

15 Powerful Engagement Ideas

Inspired by [Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion](#) by Robert B. Cialdini, Ph.D.

Reciprocation inspired return address labels to be mailed to prospective supporters, but today, mail is frequently unopened, and so the “gift” is not actually received. Or, if it is, most people rarely mail letters and tend to frown on unnecessary use of resources such as paper. So how can this tactic be employed for today's donor?

1. Send a personalized e-card on a donor's birthday
2. “Like” a social media post/picture and repost to your followers
3. Send select donors free tickets to an event, or offer free VIP access to a particular segment.

The **consistency** principle tells us that people exhibit a need to act in a way that is consistent with public statements they have made. So encourage supporters to publicly proclaim their enthusiasm for your organization; having done so, they will be more likely to respond favorably to requests for donations or time.

4. Invite constituents to write short statements about why/how they support your mission or your organization. Publish the statements in your newsletter and share them via social media. Shortly after, run a campaign to target those whose statements were published.
5. Set up a video booth at an event and invite people to talk about their experience with your organization. Share the videos publicly after the event.

Working in tandem to consistency, **commitment** tells us that the harder one has to work or sacrifice in order to attain something, the more fiercely loyal he/she will be to that thing.

6. Create an exclusive group and make it difficult to attain entry – Require a certain number of hours of volunteer service, certain financial commitment, financial commitment for a particular time period, etc. Have an initiation of some kind and a public announcement of new initiates into the group.



Our general desire to run with the crowd is evidenced by our reaction to **social proof** of something's value. Demonstrate that you have widespread support to validate the interest of potential new constituents.

7. Share lists of supporters and the statements from those supporters regarding how rewarding it is to support your organization.

8. Make a video to identify and thank your supporters. Interview multiple people about the ways in which they engage with you. Gather all your supporters together to show how widespread support is and encourage others to join you.

The principle of **liking** is, perhaps, the most obvious. Of course we are more likely to respond favorably to a request from a friend or from someone we like than from a stranger or someone we don't like. What's interesting is how we tend to decide whether or not we like someone.

9. Jump on the peer-to-peer bandwagon and ask volunteers and supporters to approach their friends and family for donations on your behalf. They can do this via social media, door-to-door, phone calls, etc. Develop a specific campaign with a specific fundraising goal and a fixed time frame and be sure to report the outcome of the campaign.

10. Host a bring-a-friend day to encourage employees, volunteers and supporters to introduce friends and family to your organization. Be sure everyone leaves with a schedule of upcoming events, a volunteer packet, etc.

11. People like those who like them. Send compliments to your constituents. Adopt the model of Joe Girard, described in [Influence](#) as the world's "greatest car salesman" and send seasonal postcards with a message as simple as "We Like You".

12. We tend to like people and things that are similar to us in some way. Demonstrate that you share something in common with your constituents. Create targeted campaigns to segmented groups of supporters: those who live in a particular suburb, those who share an interest in fishing, those who have kids, etc. Make the messaging specific to the segment and demonstrate that you share the same interests, values, etc.



Scarcity is an obvious but powerful influencer. When we fear that an opportunity might pass us by, we are more inclined to value it and grasp for it.

13. Fundraise by selling a limited number of special merchandise items not available anywhere else.
14. Run a campaign for a limited time discount off – membership, event attendance, or merchandise.
15. Create sponsorship levels for an event and be sure to prominently show when they are sold out.

Do you employ any of these persuasive techniques in your campaigns? Tweet your insights: @gobigriver

