

Customer Service: HOW YOU TREAT PEOPLE NOW MATTERS

The vital importance of matching your fundraising campaigns with external developments in your community and the world is well-known. It's equally important that the other side of your membership program is equally as responsive, and that your customer service team is fully supported with the **information, tools, and talking points** they need to provide timely, caring, and impeccable service.

CRITICAL ISSUES TO ADDRESS:

Acknowledgement Letters

If you manage your thank you letters in house and your office is now remote, make sure a development staffer can still run, print, sign, and mail your acknowledgement letters at least weekly. This might mean a trip to the office or taking materials home. Do not get stuck worrying about the “right” signer, getting a topical and thankful letter to donors quickly is more important than having the CEO’s signature in times of challenging logistics. Check your acknowledgement copy to make sure it matches the tone of the moment.

Sustainer Stop Loss Communication

If you manage your calls and letters in house and your office is now remote, finding an alternate solution for these is key. To continue these services it is best to use vendors you already have contracts with so that they can begin working as quickly as possible. This represents real cash in hand potentially lost and is important to find a solution quickly.

Mailed Contributions

If you do not use a lockbox to process your mailed gifts, now is the time to research this solution from your bank. In the meantime, a staff member may need to visit the office once a week, or more often, to process the gifts that have arrived.

Donor Services Calls

If your office is now remote, make sure that your donor services line is being forwarded to a staff member or that one is assigned to listen and respond daily. Be sure to support this team with the most up-to-date information so they are fully prepared to be successful in this challenging remote environment.

CONSIDER LIKELY DONOR QUESTIONS BEFORE THEY BEGIN:

Donor calls/emails to cancel due to job loss or economy

This should be expected. Create a standard response that can be used on the phone and over email that is respectful and considerate. If your credit card processor allows you to pause a recurring gift rather than cancel it, offer that option to the donor. Do not attempt to change the donor's mind or guilt them into continuing. Be thankful for their support and partnership and wish them well in this difficult time. Remember, many people think of your station as a friend. Treat your donors as you would a friend who has fallen on hard times. Be supportive.

Concert tickets from on-air fundraising

You may have offered tickets as a thank you gift, and now the event is canceled due to public health recommendations. Be transparent and gracious with your donors. Begin by offering a different gift instead, to try to retain as much of the revenue as possible. As a last resort offer to refund their donation.

Where's my mug/DVD/socks

While mail and mailing services are considered an essential service, and allowed to remain operational, there are still delays across the country in both production and distribution. Your donor is likely experiencing this in other areas of their life. Communicate proactively, if possible to reduce the number of communications in to the station. Give your best estimate of when their item will arrive and continue to express gratitude for their support and remind them of a great benefit they can use right away, PBS Passport.

What's happening with the XYZ event

Most PBS stations have a variety of in-person events scheduled throughout the year and many have been canceled or postponed because of public health recommendations. Keep a list of events that have been canceled handy and have a stock answer ready that lets the donor know your station is taking the advice of the city/county and will notify everyone as soon as there is a plan.