



Fundraising and development on LinkedIn: A guide for nonprofits

Featuring tips, insights, and best practices in partnership with the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP)

LinkedIn for Nonprofits

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Introduction

Find the people you need to change the world



As fundraising and development efforts move increasingly online, nonprofits face new challenges and opportunities when it comes to finding the right people—and getting their attention.

With more than **774 million global members**, LinkedIn is the ideal platform for reaching people in a trusted, professional environment. Users trust LinkedIn more than any other social media platform,¹ and they're ready to hear from you: **53% already donate to nonprofits, and 60% are interested in volunteering.** Whether you're looking to engage with corporate philanthropy professionals, make a new media contact, or bring an engaged and passionate board

member into your organization, the person you're looking for is on LinkedIn—and they're only a connection away.

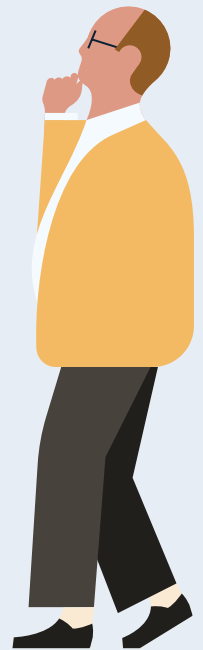
To help you find them, we've created this booklet to share tips and best practices for optimizing your fundraising and development strategy on LinkedIn, with insights from the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP). Learn how to embrace new opportunities, make the most of your network, and rapidly identify people who can help you move your mission forward.

Ready? Let's get started.

1. Business Insider, 2020 Digital Trust Report

Part one

The biggest challenges and opportunities for fundraising and development professionals today



For those working in the fundraising and development space, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a wide range of challenges. But many of these challenges weren't new—the pandemic only brought them to the forefront. At the same time, new opportunities have emerged, especially when it comes to engaging and inspiring prospective donors online.

To help you shape an effective strategy, we asked AFP to shed some light on the state of the fundraising landscape today—and the road ahead. Read on for key insights from AFP, based on its Fundraising Confidence Survey, Volume 3, released in July 2021.



3 major hurdles facing fundraising and development teams



When AFP asked its members about the biggest fundraising challenges right now, a few key themes emerged.

1 Uncertainty is the new normal

As concerns about COVID-19 variants rise, many fundraising and development professionals are hesitant to schedule in-person meetings with donors or plan special events. At the same time, some nonprofits are concerned that the longevity of the pandemic will speed up donor fatigue, leaving people too worn down to fully engage with causes they care about.

2 Donors' priorities and comfort levels are shifting

At the outset of the pandemic, many donors shifted their support toward organizations working on COVID-related issues.

Fundraisers anticipate ups and downs in donor receptiveness

On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the most confident, how confident do you feel that donors will be receptive to fundraising communications/solicitations?

September 2020: 6.8

December 2020: 7.4

April 2021: 7.3

For nonprofits within this space, questions remain about whether donors will continue to give now that the initial sense of emergency has passed. Those with missions that don't directly

relate to the pandemic, meanwhile, face the daunting prospect of re-engaging lapsed donors and attracting new ones during an economic downturn. In this uncertain financial landscape, will supporters feel confident enough to make a substantial donation or commit to a recurring gift?

3 Burnout and low engagement abound

Months of uncertainty, anxiety, and stress have taken their toll on fundraising and development professionals, accelerating burnout and leaving many looking to jump ship.

Hiring is picking up among fundraising teams

Percentage of teams expecting to hire new staff within three months:

September 2020: 16%

December 2020: 19%

April 2021: 29%

Making matters worse is the fact that some board members seem disengaged and uninterested in supporting fundraising efforts, making the fundraising team's jobs that much more difficult.

It's not all bad news, though. AFP members also pointed to some emerging opportunities in fundraising that may help organizations overcome these challenges and meet their goals. Keep reading to learn more.

Looking forward:

Embracing new opportunities in fundraising



They say that for every door that closes, a new one opens. So, while it's certainly a challenging time to be a fundraising and development professional, it's also an exciting one—because there are a lot of new opportunities emerging. The trick is knowing where to find them.

Here are six of the most significant opportunities that AFP members identified—and some tips for embracing them.

Fundraisers' confidence levels are rising

On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the most confident, how confident do you feel that you'll reach your yearly fundraising goals?

September 2020: 6.5

December 2020: 7.0

April 2021: 7.6



Opportunity #1:

Major donors are more available and remain well resourced

How to leverage this opportunity:

A strong stock market has meant that many major donors are still well positioned to support your organization generously during this time. And since most people are now accustomed to meeting via video conferencing platforms, your team may find it easier to book time with prospects, since virtual meetings can more easily be slotted into gaps in their schedule.

“Our first contact to gift close rate has improved and we are finding it easier to get visits (virtually), which shortens the timeline with most donors to get to the major ask.”

- AFP member



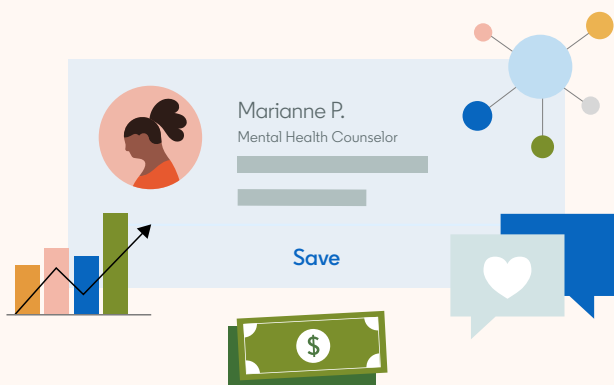
Opportunity #2:

Many are ready to give, if the right opportunity exists

How to leverage this opportunity:

While some households are being more cautious about their finances right now, that doesn't mean they don't want to donate to causes they care about. The key is to provide donors plenty of options to help them match their desire to support your organization with their current situation. Strategies like planned and blended giving can help you meet them where they are, so be sure to highlight and provide education around these options.

“Philanthropy can be a great comfort during these challenges, but only if we offer options that meet the donor’s goals, without threatening their current personal financial need. Donor satisfaction is a matrix we rarely study and it is probably just as important as the methods and dollar amounts raised.” - AFP member



Opportunity #3:

People are eager for a little positivity



How to leverage this opportunity:

People respond rapidly to emergency situations, but only for so long. Eventually, they can become numb to constant emergencies and feel like there's nothing they can do. Focusing on uplifting and inspiring impact stories can help you regain their attention, giving them reasons for optimism—and reasons to re-engage with your nonprofit.

“Messaging is more important than ever, as is the need for more targeted donor stewardship and engagement. Managing all of this in a virtual environment creates additional pressure, but if this pandemic has proven anything, it is the resiliency and creativity that exists within the sector.” - AFP member

Opportunity #4:

Transparency is resonating more than ever



How to leverage this opportunity:

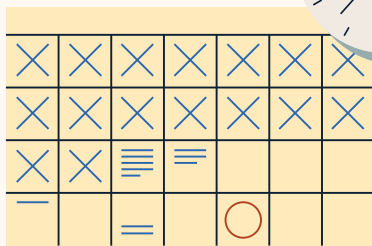
It's not just positivity that is helping nonprofits earn donors' interest right now. Many are finding that initiating honest, transparent conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion is resonating well, especially with major donors and foundation partners. And with donors growing increasingly knowledgeable about how nonprofits operate, finding ways to share information openly with them on a regular basis (like increasing the frequency at which you share reports) can enhance their trust in your organization.

“The pillars of our profession stand on a foundation of trust and relationships. Organizations have to change with the times to adjust to new platforms, new forms of payments, etc. But the rest is still predicated on the beauty of the human spirit and human interaction.”

- AFP member

Opportunity #5:

Supporters are seeking a sense of stability and long-term impact



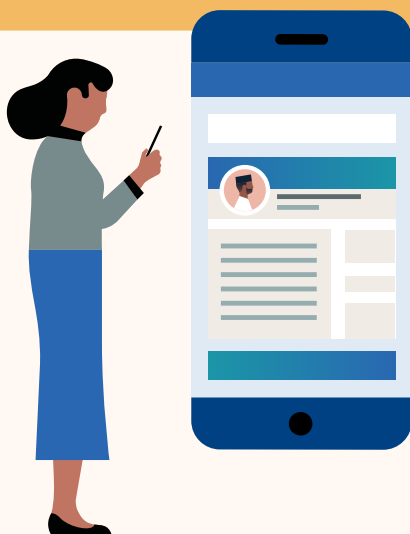
How to leverage this opportunity:

In an age of disruption, people want to find solid ground. You can offer that to donors by emphasizing that your organization is providing steady service to meet long-term needs. Some nonprofits have already found success shifting their messaging away from talking about the nuts and bolts of their programs and toward what they are doing to address systemic inequalities and solve universal social issues.

“I’m optimistic that the pandemic has caused many to focus attention on what is important. I think this creates a great opportunity in our fundraising efforts.” - AFP member

Opportunity #6:

Supporters are wed to technology and want to interact with nonprofits through technology in a number of ways



How to leverage this opportunity:

Fundraisers don’t have to remain on the cutting edge of technology and immediately invest in every new system that comes along. But supporters expect fundraisers and the nonprofits they represent to be well-versed in and using technology that bolsters communication and effectiveness. Technology isn’t a replacement for relationship-building and donor cultivation—it should be a powerful tool for enhancing a fundraiser's efforts around identifying, reaching out to, and inspiring supporters.

“The way in which donors have embraced technology, I think, will be a game changer for how we fundraise in the future. We have to keep up with donors, even when presented with challenges like the pandemic.” - AFP member

Embracing these opportunities can help your nonprofit navigate this period of uncertainty and move toward a more sustainable fundraising and development strategy. Read on to learn how LinkedIn can help you get there.

Part two

How to use LinkedIn for fundraising and development

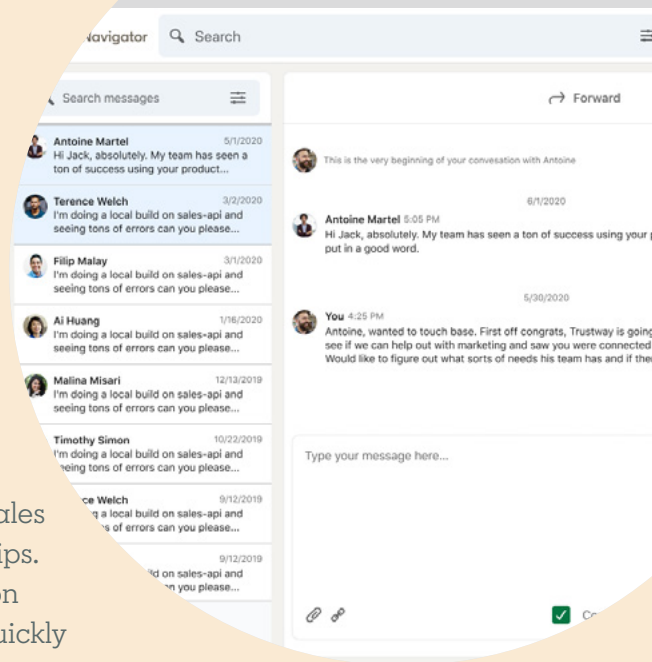
LinkedIn's search features and direct messaging options enable nonprofits to quickly find and engage the right people—especially when combined with our powerful fundraising and development solution, LinkedIn Sales Navigator. And reaching potential donors is just the beginning.

Let's take a look at what you can do with LinkedIn Sales Navigator, before exploring some possible use cases.



LinkedIn Sales Navigator: What is it, and what can you do with it?

LinkedIn Sales Navigator is designed to help fundraising and sales professionals effectively build, manage, and steward relationships. For nonprofits in particular, the solution can solve many common fundraising and development challenges, like the problem of quickly identifying who you know in order to get your foot in the door.



Here are a few core features of LinkedIn Sales Navigator—and the benefits they bring to your team:

Map your network in seconds

Rather than messaging all your board members and leaders to see if they know anyone at an organization you're targeting, easily map your nonprofit's network to identify mutual connections. Perhaps your new director of marketing used to work with a leader at a company you hope to partner with, or your regional board chair is on the same council as the head of a foundation you want to reach. Whatever the connection, LinkedIn Sales Navigator will help you spot it—so you can ask for a warm introduction.

Run, save, and share targeted searches

While any LinkedIn member can use the search bar to find other members, narrowing down your search can take time. LinkedIn Sales Navigator offers advanced search features that allow nonprofits to rapidly identify people who can help their cause. Search based on factors like job title, experience level, and affinity for your organization's mission to find potential champions, decision makers, and more. To boost your team's efficiency, you can even save and share searches that generate good results, so you won't have to manually re-enter them every time.

Identify the right moment to reach out

Maybe a company you've been following has just hired a new director of corporate philanthropy, or a prospective major donor has been engaging with more content related to your cause. LinkedIn Sales Navigator provides real-time updates about your prospects' activity on LinkedIn, helping you assess the optimal time to reach out. When you're ready to engage, all the information you need to craft a compelling message will be right at your fingertips.

Engage prospects directly through the platform

Hunting down prospects' contact information is not a good use of your team's time. With LinkedIn Sales Navigator, team members can reach out to any LinkedIn member—no email address or phone number required. You don't even need to be connected to the person to send an InMail (direct message) that can get the conversation started. Depending on your plan, you'll get a minimum of **20 InMail credits every month**—4x as many as a Premium membership provides. And for every InMail that gets a response within 90 days, you get a credit back, allowing you to reach even more people.

10 different ways nonprofits use LinkedIn Sales Navigator

When it comes to who you can connect with using LinkedIn Sales Navigator, the sky's the limit! While the solution is perfect for elevating your fundraising efforts, many nonprofits also use it to identify and reach people who can support their cause in other ways.

1

Build corporate partnerships

Find sponsors for your events, build a corporate volunteering program together, and foster meaningful relationships by connecting with decision makers and potential champions at any company.

2

Recruit superstar board members

Look for experienced, connected professionals who list an interest in your mission on their LinkedIn profile and approach them about joining your board.

“LinkedIn has been an amazing tool for us to connect with local business and community leaders throughout the country. We have people who come from all walks of life and get more involved with PCA as a supporter and say, ‘I don’t know how you found me but I’m glad you did.’ And we found them on LinkedIn.”



Jason Sacks, Chief Development Officer at [Positive Coaching Alliance \(PCA\)](#)

3

Find your next major donor

Identify people who have an affinity for your cause and the capacity to make a generous gift to your nonprofit.

4

Connect with foundations

Establish relationships with professionals at various foundations to request grants and other support.

5

Share research and reports

Get your organization’s findings in front of the people who need it by identifying and reaching out to professionals in your field.

6

Collaborate with other organizations

Reach out to fellow nonprofits to pool resources, build joint programs, and collaborate on mutually beneficial events.

7

Invite speakers to your events

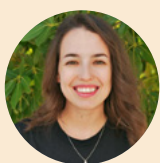
Send requests to thought leaders, experts, and influencers who might be interested in speaking at your upcoming events.

8

Encourage media coverage

Put your organization's programs and achievements on news outlets' radar by identifying media contacts and sharing what you're doing.

“LinkedIn Sales Navigator has been hugely helpful for finding media contacts. Not an insignificant amount of our media coverage has come from finding people on LinkedIn and initiating conversations. The media market is so oversaturated—sometimes it takes having a conversation with someone and telling your story to make them pay attention.”



[Taylor Hebble](#), Director of Marketing & Communications at [Hope for Haiti](#)

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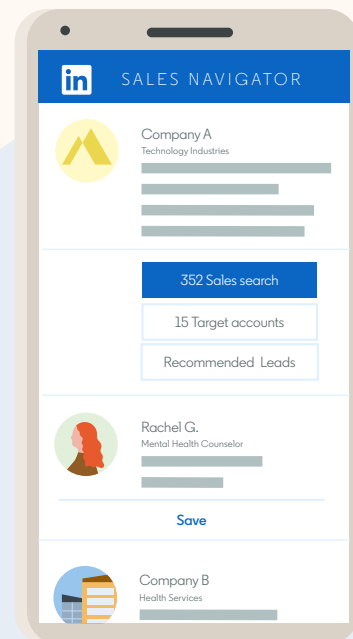
Sell your nonprofit's services

Generate revenue and drive your mission by pinpointing businesses, organizations, and groups that could benefit from your services.

10

Engage with program alumni

Map your nonprofit's alumni network to see where people go after they complete your programs—you never know when they might be able to help with an introduction or put in a good word.



Part three

Best practices to elevate your fundraising and development efforts on LinkedIn

You've got the right platform and the right solution—now what?

To help you get started, we've put together a simple action plan outlining steps you can take to make the most of LinkedIn for fundraising and development. Whether it's your first time using the platform for this purpose or you're looking for ways to take your strategy to the next level, you'll find tips and best practices to help you make the connections that matter.



Fundraising and development
on LinkedIn:

Your action plan for success



Action	Why it matters	How to make it happen
Build a great LinkedIn profile	Establishing credibility is the first step to earning a prospect's trust—and a strong LinkedIn profile can help you do that.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose a clear, professional, and approachable headshot• Add a header image related to your nonprofit's work• Write a memorable headline• Use the summary section to tell the story of your organization and how you found your calling
Join the conversation	By positioning yourself as an expert in your field, you can attract a following and encourage people to engage with you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post thought leadership content on your personal LinkedIn profile (e.g. by publishing articles on the platform or using LinkedIn Live to discuss important topics)• Comment and engage with other people's content, sharing your thoughts and insights• Share external content that may be of interest to your audience, such as reports or news stories
Prioritize prospects with an affinity for your cause	When people have a personal connection to your cause, they're more likely to want to help.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify keywords often found on the profiles of people who support your nonprofit (e.g. "diabetes prevention" or "local radio")• Build searches based on these keywords• Review people's profiles to assess if they seem interested in the type of work your organization is doing• Follow prospects on LinkedIn to keep an eye on the type of content they're posting and engaging with

Action	Why it matters	How to make it happen
<p>Drive awareness and engagement</p>	<p>Prospects are more likely to respond to outreach when they've already seen and engaged with your nonprofit's content.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure your nonprofit's LinkedIn Page is complete so prospects can easily learn more about your mission • Post relevant content to your organization's page on a regular basis and encourage your team to share it to increase your reach • Ask leaders to share thought leadership content that's likely to resonate with decision makers • Run targeted ad campaigns on LinkedIn to get your message in front of a specific audience • Invite prospects to join LinkedIn Groups and attend events where they can learn more about your nonprofit's vision and impact
<p>Look for warm introductions</p>	<p>Cold outreach can work—but a warm introduction is a faster way to get a prospect's attention and win their trust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use LinkedIn Sales Navigator to map your nonprofit's extended network—including your direct connections and the people they know • Leverage the "Best Path In" feature to quickly identify people within your network who are connected with your prospects and leads • Reach out to the right person directly through LinkedIn to request they make the introduction • Explain the benefit of a warm introduction when asking for one to encourage your network to help
<p>Craft compelling InMails</p>	<p>Some LinkedIn members receive a lot of messages. To get a response, your message needs to stand out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a personalized subject line to catch their eye • Address the person by name • Be polite and professional, without being too formal • Highlight any personal connection they have to your nonprofit's mission (if possible) • Keep your first message short and sweet • Mention a few different ways they can help—financial support won't always be feasible • Include clear next steps • Don't be afraid to follow up—but don't bombard them with messages

Conclusion

The right connections can make all the difference



It's a challenging time to work in fundraising and development. But by using the LinkedIn platform and LinkedIn Sales Navigator to their full advantage, you can harness the power of your network—and establish connections that help make your mission a reality.

Meet your fundraising goals, get the attention of the right people, and so much more. The possibilities are endless.

To learn more about LinkedIn Sales Navigator, contact our Fundraising Solutions Team: nonprofit.linkedin.com/fundraise/contact-us

To learn more about the Association of Fundraising Professionals, visit the website: afpglobal.org

For more tips and advice about using LinkedIn for fundraising, check out the resources below:

Using LinkedIn Sales Navigator

[Overview](#)

[Making the Most of Sales Navigator for Fundraising: 4 Tips from Positive Coaching Alliance](#)

[4 New Ways That LinkedIn Sales Navigator Saves Fundraisers Time](#)

Leveraging LinkedIn for fundraising

[5 Steps to Optimize Your Corporate Fundraising Strategy on LinkedIn](#)

[How to Unlock the Full Power of Your Nonprofit's Network on LinkedIn](#)

Elevating your professional brand

[Master Your Professional Brand to Drive Fundraising Fundraisers, Does Your LinkedIn Profile Establish Trust?](#)

LinkedIn for Nonprofits