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Hi, . Here are your Articles for September 9, 2014.

Keep Your Database Clean

This is one of those *Believe It or Not* stories: Years ago, a charity generated solicitation letters from a computerized database. One letter addressed to a state Humane Society stated: "*Dear Miss Society.*"

Whoops! On the surface, member or database management may seem like an impersonal clerical function, but how it's handled can have a profound impact on your relationship with donors.

You have probably not seen most of the people listed in your database. But these faceless members and potential donors deserve to be valued, respected and protected. You don't want to drive anyone away with sloppy database management.

Here are some tips to prevent problems:

1. Review the role of your database manager. Is the person an integral part of your organization - or consulted only when a donor calls to complain about a triplicate mailing? How do you communicate complaints that come via phone, e-mail or regular mail?

If your method is to hand the manager a message in the break room, or stick notes on the person's chair, it's time to develop a more systematic approach and communicate to everyone who needs to know.

2. Update mailing lists. Regularly have a licensee of the National Change of Address (a department of the U.S. Post Office) process your lists to find the names of people who have moved or passed away. It is estimated that at least eight percent of all U.S. mail is undeliverable because of incorrect addresses. This means lost donations and wasted money.

Moreover, when someone receives a letter from you addressed to a person who hasn't lived there for years or one that contains misspellings, your reputation may start to suffer. The recipients may start to think your organization is careless and wonder if that lack of attention spills into the way



More Ways to Build Relationships

Here are some basic steps to build a positive image with members and donors:

- Acknowledge all contributions regardless of the size of the gifts within a few days if possible.
- Personalize your mailings to indicate you know members and donors are new or ongoing supporters.
- Learn everything you can about each one of your members or donors. Keep this information in your database.
- Host events to increase members' and donors' awareness about your organization.
- Always return phone calls.
- Create a program to welcome new members and donors.
- Be available for questions, meetings, lunches and civic functions.

you handle your finances. You can see how easy it is for sloppy database management to erode relationships.

3. Turn complaints to your advantage. When a member makes a request or complaint, follow up with a phone call or personal e-mail message. If a donor complains about mailings in triplicate, wait a month or so, then call to find out if the problem has been corrected.

4. Respect their wishes. If donors ask to be removed from your mailing list, inactivate the file but don't purge their names and addresses. Perhaps they'll start supporting you again in the future. You certainly don't want to send them the letters that go to current members. But by leaving the history of their past donations in your database, you'll have a record of their past support.

Relationship building is one of the most important functions of member database management.

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