

**Nonprofit 911 – June 2, 2009**  
**From Surfers to Supporters: How to Optimize Your Donation Pages to  
Convert Visitors into Donors**

with Dawn Stoner

Sponsored by Network for Good

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[www.fundraising123.org](http://www.fundraising123.org) or [www.Nonprofit911.org](http://www.Nonprofit911.org)

**Jono Smith:** I am thrilled to introduce our speaker, Dawn Stoner. Dawn works for DonorDigital, a full service, online fundraising, advocacy, and advertising company that was acquired last summer by Mal Warwick Associates. Mal, as you know, was one of our recent Non Profit 911 speakers as well.

Dawn has worked with non-profits of all sizes. She created extensive online fundraising, advocacy, and communications programs. And she has also helped her clients draw significant improvements in their donation page conversion rates through testing, a topic she'll be speaking about today.

I'm happy to turn the floor over to our speaker, Dawn. Welcome.

**Dawn Stoner:** Thanks, Jono. Welcome everyone. I'm thrilled to be taking part in the 911 conference series for the first time, and really pleased to see such a high level of interest in this topic. Landing page optimization is one of the best ways we know to improve our clients' fundraising results on a tight budget. So I think we all are really concerned about our fundraising levels and this is clearly one avenue that many organizations are still just in the earliest stages of exploring.

As Jono mentioned, if you're in front of the PC, please download my PowerPoint slides. I know this subject can get fairly technical and they'll help you to visualize the concepts I'm talking about today, and also illustrate several specific landing page tests we conducted with Amnesty International.

Also, before I start my presentation I wanted to throw out this caveat: I am assuming that your current platform gives you the basic tools needed to do landing page testing. If you're not sure, the one page checklist that Jono referred to, that he's emailing around, will help you to answer that question. I know for some of you still, this may not be the case.

Unfortunately we won't have time to discuss the merits of different tools and platforms more than in passing today, but I'm hopeful that at the end of the call you'll know what you should be asking your current or prospective vendors about their capabilities for testing.

And obviously Network for Good has a solution that they just mentioned. There will be time for Q&A at the end but I wanted to add, if you have a burning question you want to

ask while I'm on, a specific topic, I'm happy to take some as we go along. So let's now dive into the testing.

If you're like some of DD's clients a few years back you probably spend most of your time thinking about developing compelling campaigns on and offline, and finding new ways to engage supporters, as well as writing great fundraising copy.

Your web donation page design and content may be an afterthought, and you may simply be using a standard donation page format provided by your CRM tools.

At some organizations it's the graphic designer or even the highest paid person in the organization that makes critical decisions about what goes on to the web donation pages, instead of letting those decisions be informed by testing and usability studies.

And if any of that sounds familiar, there are probably lots of ways you can improve execution on your donation pages to increase both conversions and dollars raised.

If you've got the power point, now turn to slide number two. I just wanted, quickly, to walk through the topics I'll be covering today. First off: Why should you be testing, what you can consider to test on your landing pages, the best pages on your site to be testing, as well as the various types of tests you can run.

And then I'll look at a case study with Amnesty International. I'll share two test examples we've done with Amnesty, with some specific results for you to consider. And then some practical advice on getting started with testing. We'll cover some of the tools that you'll need to have in place to be in a position to start a testing program. And then finally we'll do some Q&A.

So let's just kick it off with: Why test your donation pages? Well, it's a huge untapped opportunity. Most organizations have donation page conversion rates below 20%, some even less than 10%. And that's really the first question you want to be asking: Where are mine today? What is my conversion rate on donation pages?

These poorly designed pages are driving away potential donors, and why should you care about that? Well obviously improved conversion on these pages mean more dollars raised, with no increases in outbound marketing.

And as any marketer will tell you, it's much cheaper to optimize your web pages than it is to drive more traffic to those pages. And the bottom line impact of those two types of activities can be similar.

Before we talk about specific tests you can consider running, let's spend a little time talking about web users. This is your audience, these are the folks you want to be capturing on these pages. In this Twitter and instant messaging world, the attention span of the average web surfer is incredibly short.

Estimates put it today at just eight seconds per page. Think about that when you're writing your landing page copy. People also are purported to read 25% slower on the web. So you really need to grab their attention fast.

If you're on that slide you'll see that wonderful book cover, "The Four Hour Work Week." That's the kind of copy you want to think about writing to grab folks' attention really fast.

Let's now look at some donation page testing ideas. I'm going to share 10 things you can think about testing. This is by no means exhaustive, there are so many possibilities out there, but this is a great place to get you started.

**John:** Hey Dawn?

**Dawn:** Yeah.

**John:** Sorry, this is John. We've each got a couple of folks... I can hear you loud and clear on my phone, but a couple of folks said that they had their line turned all the way up, and so they asked if you could just move a little bit closer to your microphone.

**Dawn:** OK, I'm pretty close but I'll try to make it even closer. One second. OK, hopefully that's a little bit better.

**John:** That is great, thank you.

**Dawn:** Great. So the first item you can think about testing: Your headline. How are you framing your call to action on the landing page? Images on the page, are you reinforcing your message or are they serving to distract donors? The gift string on the page. This can be the amounts you're showing in the gift string as well as the layout. Maybe you don't want to show suggested giving amounts at all and just use a fill in box. There are lots of possibilities there.

Copy you're using to describe your work and your mission, that can obviously be framed a number of ways. The form fields you show on the landing page, what's the layout? Is it a single, long column or are they two columns side by side? How much scrolling is involved with the layout you're using?

Some additional ideas: The form fields themselves. Think about the information you're asking people to fill out. Are all of those fields essential? In our experience, the more fields, the more cumbersome the form looks, the weaker the conversion rate.

The buttons that you're using, the donate button specifically. The color used, the size, the copy on that button, the graphic treatments to that button, all of these can affect conversion. In terms of confidence builders, things like security logos, not only have their presence but also their placement. Where do they appear on the page?

What about testimonials? Have prominent people or even just a grass roots supporter said something really flattering about your organization and your work? Featuring those on a donation landing page can lift conversions.

In addition to what your copy says, how is it formatted? Is it easily scanned? Is it going to reach that person who's only giving you eight seconds? Are you using bullets or bold and

parenthesis, or is it just one long, dense paragraph? These kinds of treatments and features can make a difference as well.

There are so many more, but I'm going to leave out that group. But I think, when you look at all the permutations on those areas, you can come up with a lot more than 10 things to test. But these are great places to start. And on that list are lots of tests that we have actually conducted with clients that have generated significant results on those pages.

Next, let's look at the best landing pages to think about testing. First off, you want to focus on pages that get the most traffic and have the conversions. For many organizations, you feature a lot of different donation landing pages on your site.

You're creating custom pages for email users, different pages for search donors, and different pages, still, linking off of your home page. You really want to look at those pages that get the most traffic, because those are going to be the pages that most easily get the significant results.

On the flip side, this is going to sound a little contradictory, but as long as you're meeting a certain minimum threshold, you want to look at pages that are generating poor conversion rates, since, obviously, those are the pages where you'll have the most potential for improvement.

That said, if you're looking at testing a page with a weak conversion rate, it's likely going to take longer for you to collect data that's significant.

Next, let's talk about types of landing-page tests you can use. The simpler of the two is an A/B or split test. This is where you'll test a single variable. It's what you want to use when you have one big idea you want to test.

The page traffic's usually split 50-50. You could also do a third, a third, a third. If you had two permutations of that big idea, this is what you'd want to do. Also, if you don't have a large volume of page traffic and conversions, these are easier tests to run when you're converting at lower levels.

On the flip side, you can do more complex testing. It's called multivariate testing. Basically, this is just testing multiple page elements on a given landing page at the same time. The way this works is you would use some JavaScript code on the page. Once that code is embedded on the page, it will randomly serve up different variations of that page to folks that land on that page.

You will need a multivariate test platform, such as Website Optimizer, or commercial solutions, like Optimost, to be able to do this sort of more-complex testing. But it can be well worth it when you have a lot of things you're seeking to optimize on a form.

Next, I'm going to move into just the case studies at Amnesty International. First, I want to give you a little background on the work we've done. Our testing project began with

Amnesty back in late 2007, and it's been running for about 18 months now and is continuing with the search landing pages.

In all, we've probably conducted a dozen tests with Amnesty. The main goal, across these tests, is obviously to raise more money online. We focused on donation landing pages for a variety of audiences, from the email to the paid-search audience to just the general web-donations form.

When we began, back in 2007, our strategic goal was to get these pages ready for year-end fundraising season, when the big money is made or lost. But we quickly realized that there was a tremendous, ongoing value to the testing work, and we continued to refine pages through multiple iterations of testing.

Which is a good way to think about picking off a testing program. It's not just a one-off test on a page. It's a continuous process of testing, evaluation, optimization, followed by more testing, more analysis, more optimization, until you really get to a point where you've got a great and high-performing donation page.

So the case study, we did both A/B and multivariate tests. Our primary test metric was the conversion rate, which is nothing more than the total gifts made to a page divided by the total page views.

And of course, we did also analyze fundraising metrics to understand the full impact of our creative changes to the pages, but we were looking, first and foremost, at the donation page. And for the multivariate tests, we used the Optimost testing platform, and compare with the platforms used for the simpler A/B tests.

So, now I want to look at the key findings from two tests we ran. I'll start with a simple A/B test we ran with their email donation page last fall.

This was a custom page we set up, in two versions, looking at a single variable, which was the gift-string values. Our test segment was the non-donors on the Amnesty USA email file.

And our hypothesis here was to test a more conservative gift string with folks who'd never made a gift online before, thinking that perhaps, with a more conservative ask, we could bring more new donors in the door.

If you're on slide 12, you'll see the gift-string values. I'll just run quickly through it. The control gift-string value spans a \$35 entry point and tops out at \$1,000. And we wanted to test a more conservative string, again starting at \$35, but topping out at \$250. And again, this was just the folks who had never given a gift online.

The results were fascinating. We found that the conservative gift string had a 15-percent better conversion rate and an 81-percent confidence level.

A conservative string did, however, reduce the average gift size by 13 percent, but the greater volume of gifts more than offset it, and we were able to raise one percent more money from that page with a conservative string.

So this was an important discovery for Amnesty. We realized we could get more donors in the door with that more conservative string, without sacrificing dollars raised.

And that was a strategy we went forward with during the holiday season last year, which, for many organizations, is the time of year when you'll be converting a lot of first-time donors online, folks who've joined your email list in the past year.

I'm going to move on now to the next test. This is a more complex, multivariate test of Amnesty's paid Google search donation page. I'm sure many of you have Google Grants out there, and therefore don't need to pay for Google's AdWords.

Amnesty does not have a Google Grant, so it does bid on Google AdWords, and Amnesty brings in a tremendous amount of money via this page, especially in December.

So the test for the Google search page included four variables. One is to test two content variables and two layout variables.

The content changes involved the introductory text on the page, reusing their default text, and then featured an alternate version that put more emphasis on tax deductibility, which is a big driver of year-end giving for many organizations, and we thought that might have easily been touched.

The other content change was Amnesty's mission copy, which is featured in the right-hand column of that form. And this is something to think about.

With an audience coming in via either Google or other search engines, they may not know as much about your organization as the people on your email list, so you'll need to put more content about your organization and the great work that you're doing on that landing page, as an added confidence-builder and a deal-closer.

These folks just need a little more information about you, assuming you're not the Red Cross, who everybody knows.

So we ended up taking that copy out of the right-hand column, thinking, possibly, that a cleaner, more-streamlined form could lift conversion. I think I tipped my hand here on the results, but we'll look at those in a second.

**Jono:** Hey, Dawn?

**Dawn:** Yeah.

**Jono:** Just for all the folks who have written in, could you go back and define again what you mean by conversion and conversion rate?

**Dawn:** Absolutely. When I talked about conversion, I was simply talking about the number of completed transactions on a page. When I talked about conversion rates, I was referencing, specifically, the percentage of folks converting on the page. That's the number of gifts divided by the number of page visitors.

**Jono:** Right. Thank you.

**Dawn:** One was volume, one was percentage. So, just back to the Google test. The third variable we tested was the layout of the gift string on the page. The control version, the way Amnesty had traditionally featured it, was a vertical presentation of the gift string with radio buttons next to each giving level. And we created an alternate layout of presenting that gift string horizontally across the page.

The fourth variable we tested was the layout of the form deals themselves. The traditional presentation, again, was a single vertical column.

And we decided to test out two shorter columns, side by side, to get more of that form above the fold and reduce the scroll time a person would need to make to complete the form. So, if you have the PowerPoint, you can see an example of the page-creative elements on slide 15.

And now, moving on to the results. We had two significant factors in this test: the mission copy I referred to in the right column and the gift string displayed horizontally were the winning variables. Pages that included those two presentations performed best.

We found the copy which emphasized tax deductibility and the form-field layout changes weren't significant. You can see all the numbers in the presentation: slide number 16.

The mission copy in the right was really significant. When we stripped it out, the conversion rate declined 23 percent. When the vertical gift-string layout, we shifted it to a horizontal layout, the conversion rate increased 21 percent.

These both reached a significant threshold. And the other two variables certainly didn't perform identically, but they were not significant, meaning a coin toss could explain the differences in performance.

I should point out, we reached significance at the variable level. We did not reach significance at the combination level, which would have required a lot more conversions.

This gets a little bit complex, but we were doing this test ahead of the holiday giving season, again, last year, and we ended the test before we had reached significance at the combination level, because we wanted to deploy those findings that were significant, being the best solution possible for year-end giving in December.

But if you weren't doing this at a time of year that had really urgent needs, I would recommend continuing to run it and getting significance at that combination level as well.

That's just a very brief repack of our Amnesty testing work. I'm sure that probably raises a lot of questions, but I wanted to mention, as a key takeaway from our experiments, what works for Amnesty's audience may not work for yours.

Even these variables that have been significant for Amnesty's pages you will want to test on your own pages. It's never a good idea to borrow what somebody else is seeing and just immediately deploy without testing.

And these tests are not difficult to run. They do involve some time and investment of resources, but they can be run by pretty much anyone with the tools in the place.

Before I wrap up, I want to make a brief mention of what you'll need to get started with testing in your organization. And it does vary depending on whether you're considering multivariate testing or A/B testing.

First off, I'll discuss multivariate testing needs. As I noted, in the case, the testing platform we used at Amnesty was Optimost. That's a commercial solution, but there are free solutions out there.

The Google Website Optimizer platform is a great option for organizations that can't or don't want to spend the money on a commercial vendor. This is the platform needed to set up these tests and run the analysis on all the various page combinations.

Also, as I mentioned, you need enough traffic and conversions to yield significant data. And it's hard to give you any absolute numbers on what you'll need, because the traffic and conversions needed will depend on the complexity of the test you construct.

The simpler the test, the fewer conversions you'll need. But you do want to have, as a rule of thumb, at least 50 conversions per page variation to see whether you've gathered significant results, ideally 100 conversions per page variation.

In addition to some traffic, conversions, and platforms, you'll need some staff time and possibly a consultant to help you set up and analyze the test.

As I say, if you have staff that are somewhat analytical, they understand how to deploy code on web pages, you may not need a consultant. But you will need someone who's comfortable adding JavaScript to pages and understands web-analytics tools.

I can't emphasize just enough, with multivariate testing, you're also going to need some time and some patience. They do take more time to set up, and they certainly take longer to run and generate significant data.

We found it often takes weeks and months, with our clients, to collect enough data to reach some significant findings. So it's not the approach to take when you need an answer quickly. If the executive director wants an answer next week, you've got to think about a simpler test, that's probably when you'd want to choose an A/B test.

What you'll need to run A/B testing. And most everyone can do this. You'll still need a web-analytics program to track results on your front pages. You'll need enough traffic and conversions to yield significant data, but it's going to be less than with multivariate testing.

You'll need to focus on a single variable to test. This won't be the approach to take when you want to change several things on the page. You'll need to focus just on one, so you can isolate the impact it's having on conversions.

I also want to emphasize: you want to have a hypothesis of what you're trying to validate that serves as the basis for why you're conducting the test in the first place.

And with A/B testing, I would urge you to be bold. Don't think about a test that's so subtle it's not likely to affect users' behavior. If you put the two pages side by side in front of a user, a good A/B test will be a test where they can immediately identify the difference.

Maybe it's testing completely different page layouts. Maybe it's testing embedding of video on that page that includes and involves somebody in your organization talking about their work in the field and why the donation is so important and how the donation will be used.

That will be a great test to do versus a page without a video, but you will want to make sure that you set up a test that just includes one variation.

Additional resources, there are so many resources out there on the web now to help you get started with landing page testing. We have produced several white papers on testing that you can download at [Donordigital.com](http://Donordigital.com).

We have also found a wealth of good insights on two other testing websites. One is called [ROIRevolution.com](http://ROIRevolution.com) and the other is called [MarketingExperiments.com](http://MarketingExperiments.com).

There is a lot of great practical advice and troubleshooting tips and even recommendations on coding solutions for tricky problems when doing multivariate testing. So I would urge you to go and check out these resources as well. Jono, that's the end of my prepared remarks. I'd be happy to take any questions at this point.

**Jono:** Great. Well, we have a ton of questions.

**Dawn:** Ah, great.

**Jono:** So, let's see here. Let's start with a very short question from Nancy. You talked a little bit about confidence levels, can you expand on that? We are not sure what that means.

**Dawn:** OK, sure. With most testing protocols, our confidence level is a statistical reference in terms of reaching significance in a test. When a confidence level reaches 90% and above, that's normally where you would peg statistical significance in a test, and basically rule out that any underperforming challenges are not significant. We would consider directional significance at the 80% plus level, meaning when you are reaching that level, you are 80% confidence that the change is significant and 20% possibility that it is not.

**Jono:** Great. Thank you. Let's move on to the next question. And, what was the duration of each of these tests? It appears you are stating there were separate tests that might have run simultaneously from different sources such as the main web page versus a Google search?

**Dawn:** Yeah. With the email tests, we were driving Amnesty's email file to a custom landing page in that A/B test. That series, we sent the email twice and it was spanning about two weeks' time. So that was the shorter tests of the two by far. And generally speaking with email, you are going to see a really high volume of traffic of course driven by the email messages themselves to the landing pages over a couple of days period, more than likely around the email drop itself and then see that traffic drop-off to virtually zero after a week.

So we did two sends to generate the data for that test and were able to reach that 81% confidence level in a couple of weeks' time.

Conversely, with a Google search page, you tend to get much steadier traffic and you don't typically get those surges that can allow you to collect a lot of data in short order. So that test was running for over a month's time, however we have run multivariate tests on that same Google search page that have lasted three months or longer.

If you are talking about running the test at seasonally slower times of the year, say March through May when you tend not to get a heavy volume of traffic through search or through general web pages, that's going to require a lot more time to collect the data.

**Jono:** OK. Next question comes from Michael. Do you see a marked difference in conversion rates when they make a recurring donation versus a one-time donation?

**Dawn:** Yeah. I know that many organizations are using donation pages that give folks the option to make a one-time gift or a recurring gift. Typically, we recommend that clients choose one or the other type of giving to feature on their donation pages when they are conducting testing, because it is a different type of offer and it is driving different audiences. So it can be difficult to analyze when you are talking about two types of conversion goals within a single test page, and of course with recurring gifts you are always generating a much smaller number of those.

So it can be a tricky thing to test because it is hard to reach that critical mass. So our test with Amnesty has been focused on forms that are just pitching one time gifts.

**Jono:** Got it. And let's see here. This is a question from Cathy and I suspect this is probably a question on the minds of organizations that have membership base. Cathy says, "If our organization has several different fundraising campaigns as well as membership, how can we simplify our donation pages without having to have separate ones for each purpose?" So, it sounds like a little bit of a strategy question there.

**Dawn:** Yeah. That's a really good question and many organizations wrestle with that. I think you want to start off by asking yourself, are these pages and these types of asks catering to different audiences. If so, I would recommend keeping them separate. If you feel like you are driving essentially the same folks to each page, you are just really splitting your traffic among pages with different types of asks.

You might consider doing some testing to understand if that training is significant. You know I think it would be a great A/B test in essence to construct one page that become a

member header and then another that features DonateNow, which obviously carries a little bit different meaning in the eyes of the supporter and determine which page they are responding better to.

If you feel like these really are similar audiences that are landing on these pages, that will be one way to approach it. I think that question though probably would require some research on the part of your development team to understand who these folks are that are going to a member page versus a simple donate page.

**Jono:** Great. Next question, couple of folks have asked about your use of the word "conservative." Janice says, what exactly do you mean by a conservative gift string?

**Dawn:** Yeah, in this sense, purely a qualitative description. We wanted to feature suggested giving amounts that were lower. So by conservative, I meant suggesting a lower amount in the hopes that that would be more approachable and results in more folks deciding yeah, I can give.

**Jono:** And, couple of small organizations have written in with questions about getting started and where to turn to for help. Let me read a couple of those questions. Norah for example says, do you think that a university level computer science project team would be a good resource for a nonprofit to tap into to help us conduct these tests if we don't have the resources?

**Dawn:** Yeah. I guess I would ask what types of resources you are looking for from those folks. If it is simply developer coding skills, I'd say yeah, that's a great option to explore if you have the students able and willing to help. If it comes down to resources to do multivariate testing, it really has a little bit more to do with time and understanding of the actual pages themselves and the audiences you are seeking to reach. And that may raise questions about whether those folks would be most appropriate to spearhead that work. So I think it depends on the type of resources we need.

**Jono:** Absolutely. But I like your thinking there, I think there are probably, especially given what I am reading about lots of folks coming back to community colleges, there are a lot of public grade year students in our community wanting to help out on the marketing, fundraising and technology front?

**Dawn:** Absolutely.

**Jono:** Let's see here. The next question is about multivariate testing, can you clarify how you know which variable is the one responsible for the change?

**Dawn:** Yeah, great question and that is what you are using that wonderful test platform for. The platform will isolate the number of page views for each page variation and the number of conversions by page variation and then do a calculation not only of the conversion rate, but of the significance visa -vis these statistical metrics that we talked about. And there are a lot of really complex topics I won't get into in terms of Z scores and other ways to measure significance, but the test platform is what isolates the impact of a given variable in the test and that's the beauty of these test platforms.

You don't have to do a lot of intensive number crunching yourself. The platform will track and tally and calculate those metrics for you.

**Jono:** And, let's see here. Next question is going to come from Michele. Michele asks, "How did Amnesty get the message out to non-donors? Was it by an email campaign and if so what exactly was the content of that campaign?"

**Dawn:** Yes, we went out to non-donors on the email list, so these were folks that Amnesty would have gotten on the list via online advocacy or perhaps attendance got in events and if the person had given their email address. It might have even been a direct mail donor that had provided an email address, but had never given online. So it was certainly a variety of folks that we were able to isolate via an audience query using the Kintera platform and we sent them a message with an ask that was campaign specific.

I am not remembering exactly what the issue was, but it was not an institutional-type ask simply to support Amnesty's human rights work across a gamut of issues, but I can look into that and get back to you.

**Jono:** Great. Let's see here. So, this question says, "You talked about what are the steps involved in setting up and implementing the test, but do you have any advice for taking a step back and exactly how to implement an overall testing strategy?"

**Dawn:** Yeah. I would recommend first off again taking a look at what are your organization's top goals. If we are talking about increasing fundraising results on the web, you are going to want to look at all of the different revenue streams that are driving online giving. You are going to want to look at the big categories of your web program. You will want to look at the website itself, your email list and any external marketing efforts that you have, whether it's search or it's other forms of paid advertising.

And I think you are going to want to take a comprehensive look at all of those avenues for raising money and looking at the landing pages that you have in place to cater to those various audiences.

Again, I think going back to choosing which pages to test, you are probably going to want to start with the pages that are generating the most revenue for you online, because obviously if you can improve those, you are going to gain some tremendous leverage in bringing a lot more money than if you focus on the pages that are contributing a much smaller proportion of your online giving.

But you would want to take a look all those big drivers and then map out a calendar and a set of goals for your organization in terms of testing all of those pages, mapping that out perhaps over the course of the year, and really look at those opportunities in your calendar where you see the giving volume pickup.

We all know December is the make or break month for most organizations online, but you do often see a ramp up in giving in the fall; that maybe a great time then for you to consider running a bunch of tests like we did with Amnesty to get in the best possible position for December when you can really improve your returns, dramatically.

**Jono:** Great. Thanks, Dawn. The next question actually is jumping over into email marketing if you don't mind and Rebecca writes in and says, "We have a monthly email newsletter that we send out to 20, 000 plus supporters, sounds like it is probably volunteers, donors and nondonors. And we typically have a subject line that has the name of our nonprofit and the date of the newsletter, but we were interested in possibly testing a different subject line. So we wanted to basically randomly split the list in half and run a test, is that a valid way to test such a thing?"

**Dawn:** Absolutely, yeah. We are big advocates of subject line testing, that's an incredibly important point in the process and it is what gets more people in the door, more effective subject line will get more people into the email message and the greater audience that you have the hope of converting. A random split of the email list is the way you want to go and I am not sure what testing or email platform you are using, but most tools do give you a fairly straightforward way to split the list for subject line testing.

**Jono:** And actually I just have a follow-up question of my own related to that. So let's say this organization does that test, what variables then should they be looking at in their results, open rates?

**Dawn:** Yeah. I mean in terms of the significant metric there, it will be open rates. You know I think there are a lot of different ways to test the subject line and not just the subject line but the email envelope itself, what is in the "from" line, that's another test we ran with Amnesty International. We tested a "from" line with the executive director's name Larry Cox in addition to Amnesty International USA versus an envelope that just said Amnesty International USA and found that when a personal name, in addition to the organization name were featured in that "from" line, it lifted the open rates by 20%.

So don't just think about subject lines, think about that envelope. What else can you be doing to increase confidence and increase the open rates.

**Jono:** When you run into scenarios where you have done a test of a fundraising email, and the open rate was significantly higher in one version, but in the other version with a lower open rate, it actually resulted in more donations.

**Dawn:** Yeah, that definitely does happen from time to time, however it is usually something you can attribute to randomness, unless you are doing something else within that creative that could explain why one version - and this would not be a scientific test to run. If you are testing subject line, you should not be testing anything else than the messages. But we have nonetheless, the one version generated more gifts or higher average gifts than the subject line that performs best.

And we would attribute that to chance that wouldn't necessarily be significant, because there really is no direction correlation between the subject line and the amount a person gifts.

**Jono:** Got it. And let's see, next question here, you talked to us earlier about "Donate" buttons and what impact they have, can you recap that point?

**Dawn:** Absolutely. We have found the size, the color and the graphic treatments on the Donate button can all have a significant impact on conversions rates. I think with many of the CRM tools that nonprofits are using, the standard "Issue" button is a small grey button that may say "Submit." However with Amnesty, I didn't feature it in the PowerPoint, but we ran tests on the Donate button that appears on that form. We tried a red button, we have tried a green button, we have tried a blue button, but most important, we have tried larger buttons that say "Donate Now" more specific to what action you are asking people to take.

And you know, I think button design can be very audience specific, so I hesitate to give any explicit guidance on what kind of button to use. It is definitely something to test, but I have seen much more often than not a large colorful button with specific language performing better than a great button that says submit.

**Jono:** Great. Next question: "Can you test two variables on the A/B testing or should you stick to just one?"

**Dawn:** Yeah, with an A/B test you really do need to stick with one variable. The reason being if you change two things, but you only have two versions of the page, you won't be able to isolate which variable change is responsible. So when you have two variables you want to test, then you really do need to go to multivariate testing, because that will give you the ability to understand how those variables interact with each other, and then backs conversion as well as how the variable in isolation are affecting the conversion rates.

**Jono:** Got it. And, next question is from Norman. "Can you talk a bit more about multivariable testing? Not all of us can afford a tool like Optimost and it seems like this can be fairly complex since you are dealing with a combination of many other factors on the donation page, what's your advice here?"

**Dawn:** Yeah, absolutely. Optimost is beyond the budget of many, many nonprofit organizations. Thankfully, we have an alternative now in Google website, Optimizer. This is a free tool and is something that you can see with or without Google Analytics, but it is a free tool that you can go check out on the Google website, Optimizer page. And it is remarkably user friendly for nontechnical audiences. We have used it for a variety of clients, but I could definitely see a nonprofit organization using it directly without need for a consultant,

Because they have a very very good step-by-step instructions on how to set up a test, how to deploy code on your donation landing pages themselves, how to QA and ultimately launch the test.

I recommend it highly. It certainly doesn't do everything that the Optimost toolset does, but it will track all those page variations we talked about, the individual conversion rate of each and tell you when you have reached significance for a given variable. So it does a lot of that number crunching and analysis for you and it is very simple to use.

**Jono:** Excellent. And our very last question; this comes from Megan. " On slide 11, you defined conversion rate as total gifts versus page views, so if you could just recap that

point one more time? And also, can you talk a little bit whether we should be looking at page views versus visitors versus unique visitors?”

**Dawn:** Sure, absolutely. Again, the conversion rate is measured by total gifts divided by page views. And I use the term page views more as a generic term to reference the traffic on a given web page. If you are testing an email landing page, page view is not the metric, you will be looking at the number of folks who click through a link from the email message and land on that donation page. So the metrics will be - nomenclature may be different in your tool depending on which page you are testing and where those folks are coming from, but the question of visitors versus page views, we are trying to optimize the page and the traffic that lands on it. We are not trying to optimize the visitors. So we do want to look at the total page views for any given page we are testing with.

**Jono:** Excellent. And actually, we can sneak in one more question, this just came in here. This is an interesting question. Joe encounters a series where a donor visits the donation page to make a donation and then when they came back, they are actually hitting the B version and so they become confused?

**Dawn:** With respect to multivariate testing, you cannot get different variations of a page in a test. The way it runs is off of cookies in your browser. So, if you are using the same browser to go to this landing page when a test is running, you will always be served the same page variation. Now you can trick it by using a different browser and we certainly do that when we are testing pages, so that we can see different page variations. But as long as you are using one browser and the vast majority of web users do not go back and forth between browsers, you will always see that thing, page view so that you can't be in both routes at the same time.

**Jono:** That makes great sense. I want to thank Dawn for donating her time today and everyone for joining us today. We look forward to speaking with you again on one of our future Nonprofit 911 calls.

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