Good. We are very happy you joined us today. Actually, in honor of Earth Day, we've dubbed it "Green Week at Network for Good." How original, right?

We're happy to be featuring online fundraising success stories from some of the environmental organizations we work with. But before I introduce today's speakers, I just wanted to let you know a little bit more about Network for Good in case you are not familiar with us.

We are a nonprofit, just like most of you on the seminar. Our mission is to help other nonprofits like you raise money online. Nonprofit 911 is just one of the many free resources that Network for Good provides the community to help organizations increase their online fundraising and nonprofit marketing results.

In addition to the Nonprofit 911 series, which we post all the transcripts at www.fundraising123.org, we also provide online fundraising services directly to the nonprofit community, including Custom DonateNow—which we'll be telling you more about today—EmailNow and our donor database, which is called the "Donor Management Suite."

We're proud to say that over 4,000 small to midsize nonprofits rely on our online fundraising services to raise money online, to market their organization online and to manage their donors. So, if you're not raising money right now on your website or if you don't have a way to do that, we hope that you would consider Network for Good's online fundraising services to help you do so.

We have had over 400 people register for today's call, titled "The Rookie's Guide to Online Fundraising and Marketing." And before we get started, I just wanted to run through a few housekeeping items. As you probably noticed, all the lines have been muted. So, we won't be able to hear your dog barking in the background, no worries there.

And the call is being recorded. You should have received an email from us this morning with the link to the slides for today's call. If you didn't receive that email, you can go right now, point your browser to www.fundraising123.org and under the Training tab, you will see the Adobe PDF file which has the slides for today's call.

However, if you're not in front of your computer, don't worry. You can always continue your learning at www.fundraising123.org after the call. I also wanted to remind everyone again that you'd be able to access an MP3 audio recording of today's call within 24 hours at www.fundraising123.org. And within about seven days, we'll also post the text transcripts.

If you need to reach us at any time during the call or if you'd like to email us a question for one of our speakers, the email address is fundraising123@networkforgood.org. OK, enough introduction. At this point, I'd like to introduce our speakers and walk you through our agenda for today's call.

First of all, we'll be hearing from Charles Ball, who is my colleague here at Network for Good. He'll be leading off today's agenda with an overview of our Custom DonateNow service. This is Network for Good's online donation processing service that lets nonprofits accept credit card gifts on the Web.

And while this is not a sales call, you may have noticed on slide three of today's presentation that we are actually currently offering a special promotion just for Nonprofit 911 registrants. If you subscribe to our Custom DonateNow service before April 30, you'll actually save \$199. So, for more information, just see slide three and click on the link there for more information.

Following Charles' presentation, Katya Andresen, the VP of Marketing here at Network for Good, will be offering some tips on improving the health of your online fundraising and marketing efforts. And then, we'll be hearing from Kirt Manecke. Kirt is the founder and the CEO of a nonprofit environmental organization called "LandChoices." They are dedicated to preserving the lands and waters that landowners cherish.

Kirt is going to be sharing LandChoices' online fundraising journey with us today. I wanted to mention that since LandChoices began taking advantage of Custom DonateNow and our complimentary training from Network for Good, the organization has experienced some really phenomenal revenue growth.

Revenue has doubled from 2005 to 2006 and increased by more than 50% from 2006 to 2007. So, we'll be pleased and I know I'm looking forward to hearing the secrets to LandChoices' success. And so, that's our agenda for today's call. So, without further ado, I'm going to turn the floor over to our first speaker, Charles Ball.

Charles Ball: Well, hi everybody! Charles Ball here. I'm the Senior Sales Rep at Network for Good for the Nonprofit Services. It's a pleasure to be able to speak with you about our Custom DonateNow service. If you have the slideshow up, that'll be great. I also wanted, by the way, in this welcome, to thank the Basic DonateNow users, PayPal users and others for joining us in this discussion.

If you have your slideshow up, the first slide that you will see will be the Network for Good home page. And on the upper right hand side, you're going to see an orange rectangle that says "Are you a nonprofit?" Now, if one were to click on that, one would

then find one's self at our next slide. If you click on that next slide, you'll come to a page that shows affordable and easy online fundraising.

There's a photograph there with amber waves of grain and on the lower right hand side is a "Get Started" link and basically, what I'm doing here is showing you folks how to navigate to our Fundraising Services page. So, if one were to click on that Get Started link, one would then find themselves at our Fundraising page, where you'll notice that one has access to information about our Donor Management Suite, Custom DonateNow, Basic DonateNow, Email and our Internet Strategy Training.

Now, let's go to the next slide. The next slide is our DonateNow features and benefits page, which has all kinds of useful information for you. Custom DonateNow enables a branded, customizable donation page that not only enables credit card donations that's a Visa, MasterCard and American Express, but also provides tools to enhance connectivity with your donors.

You can ask questions of your donors, you can ask them for permission to add them to your email list. There's a tell a friend option as well. All these options are included in the service and you may use them as you need.

Now, on the right-hand side of this page, you're going to see a variety of different bars and boxes. There's an "Apply for Service" box—you apply for service online. There's also a "View Product Demo" bar followed by a "Pricing" box. In that Pricing box, you'll notice that we've got "Information" a one time account set up for the standard page that's \$129. For the custom page, that's \$199.

The standard page is the branded donation page, the configurable donation page with your logo at the top of the page. That's \$129 to set up and \$29.95 per month, 3% for donation. The custom page is the donation page, the configurable donation page with the background look and feel like your website for terrific branding. That's \$29.95 per month, 3% for donation.

And with this service, the important thing is you that you get a link. That link can be throughout your website. You can locate it throughout your website. You can include it in emails that you send out. And while DonateNow is primarily designed for use with a website, you don't really need a website. As long as you can send out emails, you can always send emails with that link.

Now, what we're going to do is we're going to go to our next slide and our next slide if going to show us the configuration tool that enables you to set up your donation page and change it as you need, when you need. So, let's take a look at that next slide.

The next slide, DonateNow Configure Your Page edit features. Here is where you can set up your main organization info. You can create a welcome that would be at the top of the donation page. You can create a thank-you message that goes out with the emailed receipts that we send out. You can set up your donation amounts; you can label your donation amounts. And then, you have a variety of included options, recurring donations,

thank you gifts, tell-a-riend, custom questions—a very important one—the mailing list sign up and so on.

Now, what we're now going to do is go to our next slide, which is the main page for custom and standard page examples. We're going to particularly focus our attention on custom page users and that particular client that we're going to look at is Dance Theatre of Harlem. They've been using our service with great success for a number of years.

We'll also take a quick look at a standard page user example, that's Defeat Diabetes. So on to the next slide for a look at of Dance Theatre of Harlem. One of the things that I want to point out to you, for ease of viewing I've split this into three different slides. And the first slide for Dance Theatre of Harlem is going to show you the donation page itself, the top of the donation page itself, and the background look and feel.

Now when I refer to the donation page itself, I'm referring to the part that says, "Help carry on the DTH legacy." That part, with all the information underneath including that welcome area at the top, those donation amounts you see that have the various different labels. That is created with that configuration tool, and the configuration tool will enable you to change that information as you need whenever you need.

The background that you see, this wonderful branded look and feel, is created by the client emailing to us a link to whatever page on their website they want us to copy. The links that you see at the top of the page and at the sides are all fully functional.

Now let's go to the next slide, to continue our view of the Dance Theatre of Harlem donation page. Now here we're going to see folks that, they're using the recurring donation option. Recurring donations are monthly, quarterly, yearly. They've made use of our survey-type question capability. They're asking a dropdown list question—contribution type—and they've even made that required.

Other types of questions you can ask, by the way, include text entry, radio button and check button, and customarily our clients use these to find out more about the donors and to engage them. Underneath that, you'll also notice that they are accepting donations on behalf of and in memory of, that's another option we have.

We do require, if you look at the donor information, we do require their email address because we send out receipts suitable for tax purposes. Underneath that, you'll also notice that they are asking the donor for permission to add them to their email list. If you have an emailing strategy, if you're planning on one, it's a good idea to ask folks for permission to add them to your email list.

Let's go to the next slide now, and we're going to take a look at the bottom portion of their page. And here what we're going to see is that we've got the credit card information. We accept Visa, MasterCard and American Express. We do require the card security code, an additional bit of security there.

You'll also notice at the bottom that these folks are accepting anonymous donations,

another option, and are also asking a "Get Involved" question. That's another dropdown list question that they're doing. You can ask questions before and/or after the donor's information.

Now, just so that you can see it, let's go to the next slide. And the next slide is going to show you what the donor experience might be coming from this organization's home page.

So this is the home page of Dance Theatre of Harlem. You're going to notice, by the way, at the top of this page, that's this part that the top of the page was reflected in their custom DonateNow page.

Now, the one thing I also wanted to note to you is that with DonateNow, you have a link, you can have that link wherever you want throughout your website, wherever it makes sense to make the ask. You can also include it in emails that you send out.

And the other thing is that we have these handy DonateNow buttons that you can use. You don't have to. You can create your own graphic or graphics. And at the very top left of this screenshot, you'll see Dance Theatre of Harlem. And underneath that, you'll see DTH News, Open House Series, Support DTH, and then you'll see in yellow, DonateNow. So these folks created their own graphic, and certainly you folks could do that as well.

Now, our next slide is going to show us the standard page. This'll be the page for Defeat Diabetes. And so let's click on this. So this is a branded page. It has their logo at the top of the page. The donation page itself is fully configurable. The only difference is that the background is gray.

And just to go over some of the features that they've used, of course they've got their donation amount. In this case, they did not label them. They do have a suggested donation amount, that pre-filled radio button next to the \$100 is the suggested donation amount.

They're accepting recurring donations. They're asking a dropdown list question, the programs question. They've even made it required. If you'll notice that red asterisk next to the programs means that they've made it required. You can do that as you like.

Underneath that you'll also see that they're asking a text entry question, Your Feedback. Now, one thing I want you to be aware of is that the information that you gather from the donations page is available to you 24 by seven through your downloadable spreadsheet reports. These are available through your online account.

Now, let's go to the next slide which will show you the bottom half of this page, of their donation page. And you'll also notice, underneath the donor's email address, that these folks are also asking the donor for permission to add them to their email list. And you'll

also notice that underneath the credit card information that they are also accepting anonymous donations.

And again, the following slide will take us to a view of the Diabetes home page. And on this home page, you'll notice, actually, that on the upper right hand side where it says About DDF, Contact Us, DonateNow, and also En Espanol, if one were to click on that DonateNow link that would take you to a page on their website that gives you various different donation options, and then from their they would go to the donation page.

Now, the next thing we want to do is to show you a little bit about the reporting that you get with DonateNow, so let's take a look at the following slide which shows you the donation and grant summary.

Now, you have access to this report through your online account. There's a View Donations link. You click on that, and this gives you the year-to-date overview. And if one were to click on the Donations Received Year-to-Date, that \$25,000, that would then take you to our next slide, a Donations Received for each of the months of the year to date.

Now, I don't have any slides to show this to you, but I just want you to picture in your mind's eye that if one were to click on the month of March, you would get an onscreen report for the month of March of each of the donors, their name, their contact information, the amount they donated and when they donated. And then above each month's report is an Excel spreadsheet icon which would then give you that downloadable spreadsheet report.

That is it in a nutshell. I thank you ever so much for this opportunity to speak with you. I will be available for questions later, and I guess it's on to Katya.

Jono: Great. Thank you very much, Charles. And hopefully folks got a sense of why we're so proud of our Custom DonateNow service.

And also wanted to mention another reason we're proud is we're launching a new version of Custom DonateNow in May that's going to have some great new reporting features. Also, we're going to include the ability for donors to add the transaction fee to their donation and add some more tracking features. So look for that coming up in May.

At this point, I'd like to introduce our vice president of marketing, Katya Andresen. And we hear a lot from folks who say, you know, "We've got a donate button, and we're just not really pleased with the results. How do we improve the health of our online fundraising program?" And so Katya's going to walk you through some tips that she's developed through working with hundreds of nonprofits. And without further ado, here is Katya.

Katya Andresen: Thanks, Jono, and thanks, Charles, for that demo. Much appreciated.

So, yes, I'd say the number one question I get when I'm out presenting about marketing

and fundraising is, "OK, we have a button now, which is great, but no one's clicking on it. So what do we do?"

So, I wanted to tell you that in all the years that I've been doing marketing and working with nonprofits, I have to say, usually the problem is one of three things, or sometimes all three things. And I'm on slide 20 for those of you following along, for those of you who don't have slides in front of you, it doesn't matter. I have very few visuals in this presentation.

But basically, if a DonateNow button in a fundraising program sort of needs resuscitation, the nonprofits are usually suffering from one of three ailments, you could call them.

The first one is something called "Field of Dreams" syndrome. You all remember the Kevin Costner baseball movie. It has certainly become part of vernacular that Field of Dreams, "If you build it, they will come."

The problem is that only works in Hollywood. Actually in most cases, if you build something people don't come. It's not enough to just declare your existence, to have a website, to put up a donate button and have that be your fundraising campaign.

Sadly, there is some work that has to go around that before people are going to click on a button. So, that is often a problem as people just passively just put up a button and no one is clicking on it. They are not doing the outreach and the relationship building that goes hand in hand with a successful fundraising program.

I'm going to be talk about how you do that. Consider that: are you being passive, do you just have a button up there? Are you really being aggressive in getting people to that button? You may have a field of dreams problem.

The second disease that I find myself diagnosing an awful lot with nonprofits is what I like to call "All about us" disease or also known as "nonprofit narcissism." It's what I it called in my book. The idea is that if your home page reads like an "about us" page, you have a problem. If the first three paragraphs of your emails are all about your organization, you have a problem.

If your correspondence reads like an "about us" page, that's a problem. If your appeals simply talk about what you need and you keep telling your donors what your need over and over again, you have a problem.

What's the problem? Well, that's a one-way conversation. The example I like to give is I wouldn't come up to you at a social event, say, we're at a conference. I wouldn't come up to you, hand you my life story and say, "Hi, I'm Katya. I was born in 1967. I care about good causes. I work in marketing. I'm a really good person; therefore, you should be my friend. Won't you be my friend right now?" You would think I lacked all social skills.

We all know in the social setting what to do, right? We would go up to someone and ask

where they're from, find out what they are interested in, work in information about our organization, but kind of naturally find areas of common ground on which we can stand together and connect. And that's what you want to be doing everywhere: on your website, in your email outreach, in your print materials.

It's having a relationship with the donor, including the donor in the conversation that is marketing. Ideally, marketing is a conversation. And so, if you have a home page that's got a big mission statement and the latest news about your organization and has nothing really to speak to the donor and what they are interested in and doesn't bring their values into the experience, then you have a problem.

There are 119 new nonprofits being formed every day. And so, all of them need money. All of them are good causes. All of them have mission statements. It's just not enough to stop there and assume that's enough to get someone to pledge. So that could be your problem. I'm going to talk about how to get over that problem and connect with donors.

The third one, it's really quite simple, but amazingly common, which I call the "call to inaction" problem. A lot of campaigns fall down because they lack a strong call or clear call to action.

Today is Earth Day. And if I went up to you carrying a banner saying, "Save the Earth" you would smile and say, sure I want to save the earth. But what would you go home and do? That's not a specific call to action. Good calls to action are highly specific, easy and very feasible for someone to do— highly, highly, highly specific.

So if I say to you: would you commit to rolling out a blue recycling cart on Wednesdays with your paper products from your household? That is a very specific call to action vs. saving the earth and you much more likely to do that, because it doesn't sound that hard. Oh, I can save the earth by rolling a bin out to my curb? I think I can handle that.

So, look at your home page. Do you have your donate button in at least two places? It needs to be easy, easy, easy to find. When someone goes through the donation process, is it easy? I'm going to get more into this in my 10 tips here, but if it's hard for someone to help you; they're not going to help you.

My favorite marketer Seth Godin always says, everyone is busy, lazy and in a hurry. And we all are. So, if you make something too hard, even if a person has a good heart, and in concept or in theory, supports you, they're not going to do it, unless they can do it easily.

OK, so those are the three most common problems I see with an online presence and frankly any marketing presence. Frankly, there are corporations who suffer from these ailments as well. I do everyday by the way. It's easy for me to tell you what to do. When I get time the weeds of my own work, it's easy to forget all of these things.

They sound like common sense, but we often forget them, so I wanted to highlight them. So I'm on slide 23 now, which is 10 ways to turn these problems around.

The first one I mentioned already. It's pretty obvious, but you want to make your donate button easy to find. I mean, if you brought your mother or your technically challenged sibling in from of the computer, could they find the donate button in two seconds?

If not, make it bigger, make it more prominent. It should be "above the fold." In newspapers, "above the fold" means, when you unfold your morning paper, what you can read without opening the newspaper.

The full front page is above the fold. Website design is the same idea. You don't want to have someone scroll down to find your donate button. It should be visible when they go to your home page.

You know what? You should have two on your home page. You should one in the navigation. We saw that with Stan Skeeter of Harlem. They have it out in the navigation. And I advised another one, because there are people like me who don't like navigation. We kind of look for what's big and shiny on the page. For people like me you want a big donate button, as well.

So that's the first thing. Again, back to making it easy to act. Very important. So make sure your button's very easy to find.

Number two. Put your button everywhere. I've seen a lot of PSAs and I know there are some rules around PSAs, but they don't really tell people to go to a website. They don't clearly direct people there. Do you invite people to go to your website on your brochure? Is it on your business card on the back in huge letters? Is it in your emails? Are there big donate buttons right in your email? We can give you a trackable "DonateNow" button on your email where you can track nicely by campaign to see what works.

But these are really important things that you are pushing the website and the "DonateNow" button in all your outreach. So, make sure it's everywhere. And if you put it in your persistent navigation of your website then it will be on every page, which is what you want. You want everyone to only be one click away from donating at any time.

OK. Now that you have done that, you want to be driving people to your button and so I recommend that you regularly email folks. How do you build an email list? That's one of the most common questions I get. You do not go buy one. You don't spam people. You want to only communicate with people who want to hear from you.

So what you need to do is on your home page, in addition to having all these wonderful, shiny donate buttons, you want to have a reason for people to give you their email address. Not everyone who comes to your home page is going to be ready to donate.

I don't really like "get our e-newsletter" sign up for e-newsletter. Some people will do. Most people are tired of e-newsletters and they get an awful lot of them. So try to come up with something a little more exciting that that for why someone would surrender their email address to you. If you're the organization that addresses diabetes, you might say,

"Get free tips for managing your diabetes." Those are good.

A lot of you probably get our free weekly fundraising and marketing tips. We're a nonprofit, we want you to succeed. That's part of the reason we do it. We also do it because we have our own line of fundraising products that we want you to use. So, by giving away things free, we get to develop a relationship with you.

Calls like this are another way to do that. So, you want to give something away to people. Give them something of value. And then you'll have their email address and you can be hitting them with your button.

Social media is a great way. We did a training call a couple weeks ago on Outreach through Facebook. If you go to our Learning Center at www.fundraising123.org and click on the tab that says social networking, we have many, many, many articles for ways to get people to your site using social media. And by social media, I mean all the Web 2.0 stuff—outreach through bloggers and social networks, etc.

So, you have to go out and find people. We've done a lot of presentations on going out and finding people. We don't have time to cover all that today, but I really do encourage you to browse the Learning Center for more information on that.

The next thing is number four. Once people get to your button, you kind of need to wrap around it answers to the four key questions that I like to ask. And the first one is you have to answer, "why me?"

Remember when I was talking about the "all about us" syndrome, what gets you off of that is answering why me for donors who come to your website.

Why should I care about this cause? What's in it for me if I help you? And this is really key. Kirt's got a fantastic positioning around this that he's going to be talking about later in the call in. He does a really nice job answering, why me?

But you want to tell donors why your cause relates to their values. That is very different from saying, "Hey look at my nonprofit. Value my cause." You are figuring out how your cause relates to the values they already have and you are speaking to that connection right around the button. You are appealing to your donor's existing values and feelings. Very important. That's number four.

Number five is show "why now." This is really the key online. You have to instill some kind of sense of urgency around your message. Even if it is a good message, people may not click if they don't feel the house is on fire. I mean that is really something they need to do right now. Well, that's easy if there's a humanitarian emergency going on. It's easy if it's December 31, right? That's our busy giving day of the year here at Network for Good. All those generous procrastinators are getting in their donations before the end of the tax year. If it is not December 31 and there is not some huge crisis going on, you need to another way to instill some sense of urgency.

If you didn't see it, the New York Times Magazine did a huge section on giving about a month ago. I can briefly summarize a couple of key things they had in there. They talked to a lot of researchers about giving behaviors and a couple of things that work really well with giving are instilling a sense of urgency are matching gifts are somewhat effective followed by campaign deadlines are very effective.

You can create artificial deadlines. By that I mean, if you have a donor providing a matching gift, if someone donates by a certain date, that has been found to be effective in elevating response rates. It's really interesting that the size of the matching gifts is inconsequential. It makes no difference if you have a 10-1 match or a 1-1 match.

I don't find that surprising because people are not in a rational place when they are giving away their money. They are in an emotional place. It's not a rational act to give away your money necessarily and so they are in an emotional place and so the fact there is a match that is motivating it provides a sense of urgency. The size of the match doesn't matter.

What's even more effective are campaign deadlines and specificity. So we are trying to raise money for this particular improvement to our community theater by this date. That is very specific talk about a specific call to action. It's very tangible and you can set a dollar goal. And what the New York Times cited in this article is research that shows if you can communicate that you are somewhat close to your goal, it works better than if you are far away from your goal.

So they did a lot of tests and said we've tried to raise \$5000, we've raised \$4000. There was a really great response rate. If there's a \$5000 goal and no money shown raised to date, people didn't act. There are a whole bunch of explanations for that I don't have time to go into that relates to social psychology and social norms.

Suffice it to say here, that the idea here is, if you can set a goal and show progress towards that goal, maybe even take the donor who wants to provide a matching gift and say you know what's going to work better, get us halfway to our goal for this campaign. Same kind of math on your end but different message on their end in terms of providing a sense of urgency. That's number five.

Number six. This is extremely important and I touched upon it when I started talking about tangibility. Show "what for." Donors need to know exactly what or who they are helping and where their money is going, more than ever. Most donors are pretty skeptical about nonprofits and about marketing in general and certainly with fundraising. They are very keenly aware of overhead, administrative expenses.

They may not have a sophisticated understanding of that but they want to know their money is going somewhere. They don't necessarily believe it will go where they want it to. By being very tangible in your act, you can address that skepticism and enlist the support of the donor. That's why I gave the example we want to upgrade this particular theater for our community theater program. I know that I have spoken to people. I campaigned for

an air conditioner for their office that was very successful because it was very specific, not terribly exciting. If they had been raising money for overhead, it wouldn't work but specificity helped even that. So that's another key piece.

I mentioned “why me,” “why now” and “what for.” The last one which is number seven on my list is “who said?” The good news is you don't have to be the only messenger out there. You don't have to be the voice shouting into the wind to get people to support your nonprofit. You probably have some donors who love you so much they would champion your cause.

You may have some beneficiaries of your programs who have some fantastic stories to tell and guess what? They are so much better at marketing than you are. Their stories are going to be so much better than anything you can ever do. Most people give money and they say the most influential cause of their gifts are friends and family. So you want to turn the folks around you, those donors and beneficiaries into spokespeople and put them on your home page. Where's the quote from the person that you've helped? Where's the quote from your donor explaining why they support you? That lends incredible credence to your message. It's very important.

Number eight is make it easy. So Custom DonateNow basically helps you make it easy because we spend a lot of time designing the product app to be in the right order, to offer the right options, to have the right positioning. If you subscribe to Custom DonateNow, you get the benefit of that experience. If you don't have it, don't make someone click. Don't make people go off to some third-party processor to process their donation. Don't make people go through confusing navigation and lots of marketing questions. You will lose them. For every page and every click, you lose people which is why we have one page checkout, is what we recommend.

Number nine: Be inspirational. I talked about don't be me based all the time. How do you get out of that? “We need money. We need help. Me, me, me. Help me, help me, help me.” People are fatigued with that and nonprofits can get in that messaging rut. You can really differentiate yourself from the pack if you use more uplifting positioning. It's OK to cite negative consequences or to explain a need. You want to get off of that very fast though and get inspirational and aspiration and show what the gift will change, what it will do. Show what good will happen. Be positive about what will happen.

And then once someone donates, which brings me to number 10, thank them again and again and again. You want to not get back to them saying thanks, now give again because people feel they are throwing money out at something that is not having an effect. You want to be thanking three times as often as you are asking for money.

That is everything. If you have an amazing thank-you acknowledgement process, that's the last secret I want to share with you because most donors say the reason they stopped giving to nonprofits was how they were treated by the nonprofits. So we have bad customer service. We have bad practices of treating people like walking wallets. If you try to turn that around, I think you will find not only will you have more donors; you will keep the ones that you have. I am going to turn it over to Jono to introduce Kirt now.

Jono: Great, thanks Katya. Just a reminder if you want to ask Katya or Charles or Kirt a question, you can email us at fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org. After Kirt speaks we will take your questions. We already have got questions lined up from Sherri, Sasha, Norman and Catherine so we will be getting to those in just a moment. As I mentioned, Kirt is the founder and CEO of LandChoices, a small nonprofit dedicated to preserving the land and waters that landowners cherish. Without further ado here is Kirt.

Kirt: Thank you, Jono. That you, Katya. I want to say thank you for everybody for being on this call and I want you to know that we are a very small nonprofit organization. In fact it is all volunteer. LandChoices is something I started three years ago because I found out some solutions to overdevelopment but I work a full time job in sales and marketing and I run LandChoices on the side. So I am probably a lot like a lot of you.

My story was I was looking for something really easy for people to be able to donate online and I tried a number of different products. I tried a bank product once and I had to spend hours of my time trying to get my money back because they didn't hold true to their agreement. That was just a nightmare. I don't have time to waste. I was looking for something that was really effective and very efficient.

I tried a couple of other products and I had to scratch my head and wonder why they had to design this, if I was trying to go after monthly donors, it would have them insert the total amount and then click to another page and it would ask them, "Do you want to be a monthly donor?" If they put \$200 in the first page, they are not going to want to give \$200 a month. So they would have to go back and change that around.

I abandoned that. I learned about Network for Good. I had read Katya's wonderful book, "Robin Hood Marketing." That is my favorite book. I don't get any commissions from it or anything like that. I would highly recommend it for every nonprofit. And that's how I got connected with Network for Good. I went ahead and used their free button and I'm not sure, I think it was still called DonateNow.

It was a free service and then I decided to get away from so many clicks. I would go into the paid service—Custom DonateNow which is really easy. I am basing this on statistics. In some of Katya's marketing classes she mentioned that people who only have to click once are more apt to not abandon their shopping carts and more apt to give so this makes it real easy.

In my mind, this is how I look at it. I look at investing in DonateNow as simply an investment in our fundraising program. It is not something where our donors jump up and down and tell me, "Oh my gosh, I'm so glad you have online giving. That's easy." It's more looked at as something where they don't even notice it, but they would notice it if we didn't have it. And I'll tell you little story about that in a second.

And I guess I would akin this to automobiles. In an automobile you expect to have electric windows and electric door locks. And I think nowadays people are used to buying things on Amazon.com, where it's one click. And they expect that on your

websites also. That's why I went with DonateNow. It's very easy. You click on the Custom DonateNow button, you go to one page, the donor can fill it out, and they're done.

And let me give you a little story, an example of that. I have a real good donor that's a very close friend of mine. And I had sent him a couple of renewal letters. Well, he's a busy engineer and his wife is also an engineer. She's very busy. They had called me about a week ago just to talk. Janice was talking to me, and in the background her husband, Steve, said "Janice, remember we've got to renew our membership to LandChoices. Maybe we should do the monthly giving like he talks about in his newsletter."

And Janice said, "Well, Kirt, you have a website, right? What's your website?" She was in a hurry. Her young daughter Shannon was pulling at her coat sleeve. Shannon had to go to figure skating practice. And I told Janice the website, and I started to explain how to give online. She said, "That's OK, Kirt, I'm done. I got it. You got \$250. I'm all set. I've got to go."

So that was how quick it was for her to use DonateNow. And she's the type of person who's very picky. Had she had to go through four steps, or had she been confused, she would have abandoned it. And they're so busy I probably wouldn't have gotten a check from them for another year.

So that's how I look at the Custom DonateNow button. It's kind of what you have to have. It's what people expect. People go to a bank; they expect it to have an ATM. That's just how it is. I look at it as an investment, not a cost.

I do want to say the customer service is excellent. And I'm very picky about that, because again, I don't have time to waste. Any time that I've needed something customized for the Custom DonateNow page on our website, they've done it. I messed up a couple times and didn't do the page right, and I emailed Network For Good-the customer service team-and within 24 hours they fixed it.

And that's what I look for. I don't need any hassles. And this is really easy, it works, donors find it very easy to use. I had a donor about a month ago-he's a land developer of conservation neighborhoods-and he had told me, "Well, right now business is down, but I did go to your site and I started with a monthly donation process." And it was easy for him to use. He could figure it out.

So that's why I use it. And the other reason I want to use it is studies show that people give about 20% more when they pay by credit card. One other thing LandChoices is doing this spring is we're launching kind of a monthly donor campaign. So I'm getting ready to send out an appeal letter to all our donors to tell them about the benefits-what's in it for them when they donate monthly using our DonateNow button. So I've got this all set up and now I want to promote it.

The last thing it does for me is it gives me confidence. When I go out and sell I can tell

people, "You can donate securely online," and I don't have to worry about them having to figure something out. I know that they can go there, they can do it, so it gives me confidence to promote it. And that makes it very easy, too.

And I think, like Katya said, the one page checkout is easy. As soon as people donate you get an email from Network For Good telling the name and address of the person, so I can send them a thank-you letter. That's one thing I've tried to do with LandChoices, and I think that's one of the reasons we're growing, is that's in my control. I can send out that personalized thank-you letter, and I always do within 24 hours. I put a little personal note on it, I tell them what their donation is going for, and I keep in touch with them.

And I'm kind of surprised, because the last five nonprofits I've given money to over the last six months, three of them I haven't even gotten a thank-you letter, and the other two it was a form letter. And you know what, I won't give again to them. So I think that's been one of the reasons we're successful at getting people to renew and getting new donors.

What else did you want me to talk about, Jono?

Jono: That's great, Kirt. I think we're at a good point to stop and invite people to email their questions. And, again, I want to thank you for joining the call today and sharing your story.

Kirt: Thank you very much.

Jono: So you can, as I mentioned, email your questions for Kirt, Charles or Katya, to fundraising123@networkforgood.org. And let's start out with a question from Sherri who is with Speak Out. This is a two-part question. I think the first part goes to Charles and the second part is for Katya. Or actually, the first part probably can go to Kirt. So let's go to Kirt with the first part.

So, Kirt, once someone donates, what happens next? What exactly does the donor receive?

Kirt: Oh, good idea. You can customize that on the Custom DonateNow. You can type in what you want them to receive. And I think on ours it says, "Thank you very much for your tax-deductible contribution." I want to add in there what the donation is going to. So you can customize that. They receive that email immediately, and then I receive the email that they have donated, and then it's got their name and address on it so I can immediately send them a thank-you letter. I hope that answers the question.

Jono: Absolutely. OK, the second question here is for Katya. Sherri wants to know, "Can you provide a real website where they're following the correct format? In particular, a site that does not have 'it's all about us' syndrome."

Katya: Yes. And I actually have a good story around that, too. One of my favorite sites I often provide as an example is care.org. And I actually used to work at CARE, and when I worked there, I'm sorry to say, we had a very "all about us" positioning at CARE. It was

our 50th anniversary and it was all about CARE, CARE's history, etc. That was maybe 15-20 years ago.

Since then they have done some extraordinary thing with branding. And incidentally, they had some Coca-Cola executives-they're based in Atlanta-who came over from Coke and joined CARE and have done a bang-up job with marketing. And they've completely gone from "all about us" to "all about the donor."

If you go to care.org you'll see-they've cycled through various home pages-but they've rolled out this whole campaign that's all about how you have the power to help another person, you have the power to change someone's life. It's speaking directly to the donor, which I really like. They have huge Donate buttons, and Join buttons, typically. They've put various things on their home page which do a really nice job of shifting things in that direction.

And you'll see they have a huge amount of real estate to their main message. Their current home page has a story about someone, and there's a gigantic Meet Maria button, a giant Take Action button, and a giant Donate Now button. And so I quite like that-very story-based. Nice job.

Well you might look at that and say, "That's great, but CARE has got buckets of marketing money." So I want to ask Kirt to talk briefly about his positioning with his latest campaign, because Kirt's got a full-time job in a volunteer organization. He's done a phenomenal job doing this on a shoestring, about not being all about us. Could you talk just a little bit about your campaign and your positioning, Kirt?

Kirt: Sure Katya. Actually we didn't have a lot of money. We didn't have a big marketing budget, so I paid a PR specialist out in Oregon-I think it was \$300 or \$400-to come up with some questions based on what Katya's talking about, making it about them. And if you go to our campaign page it's short, and it's got one big graphic.

I wanted a better graphic but we didn't have the funds, unfortunately, for a better graphic which would show the eyes. But we tried to make it short and tried to empower people and make it about them. And that's why we're asking a couple questions on there, and showing them that there's a real easy solution.

I had to redo this page probably-and I'm not exaggerating-about 90 times. I'm testing it because I do the website, and I finally learned that you have to have big buttons for people. That's why along the right sidebar they're really big. Because on testing, people were missing it. So that's what we did. We toned it down. We didn't have a lot of links but we tried to get two main links for people to take action, then a Donate Now button, and a message that's about them.

Jono: Great. Thank you, Kirt.

Kirt: You're welcome. Thank you.

Jono: And we have a question here from Katherine, brand new from Massachusetts. It's a two-part question and the first part is related to the Donate button on the LandChoices website. She notices that it actually says, "Powered by GroundSpring."

And so it's just a good opportunity to mention here that Network For Good and GroundSpring are two nonprofit organizations that merged a couple of years ago, and so our services are powered by GroundSpring here at Network For Good. So you'll see that name on our Donate buttons.

And the question here for Kirt is, "Could you please tell us more about the form letter thank you that turned you off?"

Kirt: Oh, certainly. Well first of all it came about five weeks after I gave the donation. Second of all, it didn't even have my name on it, it said, "Dear Friend." And it didn't give the amount I gave. And it was Xeroxed-it was obviously a copy of a copy-and it was crooked. And it wasn't personalized at all. It wasn't like a love letter, I guess I'd say.

Jono: Great. Joyce just wants a little clarification around the thank you portion of a donation. Do you send your donors a thank you cell or a thank-you letter or both and how much personalization do you do with these?

Katya: I'm going to give a general answer and then Kirt it would be great if you could give an example.

So what Network for Good's services do for you is we automatically sent a receipt that you customize immediately to the donor. So, they click the button they give they instantaneous get their tax receipt right away. Boom. Generated automatically through our system.

Then, you have the opportunity to send follow up customized emails and then of course, you should be doing what Kirt does and maybe even talk a little bit about that, but he talked about sending a personalized thank-you letter afterward.

So, that's something really important is that cultivation and I love that he used the word love letter.

There is just not enough love for the donors who are supporting us. And treat it like a relationship. Treat people kindly. So, Kirt do you want to talk a little bit about what you put in your letters?

Kirt: Certainly. And I want to say one thing, too. I'm still learning a lot. I've got a lot to learn. I would love to re-do our whole website, based on what Katya just is saying. Because a lot of the things I do are wrong. But one thing that we do get right is I send a thank-you letter out within 24 hours. Like I said, I put the amount that they gave, so they don't have to go look it up when it's the end of the year.

Now what I'm doing, too, if I have their email, I do email them a thank you also right

away, because I think based on Katya's classes, which I would recommend you take, that's a real positive thing for people.

But in the thank-you letter I always put a personal note at the bottom thanking them. I always have their names or name on the letter and I try to personalize it towards what they gave and I always tell them what their money is being used for.

Then if I saw them at an event I'll say, "It was a pleasure seeing you at the Huron Valley Earth Day Festival. Thank you for stopping by our booth. I know you're busy with your law practice and I appreciate you taking the time. Thank you so much for the contribution. It's going to be used towards our new supersize, my backyard campaign, to save land and waters nationwide."

And then I say, "thanks to members like you who have a brand new website for planners," and I just say "Warmest regard, Kirt." At the bottom it states that we are a nonprofit 501(C)3 and that their donations are tax deductible. So I just try to make it very personalized and I hand write the envelope and I do include a reply envelope with that so they don't have to go digging for an envelope, if they want to give another donation.

Jono: Great. I've got a question from Valerie from the Least of These nonprofit and she says that she hears that you can actually collect donations through PayPal. And she wanted to know what the difference between using PayPal and Network for Good is.

Charles: The things I found: PayPal is very nice, very nice customer service but it was a little clumsy. And then the monthly donation process, I don't think at that time they had it. And that always bothered me and it was a little confusing how to use that process. Now it's probably and I haven't looked at it in a couple years but I know back then they didn't even offer recurring gifts.

Jono: Absolutely and I'll offer one point there and invite Charles to add his color commentary if he likes as well. But one of the investments that Network for Good makes in our online donation processing service is we register our service in all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia.

Many nonprofits probably don't realize that there are over 40 states in the US that require you to be registered with that state if you are going to be receiving online contributions from the residents of that specific state.

I realize that's kind of a mouthful but basically PayPal is not registered in all 50 states, whereas Network for Good is. So, some people consider it a legal gray area, but obviously we always think it's more important to be covered legally. If you are interested in learning more about what the rules are in your state or in the state where your donors live for online fund raising, we have an article in our Learning Center.

If you do a search on "laws," you can see that article and you can read about the laws governing online fundraising in all the states. Charles, anything you want to say out there?

Charles: Yes, thank you, Jono. A couple of things I'd like to add. I think that what also makes the Custom Donate Now so outstanding is that you get a branded page with a seamless look and feel like your website and I think that really inspires confidence in the donor.

In addition to that, I think the ability through Donate Now to connect with the donor to find out more about them, so that you can establish and create a relationship with the donor. I think that's very, very important.

And with Donate Now, you can ask questions of your donors. You can also ask them for permission to add them to your email list. We even have something really great called "tell-a-friend." Where if you set it up once the donor's made their donation, they'll have the option of referring your organization to a friend so that's some additional marketing that you get.

Receiving a one-time donation is fine. But as we all know, it's all about relationships. Nurturing those relationships and creating those relationships. That's what I would say.

Kirt: I forgot that is the thing I do like about the Custom DonateNow is it's very easy to customize that page. You simply log on to your account at GroundSpring and then you check the boxes you want to add, whether it is. I haven't done this in so long, but I think if you want to do a gift membership to somebody or something, then you just hit update.

And if you don't want some of those items in after you look at it, just go back with the back button, uncheck a box and hit update again and it's gone. It is very easy to customize that given page.

Jono: Great. So we have a question from Sally and we get this question quite a bit, a lot of people are uncomfortable purchasing things online or donating on line because of security. Charles, can you talk about security and the privacy of information and is it safe to donate on line?

Charles: It is very, very safe to donate online. With DonateNow we have a secure donation page. It's Verisign certified. In addition to that we use the latest technologies to make sure the information is encrypted. We've been providing our services over many, many years to many, many nonprofits and they have all found that our service has been a very, very secure site for their donors to make donations.

Jono: Great. Connie has a question about processing fees. Could you talk about the 3% processing fee? Is that in addition to what banks charge and we also mention that this fee with the May release of DonateNow is going to be optional for donors so that NPO doesn't have to pay that fee. Can you explain that a little bit more, Charles?

Charles: That 3% fee covers the credit card processing costs for Visa, MasterCard and American Express. And when you are using our service, there are no other credit card processing costs. So that 3% covers it. You don't need to worry about it. We are the merchant account.

With this upcoming feature, where the donor can add on that 3%, that will even save you and save you even more. So that's what that's all about.

Jono: Great. Thanks, Charles. We had a couple questions Kirt mentioned that he had enjoyed reading Katya's book. The name of the book is "Robin Hood Marketing" and you can find it on Amazon or you can go to Katya's blog which is www.nonprofitmarketingblog.com—you can find a link to it there as well.

Here's a question I'll throw out to both Katya and Kirt. What message do you use to re-connect donors that have lapsed or dropped off for some reason? This question is from Greg. He shares a personal story of a definite what not to do.

"My mother was approached by a cancer research organization amidst her battle with breast cancer and leukemia. Following her passing away a letter was sent to her dunning her for her inability to keep up with her contribution. Needless to say, we will never support them. Just the fact that they questioned in such a hurtful way was beyond belief."

Katya: Thank you for sharing that story which is a complete and total nightmare and sorry to hear about that, Greg. And I'm afraid it illustrates a point I was making earlier. I wasn't joking. There are three different studies that show the number one reason people stop giving to a nonprofit is how they were treated by the nonprofit. Greg has that story right there.

People aren't ATM machines. We aren't invoicing them. We should not treat them that way. Unfortunately we really do. We have a tendency to, when someone gives, we ask them to give again and again and again, and the donors that give more, we ask even more.

I worked for a nonprofit, which I will not name. Once someone gave, they got, on average, 27 appeals a year until they cried foul, in which case we would knock them down to ten. We keep knocking that down, unless they specifically said they want an annual appeal of no mail.

We had mail pouring in of people complaining, why do we keep doing it? Because it works. Some people responded. But it's not a very good long-term strategy. So you don't want to be dunning people for donations as this story shows.

What do if people are dropping off? First, you want to kind of diagnose why. One reason why they may be dropping off is they were mistreated by you or you hit them up with too many appeals. Also there are circumstances may have changed. The person may have passed away. You don't know.

So one thing you would do, I would do, is if you had a major donor, people like that are worth a very personal handwritten letter or phone call. There is a wonderful story that a nonprofit ED told in a training I did down in Florida last year.

He said he had a donor who had been giving major gifts and had stopped giving and he was concerned. He called the donor and said, I just want to thank you for all the support

you have given. I wanted to check in and see how you are doing, just express our gratitude for everything you have done for us in the past. Talk to you a little about what it's achieved.

He had no specific ask. Turned out the person had been diagnosed with a terminal disease. That's horrible but they were touched by the call. It's sort of a sad story; he passed away soon after, but he left half of his estate to that nonprofit. He had written a note about just how touched he was that they had called to thank him.

There's a human being on the other side and we must never, ever forget that. So someone's dropped off, it may not be something personal. Their financial circumstances may have changed. They may have decided they want to support other causes, but most likely they don't like the way they have been treated by us.

So, one thing I would do is don't ignore your in-actives. Don't write them off. Write them a really nice letter, thanking them and reminding them, even if they gave a gift a long time ago, what progress they have made, what the organization has done with that investment, how it's paid off over time. Really show them that. You can certainly ask them to support you again if they are willing, but I would start out by an expression of gratitude is the first step toward renewing that relationship.

The next thing you could do is, I would send out that and I would follow up if you still heard not response, asking, "You haven't heard from us in some time, would you like to still be hearing from us? How would you like to hear from us?" And that's another opportunity to get information on why this person has dropped off.

I get a lot of people saying to me, "Katya, what is the right number of email appeals to send a year? What's the right amount of mail?" My answer is, "Have you asked your donors that question?"

And I know direct mail folks don't like that and they shudder at that sometimes, because they know that hitting people up a lot will increase the amount you bring in, at least in the short term, but respect the donor. Ask them when want to hear from you.

One of those two approaches, either the gratitude approach or the, "We haven't heard from you in a while—would you rather hear from us less frequently, or would you like to hear from us in a different way? What's convenient for you?" Either will elicit a response and recharge the relationship.

Jono: This is a question from Katherine and I'll ask this one to you, Kirt, and Katya, as well. Katherine is interested particularly in recurring giving and can you speak more to marketing and management of recurring giving? Should we treat our recurring donors differently? Should we can market and communicate to them differently?

So Kirt, do you have any thoughts on your recurring giving program and how you treat your recurring donors?

Kirt: There's a book called "Hidden Gold" and it's really good. In addition to Katya's blogs which are fantastic. I read those every day because she's got great advice that I follow.

This book kind of explains how to go about putting a direct mail package together to stress the benefits: what's in it for the donor of the recurring gifts. And that's kind of how I'm following is getting the little slip in there and getting the letter about the benefits and then the reply envelope.

Just sending that out and telling people how much more effective online giving is for us and also for benefits to them. It makes it very easy.

Jono: Great. So I'll ask you this question as well, Kirt. We've had several folks who are evaluating whether to go with a free service like Basic DonateNow or go for a service with invest in one with a monthly donation or monthly fee. Can you talk a little bit about how you came to your decision to invest in a service like Custom DonateNow that has a monthly fee vs. one of the free basic services.

Kirt: Sure. In fact, I started out with the free. I think it's still called "Donate ow" from Network for Good. That worked fine, except you had to put a user name and password in it.

I think it was three or four clicks and based on the research, I thought it's well worth the \$29.95 a month, or whatever we pay, \$30 a month, to go to the Custom DonateNow because when they click on that button, like Charles said, they are taken to a customized one page site and like Katya said, it's one page giving.

So I decided if I've invested all this time in this nonprofit, let's just follow what works. I don't have enough time to reinvent the wheel. If the research shows that people give more when it's one click, and they expect it. You know they're used to Amazon.com and all these other sites. I don't want to make it hard for them. I want to make it easy.

If this is what's going to do it, then I look at it as an investment and I'm very glad I made the investment. I also invested in the e-newsletter which I may have to change those words on our website, through GroundSpring and that's wonderful also.

So, it's kind of a business decision, I guess you look at it and say, OK we're in this. We have to invest in our fundraising. This is one area we're going to put our budget towards. And I'm very, very happy with it. I think the one click gives you confidence to promote it. It's very easy for donors and that's just what people expect.

Katya: Thank you. That's a great answer. I would also add, just to clarify, the free service we had is called Basic DonateNow. And then the subscription service is Custom. I'd make one observation. If you have absolutely no budget at all, having a Basic DonateNow button is better than no button, so by all means put a button on your website.

Be cognizant of the fact, though, that free is not always as clear as it seems. What we find is our customers of Custom DonateNow raise five times as much with as the ones with Basic DonateNow. And that's because Custom DonateNow is the one page branded check out. It's just a better donor experience.

And all the other free services: there's Google Checkout page, PayPal, etc. Those are "free" or a very low cost, but again, you need to weigh that against conversion rates. Like, who is going to donate and respond? Again, if you have nothing, put something up, it's better than nothing.

I would advise using Basic DonateNow, because it is competitive with those other free services. We have better donation tracking. We do the state registration for you, etc. But if you can, please think about a small investment in a paid service for the reasons we have outlined today. The focus is on the donor experience. And that's really what makes or breaks an online fund raising program.

Jono: Great. We had a couple questions about funding and grants, and do you have any referrals for places to go to help locate grants?

Network for Good has a great partner called "Grant Station." Go to www.grantstation.com. You can learn more about their services and actually they have a newsletter, a weekly newsletter. I think they charge \$99 a year for a subscription, but if you are a subscriber to Network for Good's Custom DonateNow service, we waive the \$99 fee, and you can get a free subscription to that Grant Station newsletter.

It's filled with great tips that are helpful to grant seekers. I think we are about out of time here. So, Kirt any final words from your end?

Kirt: I did remember that the reason I went with Network for Good also was because you guys are registered in each of the states and that would be a real nightmare to do, so this is two years ago. I remember that was one of the big reasons also that I did decide to do that. The last thing I didn't want to get in trouble. So, I decided to make it easy.

Jono: Great. Thanks very much, Kirt. And thank you Charles for your time today. I want to remind folks that next Tuesday we'll be returning to our donor database theme and we'll be offering tips on implementing a donor database.

So, for folks who do have some donors and maybe you are managing them in Excel spreadsheets, Access, Word or even in Outlook, and if you are thinking about taking a more coordinated and organized effort to that, then our Donor Database series will be helpful and useful to you, we think.

So to find out more about that you go to www.fundraising123.org and you'll see a link to sign up on the bottom left of the page. Once again, we'll have an email coming out to you in about 24 hours with a link to the MP3 audio file and in seven days you can come back and download a text transcript. So, thanks again to our speakers today. And thank you for joining us for today's edition of "Nonprofit 911." Have a great day everyone.