

# Break It Down: **SUSTAINERS**

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While our nation, and your community has never faced a situation that matches the intensity of the coronavirus pandemic, we can focus on the elements in membership fundraising that help build revenue stability over time.

One of the best sources of stable funding for PBS stations is monthly sustaining donors. This current situation is demonstrating in real-time, the value of having a large percentage of supporters on your file whose gifts do not need to be renewed at a time when people may become more uncertain about making voluntary donations.

That said, with unemployment numbers rising rapidly, every station will hear from donors who ask to cancel or pause their giving. Each station will need to create a strong and supportive communication plan to keep sustainers engaged as we all navigate through this pandemic and into the recovery.

## **DO:**

- ✓ Communicate Often. Speak directly to your donors as sustainers. Let them know that you understand the commitment they have made to your station and help them see the positive results they are bringing to life by supporting your station each month.
- ✓ Thank them for helping make this work possible in difficult times. Use multiple channels to do this: social media, email, postcards, on-air.
- ✓ Give them specific examples of special initiatives (distance learning, special news coverage) that are possible because of their support.
- ✓ Consider a Thank You post card listing some of the most popular online programs and services they can enjoy as a sustainer.
- ✓ Engage them in community support projects such as window signs, sidewalk messages and online viewing parties. These are all ways we can create virtual community.
- ✓ Remind them often of your Passport highlights, streaming opportunities, podcasts and more on the PBS app.

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## DON'T:

- ✓ Avoid asking for an upgrade or additional gift. You might need to test out which channel will give you the best ROI but continue to ask. Many people will be both able and motivated to do this.
- ✓ Neglect to secure updated credit card information. Loss of cash due to bad credit cards at this time can be very detrimental to your budgeted revenue. Spend extra time here getting sustainers back on track.
- ✓ Miss out on the opportunity to solicit past Sustainers, this might be just the push they need to rejoin.
- ✓ Guilt any sustainer who needs to cancel or pause their donation. Be gracious and understanding in this time. Your polite reaction now will help them choose to come back when they are able.
- ✓ Leave your sustainers guessing. This is the time that you want your sustainers to know exactly what benefit your station is providing them, their family and your community at large, as well as the good they are helping achieve in the world.