

## Augmented Reality: Enhanced Engagement, Increased Results

By Alexandra MacAaron



The late great John Lennon once said that "reality leaves a lot to the imagination."

Today, some of the most creative people in the direct marketing business are adding a lot of imagination to reality—by augmenting tradi-

tional print material with a digital experience.

There's some confusion between the terms virtual reality and augmented reality, so let's start with definitions.

**Virtual reality** refers to computer-generated objects or environments with which users can interact in a seemingly real or physical way via headset goggles or gloves.

**Augmented reality** superimposes computer-generated images onto the user's view of the real world via a smart phone or other device so it becomes a composite experience.

Virtual reality is the sexier of the two, and, to date, it's probably best known for its use in

gaming. But, it has other less frivolous applications. There are training programs for ER doctors that include virtual emergencies and measure the doctor's stress level as he or she responds. Before a surgeon

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Nonprofits are just beginning to explore the opportunities that augmented reality offers. Options as simple as Snapchat filters and Facebook frames allow supporters to promote the causes and organizations that mean the most to them. Museums and other institutions have offered 360-degree tours of current exhibits or proposed renovations.

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## How Different Is International Fundraising, Really?

By Erica Waasdorp



My answer: Everything and nothing!

Note that I didn't come to this answer lightly. When I first came to the U.S. as a Dutch native 25 years ago, I previously worked at several international companies that

shared resources between offices, then tested and customized for local markets.

I was fortunate to get my international fundraising feet wet with an international animal welfare organization that raised money in six countries. The organization had local offices in each country, but all fundraising was directed from the U.S. As someone who spoke Dutch and German (and English, of course), I regularly

communicated with the directors of each country office. This really helped me understand the similarities and the differences in fundraising in these cultures and countries.

Several years later I ended up being the virtual executive director for an international relief organization, in charge of Dutch fundraising. Yet another opportunity to identify similarities and differences.

I've since been fortunate to work with international organizations, successfully helping them raise funds in the U.S.

Finally, as the U.S. Ambassador for the International Fundraising Congress, held every October in the Netherlands, I've seen numerous international fundraising campaigns and met agencies

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## International Fundraising.

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and fundraisers from over 65 countries in the world.

Let me just tell you that international fundraising can be fascinating, very rewarding and an eye-opening experience, ultimately, raising more money for your organization, but it shouldn't be entered lightly.

### LET'S START WITH INTERNATIONAL FUNDRAISING SIMILARITIES

All fundraising is aimed at individuals. Even if you're focused on foundation or corporate fundraising, ultimately, there's a human being behind the giving decision.

It's my experience that what typically works in the U.S. will also work in other countries. What typically works in the U.K. also works in the U.S., etc. That premise is what made and continues to make fundraising internationally so successful.

For the animal organization, we would typically take concepts and messaging that worked in the U.S. and apply them worldwide—Australia, Canada, U.K., the Netherlands, Italy, France, Germany—no matter what, it worked! Because it was aimed at people. The messaging was aimed at humans. There was a story. There were pictures. There was emotion. There were multiple asks for money. There were specific

examples of how the donor's gift could make a difference. Universal fundraising rules applied.

One of my German colleagues used to be the skeptic every time we came up with the next U.S. appeal. Typically, what happened was: the stronger he opposed the idea, the better it worked!

### HOW ABOUT THOSE INTERNATIONAL FUNDRAISING DIFFERENCES?

Well, first off, people in different countries speak different languages. And this can impact your printing and messaging. For example, Dutch and German direct mail packages need 10 to 20 percent more space because they use more words to say the same thing.

People pay differently, and currencies are different. People communicate differently. For example, giving through text; texting was more popular in Europe than it was here. Postal rates are different. There are no nonprofit rates or deep postal discounts in most other countries. Addressing guidelines are different. For example, in the Netherlands, you'd never say Mr. and Mrs. John Jones. You'd say John and Mary Jones. Maiden names are hyphenated after the married name, which is the opposite from what we do in the U.S.

Postal codes are different, and the order of writing it is different. The city, state, zip in Dutch would be something like: 6431 NW Hoensbroek. Every postal code there signifies a group of 15 households, very targeted.

The number and types of channels and media will be different. Their postal delivery system may be different. For example, P.O. boxes are much less prevalent in some countries. Different causes may be more relevant than others. For example, environmental organizations may be better supported in some countries than others. Many countries use the metric system. (Let me tell you, I still miss that after all these years!). Paper styles and weights may be very different from what you're used to.

Privacy rules are much stricter, especially after the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) went live in 2018. Direct mail acquisition will be forever changed! List exchanges and rentals were not as common as they used to be, but now, they may be non-existent.

Gas prices are a lot higher which makes transportation more expensive. Sales taxes and value-added tax rates are high and will have an impact on everything you're purchasing including printing and mailing.





## ON THE POSITIVE SIDE...

Response rates in other countries are often higher than we're used to seeing. The number of people comfortable making a monthly gift from their bank account (EFT/ACH) is much higher.

Your bank may be able to provide you the donor's information, and they scan the payment form, so no manual entries are needed at all. Just think of the time and staff time you save!

People in many countries are actively volunteering and donating. Some countries may have more elaborate tax benefits for giving and often there's a huge potential for major gifts and bequests.

## WHAT'S THE BEST APPROACH FOR AN ORGANIZATION THAT WANTS TO RAISE FUNDS INTERNATIONALLY?

Absolutely, do your homework. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but here are some must-dos before you go further.

See what types of channels and messaging are most commonly used in the country you're looking to go into. Attend a local conference and talk to vendor partners and other organizations. Check out things, like SOFI—soffi.org is a great spot to check out campaigns and results from all over the world.

Subscribe to local email newsletters. Hire a local agency or advisor. You may think you can save money by combining production for a few countries if the sizes and metrics are the same and that may be true. But ultimately, you'll need to know the specific rules and guidelines. You need that local knowledge.

Hire a local translator. Someone who knows the latest common words and can really adjust the language to be as close to coming from your local office as possible. Do make sure that some of the "fundraising intricacies and asking language" stays in there though. In the beginning, when you work with a local translator, you may ask another to translate it back to ensure that the message hasn't been considerably altered.

See how donors typically pay. Look at payment processes and what's required for donor acknowledgements and administratively. Payment processing technologies, analytics, policies and usage are evolving rapidly right now so make this a top priority.

Look at donor's typical average gifts. Make some projections. Starting an international operation is not cheap. You really need to make a commitment and calculate all your costs.

Set up a local office. There is no question that this is crucial. You cannot raise funds in a country without a presence. You want to have local people answer the phones. You

want to have local knowledge of the legal and administrative requirements that are necessary to be able to raise funds in a specific country.

Yes, you can hire a lot of local knowledge through a local agency, but if you really want to be successful, you must go all the way and establish that local presence. Ask for advice on keeping your international name or whether you should translate that name. See what other organizations are doing. See how much money they raise and how many donors they have. Make a donation and then see what they're sending their donors. Keep track of how often they ask for funds.

Make sure that your local staff knows your organization and is also trained in fundraising.

After all of this, keep an open mind but do put your fundraising hat on and make the best judgement calls, gathering as many facts as possible.

But above all, if you're already part of an international organization, be sure to share with each other. Share amongst offices and departments and always be open to learning something new.

U.S. fundraisers who are part of international organizations tell me that they typically get together at least once a year to share experiences and brainstorm about

new strategies and approaches that could further their cause to much higher levels than ever before.

And, of course, you always want to test. Approaches that have been proven to work in one country could very well work across all countries.

For example, I will never forget when I attended a U.K. fundraising conference for the first time. I was absolutely blown away by the number of campaigns that were completely integrated across all channels. Very powerful.

## In conclusion...fundraising internationally can be so worth it!

The world has become so much smaller than it used to be. People in other countries are exposed to what happens elsewhere. Customs are crossing borders.

But people are people. And if we fundraisers continue to say "thank you" like we mean it, we tell the stories that tug at people's heart strings and we tell donors how their gifts are making a difference, there's hope and growth, both nationally and internationally. No doubt about it.

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## HOW TO HACK THE BRAINS OF DONORS, MEMBERS AND OTHER HUMANS

ANNUAL MEETING, KEYNOTE PRESENTATION & NETWORKING RECEPTION

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24  
6-9PM  
SEIU | WASHINGTON, DC

\* REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED

**DMAW**  
Direct Marketing Association of Washington

