



# Why Reinventing Fundraising in Higher Education Is Imperative for Its Survival

A call for more intelligent fundraising to engage the right donors at the right time with the right offer through a set of channels



FUNDRAISING



## IT'S A RAPIDLY CHANGING LANDSCAPE...AND THE STAKES ARE HIGH

**Increased pressures across a more complex and challenging landscape demand that colleges and universities take a new approach to fundraising.** As overall enrollment numbers decline, student retention is stagnant, and traditional revenue sources are no longer predictable, individual philanthropic support for higher education is more important than ever to ensure financial stability and long-term growth.

But just as higher education leaders are looking to advancement to close the funding gap, those on the fundraising front line are facing their own set of serious challenges. Alumni participation and individual giving to institutions are declining, and the public has raised questions about the value of higher education. Simultaneously, foundations and gift officers are being asked to raise much more—with either flat or only minimally increased budgets.

Fundraisers need to do much more with the limited resources they have. In this setting, perhaps the harshest reality of all is this: traditional, “tried-and-true” fundraising methods won’t be enough to address new challenges in higher education or the increased demands on advancement professionals.



## HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDRAISING IS FACING THREE CORE CHALLENGES—AND ISN'T ADAPTING QUICKLY ENOUGH TO OVERCOME THEM

As pressure mounts to bring in more fundraising dollars more quickly, donors are becoming more difficult to acquire and retain due to 1) increasing competition, 2) a changing communication landscape, and 3) the population's shifting behaviors and preferences when it comes to giving.

### 1

## COMPETITION FOR DONORS AND DOLLARS IS ONLY GROWING MORE FIERCE

Contrary to popular belief, an institution's biggest competitor for donors and dollars is not other colleges and universities, nor is it the 1.5 million charities now active in the U.S. If it were only that simple! The true source of competitive pressure in today's world are the consumer marketing giants like Amazon who continue to lead the charge in more sophisticated, data-driven, channel-optimized, and highly tuned communication to the same population that colleges and universities are trying to reach. These retailers have set the bar very high and continue to push it skyward with advanced targeting, big data, and continuously tested user experiences.

Donors, like the rest of us, now expect this same type of interaction with any type of brand they encounter—even their alma mater. When institutions fall short, their message falls flat, and their attention falls away, taking their discretionary dollars with it. Gone are the days of alumni feeling duty-bound to give back to their institution.

Of course, the competition not only comes in the form of highly-optimized and personalized experiences, but also in the sheer volume of messages and offers.

Some organizations are already catching on to individualized marketing, the attention economy, and high-quality storytelling. We are now at the tip of the iceberg as we see major nonprofits and foundations start to modernize their approach to targeting, engaging, and soliciting for philanthropic support. The reality is that the only way to beat them is to join them. It's time for higher education to move more quickly to adopt these modern marketing tactics to remain relevant and produce results—or be left in the dust.

## 2

### THE COMMUNICATION LANDSCAPE IS EXPLODING

Compared to just one year ago, Americans are now spending 60 percent more time on smartphones creating and consuming information on websites, email, social media, streaming video, and more. By 2019, 246 billion emails will be sent per day. It's no surprise that the number of channels and the volume of information being sent has exponentially grown in the last decade. This represents a challenge in a more crowded arena with more fragmentation of ways to connect with donors.

Compounding this is the incredible power of choice. Donors now drive their own communication by selecting the modes and filters that suit them. It's important to remember your audience is now in control of the message and how you reach them. They decide when they want to be contacted, by whom, through which channels, and on what topics.

With this in mind, successful fundraisers will need to meet donors where they are—and on their terms—to make the connection that will lead to engagement and, ultimately, a gift.

## 3

### THE TIME TO MEET SHIFTING DONOR EXPECTATIONS IS NOW

While core motivations for giving have not changed dramatically—donors still give for primarily social, emotional, and personal reasons—donor expectations and giving preferences have evolved. We live in an age of unprecedented personal expression and transparency.

To truly connect with donors and inspire them to support the programs that are most meaningful to them, you need to speak directly to them—and then let them talk back. This means getting extremely clear on the message you're trying to send and personalizing the experience to make it incredibly compelling and relevant to that individual. Now more than ever, the key to more effective communication is relevancy.

When your emails and other communications are more personalized and specific, they tap into the identity of the donor and are instantly more relevant, interesting, and authentic.

A fundraiser's job relies heavily on the ability to definitively answer the question, "Why me?" You can't do that with blast messaging and generic segmentation. For today's donors, only a highly personalized, relevant, and interactive experience will break through the competitive noise and hold their attention.



## HOW TO RISE TO THE OCCASION

While these challenges might feel daunting, there is an incredible and exciting opportunity to modernize fundraising with new tools and tactics that can have a truly revolutionary impact on giving. To meet today's demands, institutions must shift the way they approach fundraising. Advancement professionals need to adopt new strategies that leverage advanced analytics, new engagement models, and insights to be able to scale, connect, and see a greater return on their fundraising investment. The good news is that the data, technology, and a compelling impact opportunity already exist to communicate with students, alumni, and other members of the community. The priority now is to weave them together in a more intelligent way to more effectively engage donors and create a rewarding habit of lifetime giving.

### Three essential concepts that you must embrace to overcome the common challenges and advance your organization:

#### 1. ROOT YOUR STRATEGY IN DATA

Let's be clear: traditional segmentation based on old-style heuristics will no longer cut it. **Advanced analytics**, predictive modeling, and engagement scoring will help you identify the right donors most likely to give, focusing your time and resources in the right ways, making your programs more efficient, and resulting in a higher return on your investment of money, time, and people. These same techniques will also help you fine-tune your methods and messaging to ensure you are sending the message most likely to resonate with any given donor.

#### 2. MODERNIZE YOUR OUTREACH

In addition to leveraging new techniques like targeted digital advertising, marketing automation, and adaptive **engagement technology**, a modern approach to building a relationship with donors weaves together the right channels for the right donors at the right time. Move beyond a simplistic multichannel view of blasting the same message across all channels, and **create a personal journey** that tailors your channels and cadence based on the campaign and audience. All channels—including digital, email, social, phone, direct mail, events—working together creates a more compelling donor-directed experience.

#### 3. PERSONALIZE THE ENGAGEMENT

Donors want to understand how your work is relevant not only to their experience with the institution, but also how it connects to what they care about now. They need to know the specific, tangible impact their gift will have. Use the **insights** that you gain from your data and a donor's own actions to move away from a scripted transaction and instead create interactive, dynamic giving experiences that speak to an individual donors' expectations and why they give. Allow for giving to take place at any time, at any level, and through the giving methods the donor chooses.

Finally, take a holistic view of your donors—from acquisition to transformational giving—and connect these same principles throughout your fundraising operation, tying them together so a donor’s journey with your institution gets more compelling and rewarding with each step. From student philanthropy to planned giving, from alumni engagement to a multi-million-dollar major gift, donors have shifted to expect a new level of interaction and customization—it’s time to shift along with them and reinvent fundraising in order to reinvigorate higher education philanthropy.

**More intelligent fundraising that engages the right donors at the right time with the right offer through the right set of channels.**



# RNL COMPLETE FUNDRAISING PRODUCT PORTFOLIO



## MAJOR AND PLANNED GIVING

Identifies, warms, and qualifies prospects ready to make a transformational gift.

### Pipeline Building

- RNL Major Giving Pipeline Builder
- RNL Planned Giving Pipeline Builder

### Targeted Coverage

- RNL Major Giving Coverage
- RNL Planned Giving Coverage



## ANNUAL GIVING

Attracts, converts, and retains more donors through advanced engagement strategies and intelligent, integrated multichannel campaigns.

### RNL Personal Journey

- RNL Millennial Journey
- RNL Donor Retention Journey
- *RNL Parent Journey \*coming soon*
- *RNL Academic Unit Journey \*coming soon*
- *RNL Leadership Journey \*coming soon*

### RNL Intelligent Phonathon

- RNL Masters Phonathon
- RNL Selective Phonathon
- RNL Off-Site Managed Phonathon
- RNL CAMPUSCALL

### RNL Digital Dialogue

- Calendar Year End
- Fiscal Year End
- Annual Giving
- Retargeting

### Direct Response

- Direct Mail
- Direct Mail + Email



## DIGITAL GIVING

Amplifies your message and engagement online to raise more dollars through industry-leading digital platforms.

### Crowdfunding

- RNL Crowdfunding *powered by ScaleFunder*
- RNL Evergreen Giving Page – Crowdfunding

### Giving Day

- RNL Giving Day *powered by ScaleFunder*
- RNL Digital Dialogue – Giving Day



## ADVANCEMENT SERVICES

Transforms the quality and completeness of your organization's data.

### Data Enrichment

- Cell Phone Append Research
- Phone Append and Verification
- Address Append and Verification
- Email Research
- Prospect-Driven Research
- Matching Gift and Employer Append Research

**More than 30 data attributes available  
for research and enrichment**

# Building your fundraising strategy? Talk to us today.

Learn how to get more from your budget, adapt to a changing landscape, and exceed your goals.

Call: **800.876.1117** or Email: **[ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com](mailto:ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com)**

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## **RNL COMPLETE FUNDRAISING**

More intelligent fundraising that engages the right donors at the right time with the right offer through the right set of channels.

RNL Complete Fundraising is a portfolio of purpose-built solutions that amplify and accelerate results with advanced analytics, engagement technology, and industry-leading insights.

Using data and donor-driven engagement, RNL Complete Fundraising delivers more intelligent campaigns that reach the right donors at the right time with the right offer through the right set of channels.

With solutions rooted in these modern, best-in-class approaches, RNL powers a comprehensive array of fundraising programs, engaging and developing donors at each stage in their philanthropic journey—and meeting the needs of colleges and universities with connected, scalable solutions that are proven to increase fundraising results.

Visit **[RuffaloNL.com/CompleteFundraising](https://RuffaloNL.com/CompleteFundraising)** to learn more.

### **ABOUT RUFFALO NOEL LEVITZ**

Ruffalo Noel Levitz is the leading provider of enrollment management, student success, and fundraising solutions. Each year, more than 1,900 colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations rely on RNL best-in-class analytics, engagement technology, and industry-leading insights to achieve their mission.