



# 2023 Giving Day Insights

Learn about the latest giving day results  
and key strategies for success



# Giving Days: Engaging Today's Donors and Building Pipeline for the Future

Most higher education institutions and charitable organizations now invest significantly in a giving day effort at least once each year. In a time when gaining donor attention is tough, giving days offer a unique opportunity to boost excitement, get noticed, and encourage donors to take action. Giving days answer the key question “*why give now?*,” by fueling urgency with time-sensitive challenges and deadlines.

Donors find this focus on a single day compelling. We saw this once again as part of a global movement:

**A record \$3.1 Billion was given on #GivingTuesday 2022, an increase of 25% since 2020**

**It is even more remarkable this happened in a challenging global economy.**

Time-sensitive, impact-driven, and social giving is a key part of today's donor engagement. Many institutions now see the bulk of their annual donor count come on their giving day. This makes optimizing your giving day more than a way to meet this year's goals and build crucial donor pipeline for the future.

In this report, we review the results of 2022 giving days and offer the key trends, takeaways, and recommendations that can fuel your coming year's success. The RNL team encourages you to look at these trends, evaluate your strategy, and look for new ways to engage donors that will keep your giving day fresh and exciting.

As you review these trends, don't hesitate to reach out to the RNL team and ask us for examples from peers or strategy tips on how to adopt a new tactic on your giving day. We're excited to help fuel your success in this crucial part of your annual donor engagement effort.



# The Data Behind the Giving Day Insights

Analyzed: January-December 2022



The institutions analyzed in this report use the RNL ScaleFunder digital giving platform. These institutions are primarily higher education institutions, but also include Greek organizations, healthcare organizations, and other charitable institutions. The insights also draw from documented donor trends and apply to all giving day platforms.



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## Key Giving Day Statistics: Average Gift and Gift Sources

As giving days have grown massively over the past decade, average online gifts and total giving have grown. The key trend is that in addition to giving day participation growing dramatically, big giving day totals have been achieved through partnership with major givers who count their gift on the big day. This includes challenge and match donors who use their investment to boost broad response across an alumni and constituent base.

### Key giving day stats in 2022:



## Key takeaways and recommendations

- While there will always be a range of gifts, the average online gift indicates very high ROI for giving day efforts.
- Your online giving during your day will drive total donor count and participation.
- Big giving day dollar totals are largely built from major gifts.
- Challenge and match major gifts help build these big totals.
- Your team must have the flexibility to enter offline gifts at any time, and they have them reflect in challenge totals and the big giving day total immediately.



“This year we saw a donor make a \$50,000 giving day gift online. It was incredible to see. Your giving day effort is about engaging all kinds of donors, and big donors definitely want to be part of the excitement.”

*—David Jakielo, Client Solutions Consultant,  
RNL*

## Watch our webinar for more

### [RNL.com/GivingDayWebinar](https://RNL.com/GivingDayWebinar)

The RNL ScaleFunder team breaks down the key statistics, shares examples of giving day success, and outlines key trends for 2023.

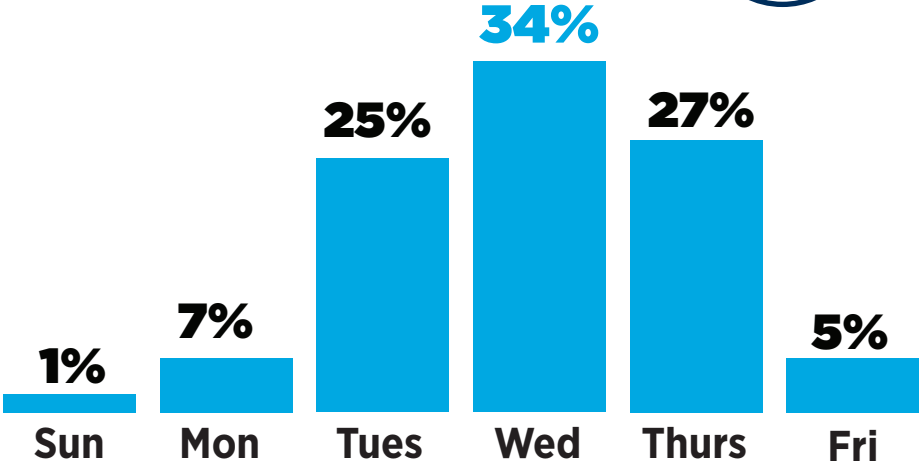
#### Examples include:

- The University of Texas, Austin
- Kappa Alpha Theta
- Central Michigan University
- Oklahoma State University
- The University of Cincinnati and UC Health
- University of California, Santa Cruz
- Fort Lewis College

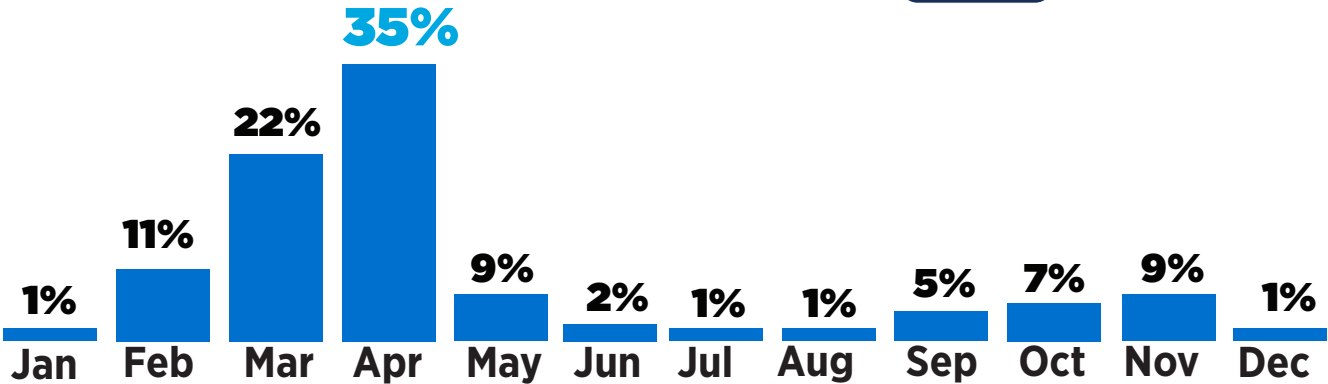
# When Giving Days Are Held

Nearly nine out of 10 organizations in our study hold their giving days in the middle of the week. This allows for maximum attention as well as time at the end of the week to communicate results and thank donors.

## What day are giving days?



## What month are giving days?



*Excludes #GivingTuesday*

Giving days are incredibly popular in the spring, with 57 percent held in March or April. They are often held on key organizational anniversaries, like founding dates. Here's a breakdown of 2022 giving day timing. Note that this does not count giving days on Giving Tuesday.

## Key takeaways and recommendations

- Your best bet for a giving day is Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday (unless you have a specific reason to choose another day).
- Multi-day giving days are growing. Along with this, some institutions are engaging in “soft launch” campaigns before the big day, and extensions to giving day challenges are common.
- Organizations largely hold their giving days in months that are some distance from other time-sensitive solicitations, like calendar and fiscal year end.
- #GivingTuesday offers great value to engage donors in a global movement, and many organizations hold special campaigns on this crucial day.
- The largest giving days are held outside of #GivingTuesday, when organizations can gain the most attention on their marketing efforts.

“I recommend that organizations look at a noon launch and go through the next day. It makes it easier to kick off and you have a second day to continue to market. People will be awake when you launch, you'll start strong, and you will have the time to get creative on day two if you need it.”

**—Theresa Jubert, Senior Client Solutions Consultant, RNL**

# The Impact of Ambassadors on Giving Day Success

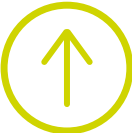
Engaging peers as volunteers to get out the message on your giving day is a reliable tactic to boost response. Volunteer ambassadors are enabled through great training programs, coaching from giving staff, and great technology that lets them track their impact. We looked at organizations that started ambassador programs through the RNL ScaleFunder ambassador technology for the first time, and here's what we found.

## ScaleFunder Ambassador ROI Analysis

### First RNL Giving Day

NUMBER OF AMBASSADORS (RANGE)	amount online dollars	amount online gifts
0 ambassadors	\$59,560	356
1-50 ambassadors	\$67,737	461
51-100 ambassadors	\$181,677	1,140
101-180 ambassadors	\$182,846	1,531

### 101-180 ambassadors



207% dollars  
330% gifts

### 51-100 ambassadors



205% dollars  
220% gifts

“Giving day ambassadors leverage one of your most powerful marketing tools: a peer-to-peer network. The increases we’ve seen when people lean into that effort blow my mind. I’m a numbers geek at heart, and you really can’t deny the huge percentage increases as you increase the number of engaged ambassadors. Ambassador ROI is extremely high. It’s a huge payoff for both you and your donors.”

—*Courtney Pourciaux, Client Solutions Consultant, RNL*

## Key takeaways and recommendations

- Volunteer ambassadors help drive the massive donor participation of the biggest giving days.
- A good goal for a first effort is 50 ambassadors—that appears to be a breakpoint for ROI.
- It's crucial to make it easy for ambassadors to help, offering them easy signup, toolkits, and sample social posts.
- Ambassadors love to track the gifts they influence and compete with peers. Easy-to-use technology and leaderboards help fuel this friendly competition.
- As part of this competition, offering prizes for your ambassadors based on the number of gifts they influence is highly motivational.

## The Future of Challenges, Matches, and Time-Sensitive Competitions

Within the urgency and focus of a giving day, challenges can maximize donors response. These can come with a giving match component or an “unlocked” big gift when a donor milestone is met. Many organizations now host dozens of challenges on their big day. Key technology that autocompletes these challenges and provides real-time updates on the giving day portal is crucial. We see challenges, matches, and competitions (broadly grouped under “gamification”) increasing even further in the future.

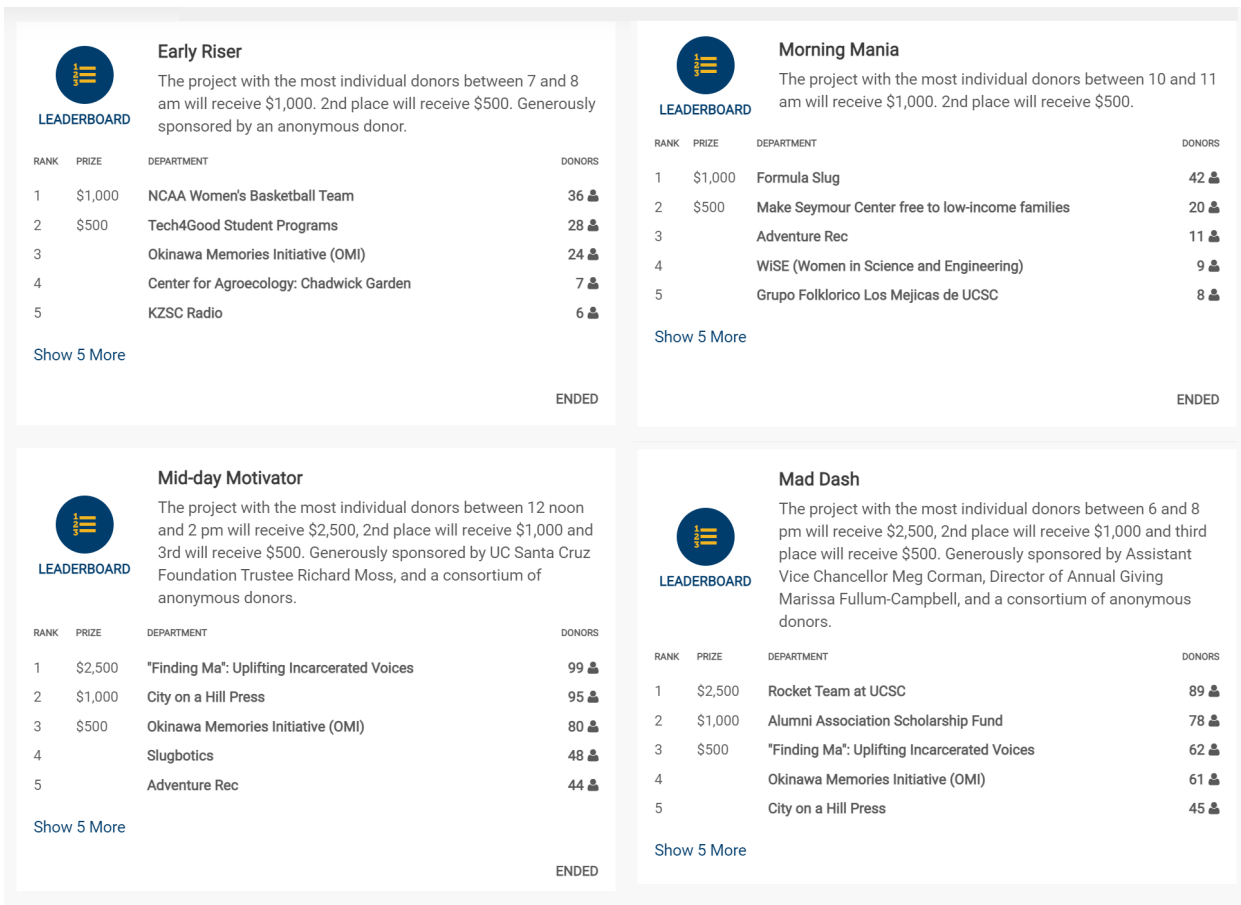
Giving-enabled competitions that support key constituency groups have also become popular. One of these is the “power hour,” where donors are encouraged to give and make a vote for a student organization, department, or team (regardless of their giving area). The groups with the most giving votes receive a grant from the development office or foundation to support their efforts. We think this tactic is genius because it emphasizes giving as a democratic effort and lets donors give to their chosen area of impact but still provide support to a group they feel close to. We see tactics like this growing in 2023 and we've implemented key technology in the RNL ScaleFunder platform to make it possible.

“Great matches and challenges make a difference. Online participation is being driven by the excitement and that gamification that you're creating.”

— **Maile Juranits,**  
**Associate Vice President, RNL**







Sample multilevel leaderboards during the giving day at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

## Key takeaways and recommendations

- Challenges, matches, and leaderboards are crucial for driving mass donor response on giving days.
- Engaging gift officers to seek challenge gifts from major donors is a great tool for mid-level giving, and the most successful advancement shops make securing giving day challenge gifts as part of gift officer annual goals.
- Multiple concurrent challenges are becoming common, and technology that qualifies donors for multiple matches at checkout is crucial.
- Technology that can auto-complete, calculate, and report challenges totals provides invaluable insight and support for your team as they keep your giving day on track.
- Time-sensitive campaigns like power hours are a great way to build excitement and bring a broader community to the giving day excitement.
- Non-giving challenges like social sharing or voting for student organizations with a gift have grown and add depth to giving days.

# Making Giving Easy: The Digital Wallet

Digital wallets reduce giving friction by allowing donors to use technology that's already on their phone. They make giving easy, which is a crucial part of your giving day success.

## RNL + Braintree Digital Wallet Stats for 2022

# 26,984

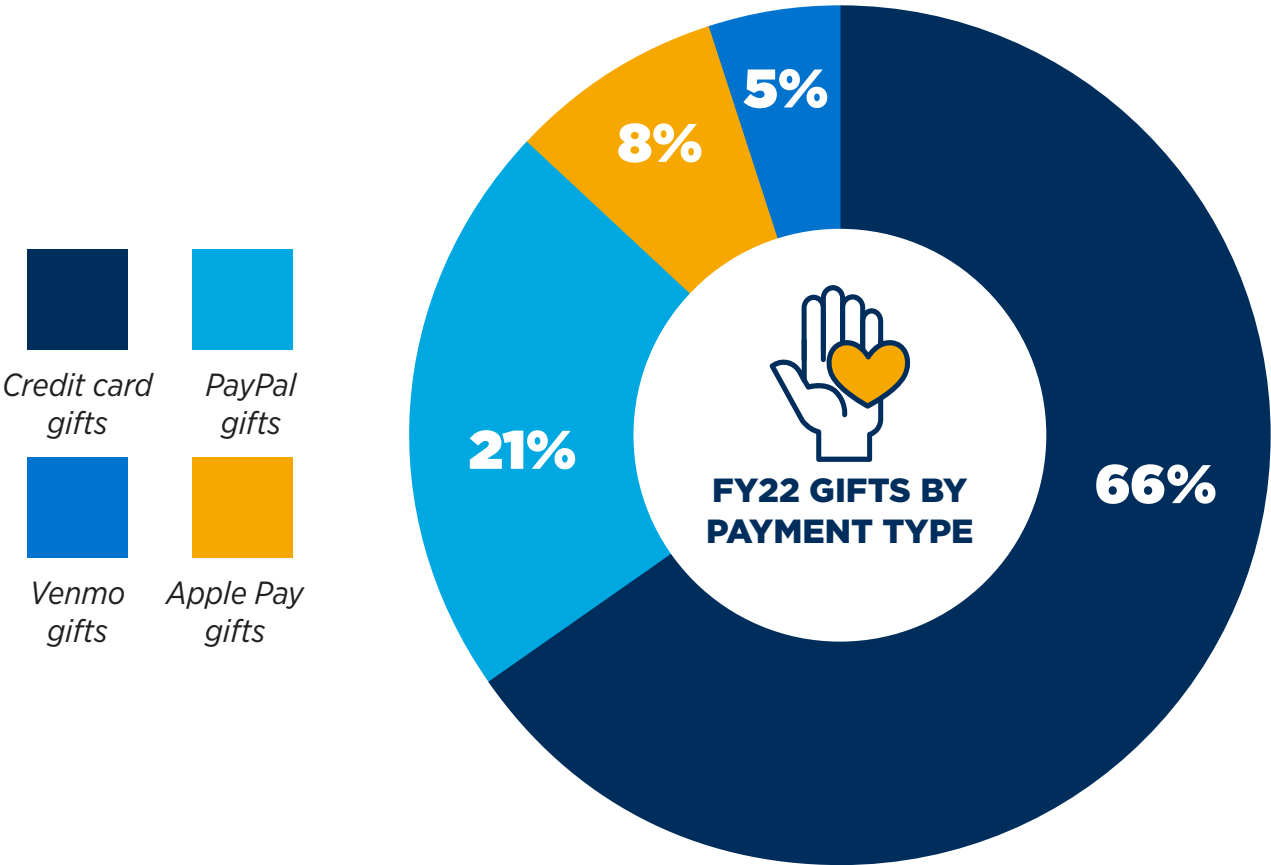
ONLINE GIFTS TOTAL

# 34%

OF GIFTS MADE USING  
ONE OF THE THREE  
DIGITAL WALLET OPTIONS

# 23%

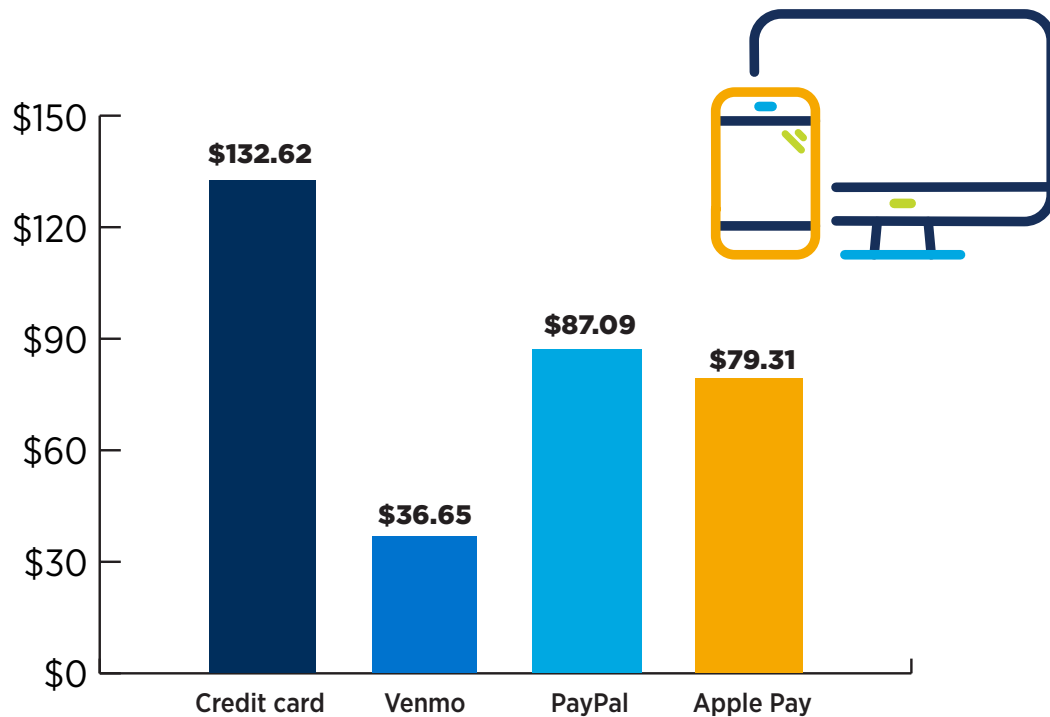
OF ONLINE DOLLARS  
RAISED WERE MADE VIA  
DIGITAL WALLET GIFTS



# FY22 Average Gift by Payment type

“When RNL partners adopt digital wallet, they immediately see gifts come in with low friction from new sources. Providing an opportunity to give with the payment options already installed on a donor’s device is just great donor service. We can make giving easier and improve the donor experience with this easy to adopt technology ”

— *Amanda Ringo, Client Solutions Consultant , RNL*



**Santa Clara University made digital wallets part of its \$4M giving day in 2022.**

You can read the case study and watch an interview with Director of Annual Giving Strategies Sergio Lopez at:

[RNL.com/SantaClara](https://RNL.com/SantaClara)

## Key takeaways and recommendations

- The benchmark today for “easy” giving is to allow donors to give in less than a minute. Digital wallet technology makes that not only easy to achieve, but also very cost-effective.
- Based on our work with our giving day partners, an average of 1/3 of gifts will come in via digital wallet after adopting it as a giving option.
- Younger donors love Venmo. While the average gift is lower for these donors, making giving easy can greatly boost participation results.
- Every giving day leader should carefully consider how easy it is to give, including how donors find the departments and funds they support, as well as the ease of the “check out” process.



“When a donor shows up to give, you’ve already overcome a huge hurdle. You want to make it as painless and as quick as possible. In our last giving day, we had many comments like: ‘Can you include other forms of payment?’ So for us, it wasn’t about following trend, it was about a donor need. And it has made a difference.”

— **Sergio Lopez, Director of Annual Giving Strategies, Santa Clara University**



# Key Giving Day Trends

“These options allow your donors to give very quick and easily. A digital wallet eliminates a step, and they don’t have to pull out their credit card when they’re giving on their mobile device. That makes giving possible in less than a minute, a key goal for your giving day.”

— *Kelsey Crane, Client Solutions Consultant, RNL*

Giving days have transformed since their start a decade ago. Almost all organizations engage in some form of giving day. The most successful institutions make sure that their top leadership are engaged and that everyone is aligned and focused on the goal—and topping the total from the previous year. Here are some key trends the RNL team has identified in our planning for 2023 giving days.



- Multiple giving days each year are becoming more and more common.
- Second and third giving days often focus on key impact areas.
- Crucial cause areas like inclusion, social justice, mental health support, and food insecurity are rising in giving day focus
- Most institutions want to do more with volunteer ambassadors on giving day.
- Most organizations have cumbersome online giving experiences that make it hard for donors. Across the board, we can all do more to make it easy to give.
- The giving day effort has grown to an institutionwide philanthropy event that goes beyond giving at many institutions. This includes significant student, parent, and volunteer involvement.
- The omnichannel outreach across texting, email, direct mail, video messages, and digital advertising is a big part of successful giving days. However, coordinating this outreach is a major challenge for most organizations.
- Giving days are now an annual giving, major gifts, and stewardship partnership activity, not just organized by a single area of an organization.

## 6 Final Keys to Giving Day Success

Based on our review of the most successful giving days this year at hundreds of institutions and organizations, RNL's giving day strategists these six core strategies to optimize your giving day in 2023.

- 1 Expand to a second (or more) giving day. Organizations that have added giving days have had great success. These often come in the form of a secondary cause-based giving day for a specific area of need. And #GivingTuesday is a key tool in expanding your giving day efforts.
- 2 Engage volunteers to boost trust and break the attention barrier. Volunteers expand your social reach and add credibility for donors. Providing volunteers easy tools and a platform to track their impact is crucial.
- 3 Get the tech to boost the donor experience and help your team. Your platform should both excite donors and make it easy for your team. This includes easy-to-use gift uploads, challenges, and matches that auto-complete, along with integrations with key outreach channels like personalized thank you videos.
- 4 Partner with gift officers. Booking big gifts on your giving day helps officers encourage donors to take action. Challenges and matches also provide great mid-level giving opportunities to get big donors more involved. Giving day is no longer a distraction but a key tool for gift officers.
- 5 Boost giving day success with omnichannel engagement. Boosting awareness for your giving day with coordinated calling, texting, email, direct mail, and digital advertising makes a big difference. Working with a partner who specializes in omnichannel outreach can also free up the resources and focus of your team on other critical areas of your giving day.
- 6 Let donors give in less than a minute. Ease of giving should be a top priority in your giving day experience, including digital wallet options like PayPal, Apple Pay, and Venmo.

### Find expert insights into your giving day

Ask for a complimentary consultation with RNL's giving day experts. We have worked with hundreds of institutions and have helped our partners raise \$900M on the RNL ScaleFunder platform. We can help you identify your best giving day strategies, engage key stakeholders, and execute a giving day that excites your constituents and exceeds your goals.

Visit [RNL.com/GivingDayConsult](https://RNL.com/GivingDayConsult) for your complimentary consultation.

# RNL Omnichannel Fundraising

Engage donors personally to build a major gift pipeline with high ROI



It's harder than ever to break through the noise and make giving a priority for supporters, alumni, parents and friends. With an omnichannel approach to fundraising, you'll engage more donors more effectively and create a lasting foundation for philanthropy. Our data-driven and outcomes-oriented strategy will help you identify the best prospects for your outreach, cultivate and steward your existing supporters, and chart pathways to growth for leadership and major gifts.

This strategy can be used to maximize engagement in key donor outreach audiences, including:

- Annual giving
- Leadership giving
- Major and planned giving pipeline cultivation
- Special campaigns and initiatives

RNL partnered with **Baylor University** to help set a record for total annual alumni donors



Tell a consistent, coordinate, and powerful story through RNL's omnichannel capabilities



Digital advertising



Texting



Email



Social media



Direct mail



Phone



Video messages



Giving days



Crowdfunding



Explore more and ask for a complimentary consultation at [RNL.com/Omnichannel](https://RNL.com/Omnichannel)

# About RNL

RNL is the leading provider of higher education enrollment, student success, and fundraising solutions. More than 1,900 colleges, universities, and nonprofit organizations rely on RNL for advanced analytics, personalized engagement, and industry-leading insights to achieve their missions. The firm is distinguished by its powerful portfolio of solutions focused on the entire lifecycle of enrollment and fundraising, assuring students find the right college or university, graduate on time, secure their first job, and give back to support the next generation. RNL conferences, research reports, papers, and articles help clients stay on top of current trends.

Visit [RuffaloNL.com](https://RuffaloNL.com)

## Ask for a free donor engagement consultation

Talk with our experts about increasing donor engagement, optimizing your outreach, and creating a sustainable pipeline of loyal donors.

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Visit [RuffaloNL.com/DonorEngagement](https://RuffaloNL.com/DonorEngagement)

Email [ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com](mailto:ContactUs@RuffaloNL.com)

Call **800.876.1117**

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