



Nonprofit Federation

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There's so much buzz and debate today about the benefits of social media. Yet one of the most powerful tools to communicate with donors, members and advocates is right there in your pocket. Take a look at these numbers:

- ☛ Over **86%** of the U.S. population has at least **one mobile device**, and over **half** use text messaging regularly.
- ☛ Our **dependency on mobile devices is increasing**. The variety of ways in which Americans use mobile expanded in all age groups over the past year (30-49 year olds had the biggest increase). Increases include taking photos, sending/receiving texts and emails, recording videos, accessing the Internet via mobile, etc. (Studies by InsightExpress released in May 2010; and by Pew Internet released July 2010.)
- ☛ **9 out of 10 adults** use at least one mobile device to keep up with work and family life. And **this group includes baby boomers**. (Experian Simmons research – National Consumer Study, March 2010)

Clearly, mobile is main stream. It's exploding as a way for people to access social media and their networks. And it's a way for your nonprofit to engage supporters and build stronger relationships.

### So how do we cultivate with mobile?

Just so we're clear: cultivation is making your donors, members and other supporters feel needed. It's making them feel like a person and not a number or source of revenue. It's listening to their preferences and accommodating them in every way possible. It's delivering what you promise.

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Cultivation also requires a “donor-centric” way of thinking that permeates all communications, online and print. It means keeping people informed with relevant content. You ask for more than money (e.g., their opinion, to volunteer, or help spread the word about your nonprofit). It definitely includes expressing your gratitude warmly and sincerely.

Good cultivation is not haphazard. Every staff member does their part to cultivate supporters in their day-to-day work. Cultivation is part of every touch with prospects and current supporters. And since mobile is so personal, it should be **folded into your overall cultivation strategy**.

Speaking of “folding in” . . . mobile gives the best results when it is **incorporated into your existing marketing and fundraising strategies**. Use your existing channels to promote your mobile call-to-action, and vice-versa.

### Let's start with acquisition

How could you *cultivate with mobile* while prospecting? Here are three examples or possibilities:

1. Advocacy charity, for example, gets prospects to opt-in to receive alerts via text through ads on the mobile web. Because this is information they want, over time it **builds loyalty** between the two of you. Some alerts may include calls-to-action where people click on a link to a landing page with more of the story. On that page include a benefit-filled request to donate. Strive for donations and other involvement tactics when practical.
2. Using traditional media, plus online and print channels, any charity can invite prospects to opt-in and receive relevant tips via text or even voice. Sending relevant, valuable content builds loyalty over time. Some tips could have links to a landing page with more info. On that landing page have a call-to-action to donate

with donor-centric bullets on how they will make a difference.

3. At special events. Have a call-to-action appropriate for your event at multiple locations. For example: Text “Join Us” to 12345

A vital point to understand is that mobile is entirely **permission-based marketing**. Unlike email, the law requires that you receive permission **BEFORE** you send mobile messages. The mobile opt-in must also be very specific regarding the content of the messages and how frequently you send them. And it must be equally easy to opt-out.

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**Special events.** As people register for your walkathon, for example, get them to opt-in for updates. As they build their team of walkers and sponsors, they can compare their progress to others. Have a prize for the largest team; the team that raises the most; teams in different age groups; and so on. Make it fun. Tweet about it and have a Facebook page too. Remember, mobile influencers access their social networks via their mobile device.

At any event you can always invite people to opt-in for valuable content sent via text or voice on their mobile device.

**Monthly giving.** Assuming all of your donors aren't on automatic payment via credit card, you send

out reminders in the mail. Strive to get as many as possible to opt-in to receive either a text or voice mail reminder instead of a direct mail letter. This saves money which can be applied to mission work. Test—with permission—sending a tip or bit of news with the mobile reminder. Donors help you be more efficient, you're adding a convenience to their life, and possibly you're also sending information they value along with the donation reminder. All this builds loyalty.

### Mobile is perfect for renewals

As you build your mobile subscriber database, text or voice messages can be another way to remind donors who haven't yet responded to a specific campaign. Two bits of caution: 1) be sure your opt-in stated that *occasional* reminders like this are part of the mix; and 2) don't let this be the only way you remind them.

Also, as people donate expand your mobile database by asking if they want to receive updates via mobile. Do this in thank you messages, emails, and newsletters. Sending success stories of on-going mission work, progress updates on capital campaigns or other special projects, and other news from the field is *information donors value*. All this builds stronger relationships with people who care about what you do.

Other **ideas for pure cultivation** with no zero “ask”:

- Happy Birthday message. Or, an association could send an anniversary thank you message on the member's renewal date.
- Other holiday greetings such as New Years, Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving. Faith-based charities could safely add Easter, Christmas or Hanukah.
- Public Service Announcements (PSA's) such as pet care tips, health tips for eating or exercising, living “green” and on they go.
- Success stories about your mission. The text message may include a link

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to a mobile-friendly website with the rest of the story. Or it might be a short video clip from the field on the great work they [supporters of your nonprofit] made possible.

- Story featuring a member, donor, or volunteer.
- Thank you message from a beneficiary of your mission.

### Same opportunities exist for associations

**Use multiple channels to build your mobile subscribers** within your membership. As they opt-in make it clear what type of information they'll receive and how often. Give them options. Here are a few **examples of how an association can cultivate members via mobile:**

- career or business tips every other week
- invites to webinars, special events, and other educational opportunities as they occur; up to 4 invites per month
- industry news; daily or weekly
- Or different combinations of the above ideas (e.g., bi-monthly career tips and daily industry news stories)
- with each of the four previous ideas, consider asking if you can *also* send reminders to renew their membership when the time comes

### Engagement is the secret of success

This is just as true for mobile as it is for social media. Use your mobile subscriber database to involve current supporters. And promote the engagement/ interaction opportunity to non-subscribers through other channels such as mobile ads. The intriguing engagement you offer ought to *attract more subscribers*.

Here are a few mobile engagement ideas that *simultaneously cultivate your relationship* with them:

- Contests where people text to participate. For example: Text to vote for a winner. Text in a suggestion for naming a new program your nonprofit is starting. Or name a mascot for your nonprofit.
- Virtually build or repair a home. There are numerous charities that provide homes to the needy, or help them renovate their existing home.

*Anytime you can get people interacting with you . . . you build loyalty.*

- Help dig a water well (virtually) for a village in Africa.
- Conduct relevant polls or surveys. Later, send out a link they can click to view the results.

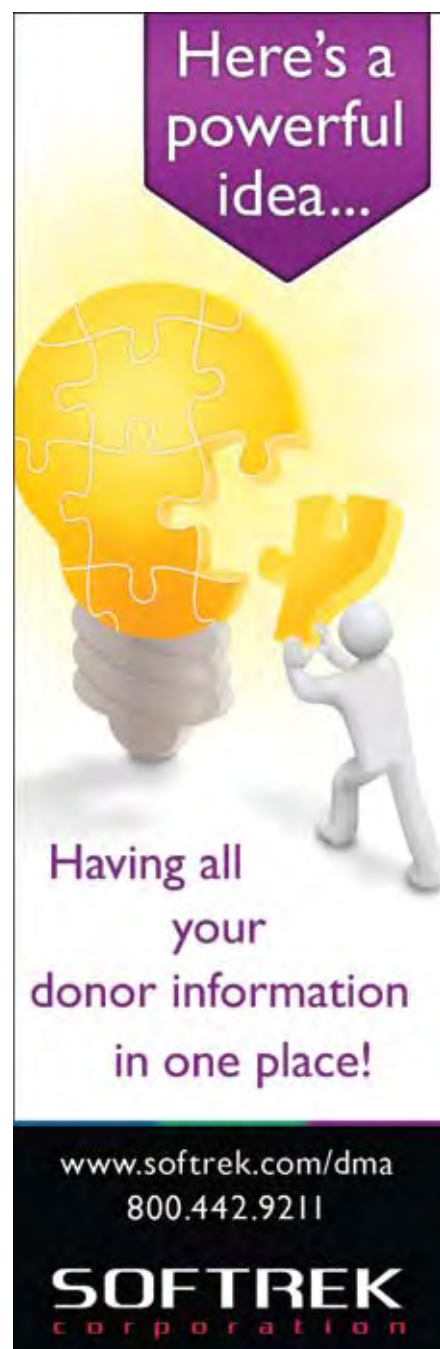
Anytime you can get people interacting with you . . . **you build loyalty.**

**Mobile subscribers are loyal**  
**Mobile subscribers have a very high affinity and they're very loyal to nonprofits.** About 71% of those who have received information from a charity via text say it's an important way to stay in touch with charities they care about... Use all your communication tools to help build your list of subscribers. Regardless of how fast you build your mobile list, the rewards are worth it.

Mobile is a very viable means of donor cultivation through news updates, success stories, reminders for special events, call for volunteers, and so forth.

And successful cultivation translates into stronger relationships with donors or members, higher retention, and higher lifetime donor/member value. One leads to the other and it all results in more funds raised for your nonprofit.

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