



Classy

The State of Modern Philanthropy 2019

TRENDS IN RETURN DONOR BEHAVIOR

The Road to Lifetime Donors

At Classy, we're obsessed with exceptional experiences. How something looks, how it makes you feel, and what you remember about it. When a donor has a great experience, they carry it with them. It's these touchpoints that have the power to influence how a donor perceives your brand and the work you're doing to change the world for good.

This perception, coupled with the right opportunities, is what ultimately leads a donor to return and, over time, develop a meaningful relationship with your organization—which is critical for your sustained revenue, enabling you to make a bigger impact in the world.

Imagine if you better understood the optimal mix of steps to transform a one-time supporter into a person engaged with your mission and the ideals you represent. That's exactly what we seek to understand in this year's The State of Modern Philanthropy. This report explores trends in return donor behavior online in an effort to find out what makes a donor come back, re-engage, and ultimately build a meaningful relationship with an organization.

Led by our team of data scientists, this annual release based on our proprietary data—sourced from almost 1 million transactions—aims to surface key findings and platform benchmarks, and recommend next steps for future application. It's our goal that by regularly reviewing and reporting on our platform's data, we're able to help nonprofits raise more money, fund more programs, and do more good in the world.

Similar to The State of Modern Philanthropy 2018, we've modeled our analyses around the supporter journey—the steps that someone takes from discovering your organization to becoming a lifetime donor—and organized our findings into four main sections: source, destination, actions, and timing. But this year, we take it a step further and look at a donor's next step after making a one-time donation. As you digest the results, be sure to spend time with our “thought starters” at the close of each section, which will help translate our results to actions relevant to your organization. We're excited to see how you apply the data and use it on your journey to create exceptional experiences and build truly meaningful relationships with your supporters.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Ben Cipollini".

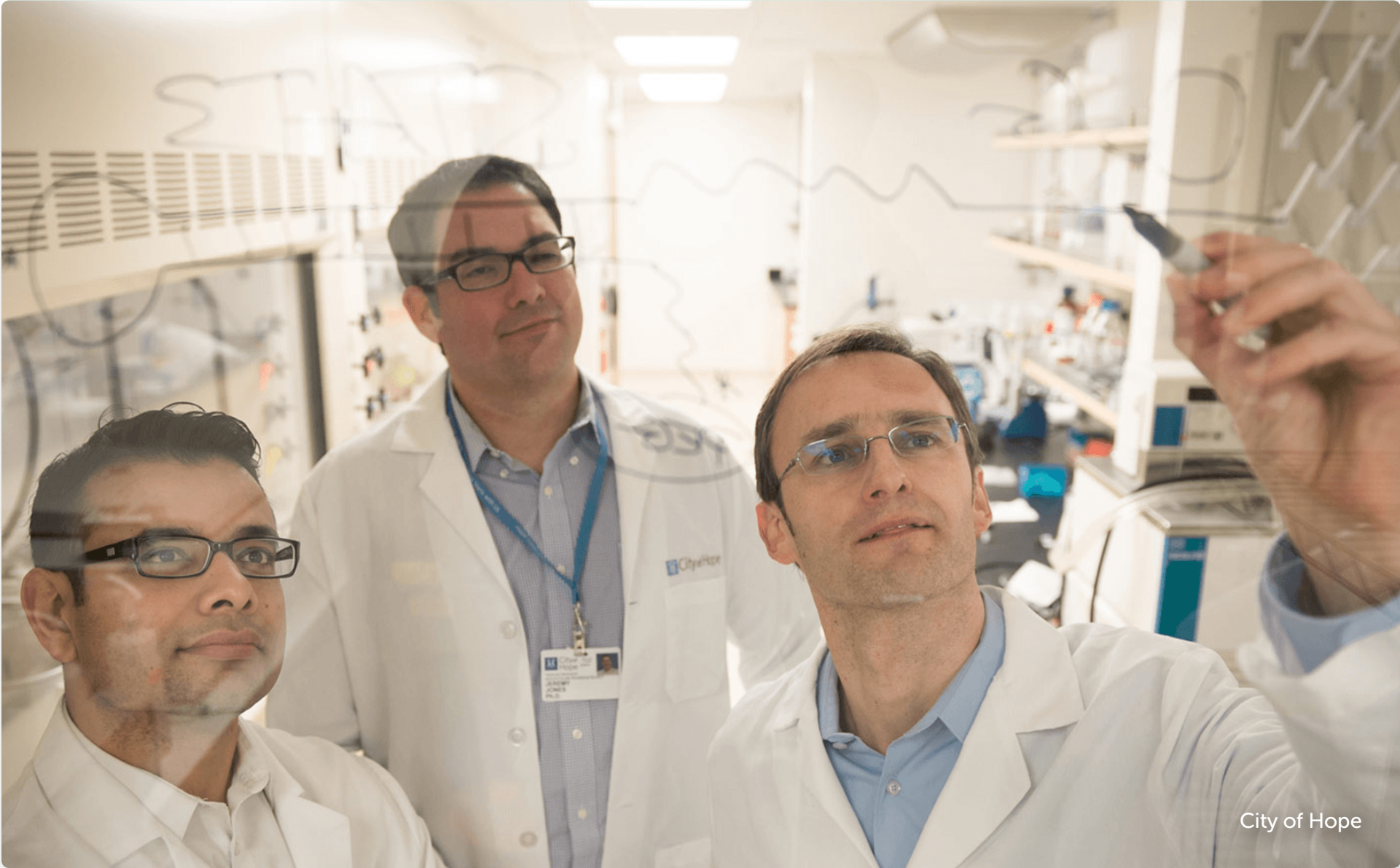
Dr. Ben Cipollini

Director, Data Science

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How to Use This Report



How to Use This Report

Classy started as a group of fundraisers for local nonprofits in San Diego. When we encountered challenges trying to donate the money we'd raised, we decided to create an easy-to-use fundraising platform. Since then, we've helped organizations raise over \$1 billion online.

Fundraising pain points initially served as the inspiration for our transition to a software company, and they continue to serve as our inspiration for our annual industry report, *The State of Modern Philanthropy*, and the motivation behind our commitment to facilitating remarkable giving experiences.

In *The State of Modern Philanthropy 2018*, we reported that recurring donors are over five times more valuable than one-time donors. However, there is more to being a *return* donor than becoming a *recurring* donor. One-time donors can also re-engage with an organization online by giving a second time, becoming a fundraiser, or purchasing a ticket to attend an event. In this year's report, we look at what brings donors back (and what causes them to stay) through the lens of each of the four phases of the supporter journey:

1. SOURCE



Giving Gateways and Donor Demographics

2. DESTINATION



Campaign Types

3. ACTIONS



Follow-Up Behavior

4. TIMING



Time Between Interactions

About the Data

The data used in this report comes from 2017 and 2018 Classy platform data in order to examine the patterns in supporter behavior at least one year after a first donation. Since this report is specifically about return donors, we looked at supporters based in the United States who gave their first donation to an organization in 2017, and then we looked at their behavior for the rest of 2017 and into 2018.

In this report, we treated within-year return donors (donors who gave their second donation in the same calendar year as their first donation) the same as year-over-year return donors (donors who gave their second donation in the following calendar year after their first donation). For example, if there was a donor who gave their first gift in January 2017, and then a follow-up gift in July 2017 (a within-year return), and a donor who gave their first donation in September 2017 and second in March 2018 (a year-over-year return donor), we viewed them as in the same cohort since they both had the same amount of time between donations (six months).

This report dissects a smaller subset of Classy's larger data set, specifically exploring data from over 15,000 campaigns, almost 1 million transactions, and about 4,000 recurring plans.

Applying the Data

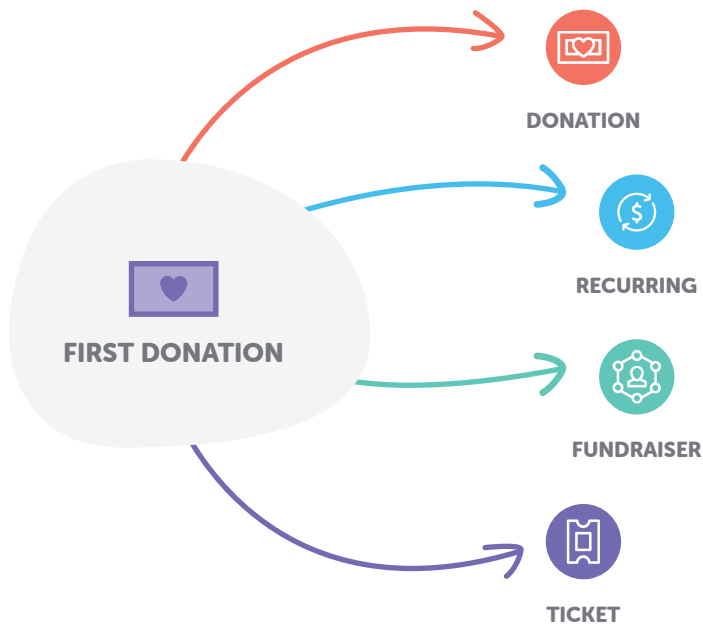
To help connect the findings in this report to larger implications for you and the entire nonprofit sector, each section closes with a list of "thought starters." These questions aim to jog your mind and aid in your unique strategy development.

Keep in mind that your organization's individual strategy should be built by more than data alone. While data analytics is a key factor, you must also consider the qualitative context of your particular environment, history, and current resources in order to make truly informed decisions.

Executive Summary



Because International



Not all supporters take the same journey. When we look at donors whose first interaction with an organization was a one-time donation, what they do next varies from person to person. For the purpose of this report, we're focusing on that important subset of donors—those who make a one-time gift to an organization and then come back to do something else—whether that's to give another one-time donation, become a recurring donor, become a fundraiser, or purchase event tickets or registrations.

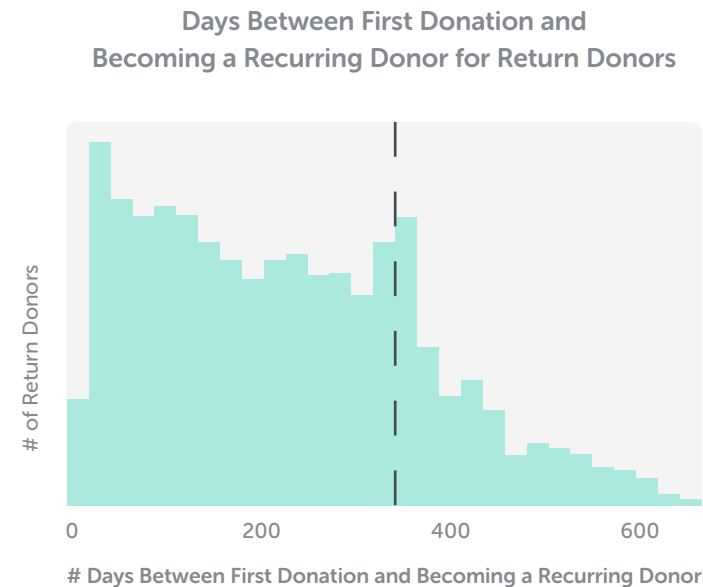
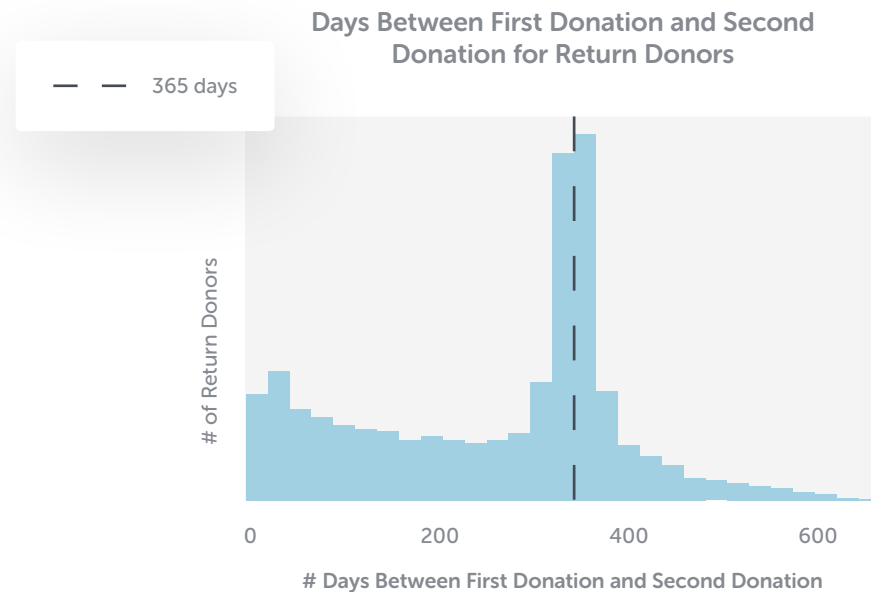
At Classy, we understand how incredibly valuable lifetime supporters are to your organization. In fact, in *The State of Modern Philanthropy 2018*, we found that recurring donors were over five times more valuable than one-time donors. To help nonprofits better understand how they can build meaningful relationships with their donors—through recurring giving or otherwise—*The State of Modern Philanthropy 2019* examines the next steps a donor can take after making their first gift.

Here's what we uncovered.

There's a large opportunity to re-engage donors earlier.

The typical return donor made a second donation around 349 days after their first donation. However, we found 19% of donors returned within the first 90 days, or three months. Furthermore, one-time donors returned around 135 days sooner (4.5 months) to start a recurring gift rather than to give a second one-time donation or become a fundraiser. There is an opportunity for nonprofits to present thoughtful content and a variety of next steps to donors earlier to close the gap between first and second actions and build more meaningful donor relationships.

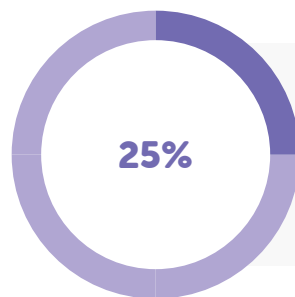
As indicated above, donors who gave once and returned to become a recurring donor at some point did so faster than those who returned to give another one-time gift.



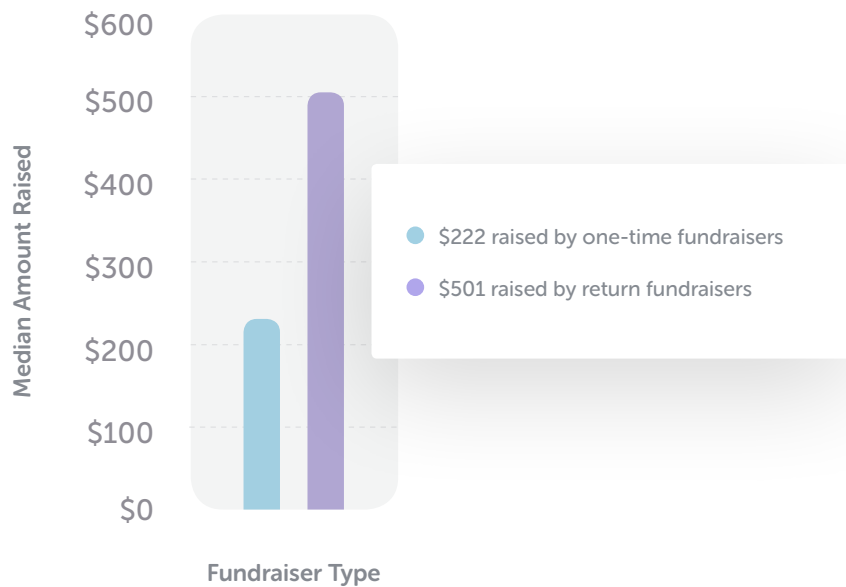
Recurring donors are even more valuable than their monthly gifts.

Of all one-time donors who returned to start a recurring gift subscription, 25% went on to make another one-time gift as one of their future interactions.

When recurring donors raise their hands to contribute to your organization’s mission on a monthly basis, they’re demonstrating a deep commitment to your cause. But nonprofits don’t need to consider a recurring subscription as “the final destination” and consider their work done. Our analysis illustrates that recurring givers are more than just a passive, automatic transaction; they actively give on top of their subscription. Nonprofits can re-engage this dedicated group of supporters in supplementary ways throughout the year.



Of all one-time donors who returned to start a recurring gift, 25% went on to make another one-time gift.



Strong relationships with fundraisers pay off.

While it's important to pay close attention to the behavior and retention of individual donors, focusing on fundraiser retention could yield significant results for your organization.

Our analysis found that return fundraisers typically raised **over twice as much (126%)** as one-time fundraisers.

But only 14% of fundraisers returned and created new peer-to-peer fundraising pages within the two-year timeframe of this report. For registration with fundraising events, only 19% of fundraisers returned and created new fundraising pages.

Organizations have an opportunity to nurture and re-engage these micro-influencers to ensure they come back to raise even more money for your cause.

Before digging into our full analysis and other exciting findings, we next introduce core concepts, helpful definitions, and the Classy Fundraising Benchmarks Worksheet to help you get the most out of the report.

Core Concepts



Baseline Metrics 2018

Our baseline metrics reflect performance on the Classy platform between January 1, 2018, and December 31, 2018. *The State of Modern Philanthropy* provides these numbers annually as a way for nonprofits to maintain a pulse on helpful industry benchmarks.

Throughout this report we lead with median over average (or mean). When your **data is skewed**, the median does a better job showing what a “typical” example looks like, rather than the average, which can get pulled to the more extreme values.

We believe looking at both typical and outlying values is important to understand how to benchmark yourself against other organizations. This is why we include a wide range of metrics, showcasing not only the median and average, but also the top 10% for some data points.

CLASSY FUNDRAISING BENCHMARKS WORKSHEET

Last year we summarized *The State of Modern Philanthropy 2018* into a helpful worksheet where nonprofits could compare their overall fundraising numbers to the benchmarks from our research. This year we're delivering the worksheet again, focusing on a key set of numbers you can compare year over year. Use this Classy Fundraising Benchmarks Worksheet to see how your nonprofit compared in 2018.

Gift Size	Classy Benchmark	My Results
median / average one-time (non-recurring) gift	\$50 / \$149	
median / average monthly recurring gift	\$24 / \$35	

Campaigns and Peer-to-Peer Fundraising Pages	Classy Benchmark	My Results
median / average amount raised by a campaign	\$2,375 / \$17,893	
median / average amount raised by a fundraiser	\$105 / \$443	

Campaign Traffic	Classy Benchmark	My Results
% traffic from mobile devices, all campaign types	51%	
% mobile traffic from social media, all campaign types	57%	
donation checkout page conversion rate ¹ , all campaign types	24%	

Giving Tuesday	Classy Benchmark	My Results
% of annual donation volume that occurs from Giving Tuesday through year-end	29%	
number of new donors acquired on Giving Tuesday versus typical day	4x	

¹**Checkout page conversion rate** is defined as the percentage of visitors who get to the checkout page of a campaign and then complete the act of donating. This is in comparison to **campaign conversion rate** which is the percentage of visitors who land *anywhere in a campaign* (e.g., main landing page, an individual's fundraising page) and then complete the act of donating.

Top Results

Gift Size

Of all **one-time (non-recurring) gifts** in the top 10%, the median gift size was \$500 and the average was \$973.

Of all **monthly recurring gifts** in the top 10%, the median gift size was \$100 and the average was \$143.

Campaigns and Fundraising Pages

Of all **campaigns** in the top 10%, the median amount raised was \$60,847 and the average was \$134,351.

Of all **fundraising pages** in the top 10%, the median amount raised was \$1,710 and the average was \$2,799.

Helpful Definitions

The following explanations illustrate how each key word is defined in this report.

Return Donor

For the purpose of our analysis, we define a return donor as an individual whose first interaction was a one-time donation in 2017 that was not a self-give donation (a donation to an individual's own personal fundraising page), and then re-engaged with an organization via a second interaction. In this report a return donor could go on to do various actions for their second interaction, such as the following:

- **Make Another One-Time Donation**

When someone clicks “donate” and completes checkout, without choosing the option to give monthly on an automated basis.

- **Become a Recurring Donor**

When someone clicks “donate” and completes checkout, choosing the option to give monthly on an automated basis.

- **Become a Fundraiser**

When someone creates a personal fundraising page and has at least one non-self-give donation.

- **Purchase a Ticket or Registration**

When someone buys a ticket to or registers for an event hosted by an organization.

Interaction

Any action a return donor could take with an organization through the Classy platform, such as giving a one-time donation, becoming a recurring donor, becoming a fundraiser, purchasing a ticket, or paying for an event registration.

Mobile Device

Includes both cell phones and tablets.

Social Media Referral Source

When a donor came to the campaign from Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter².

The Online Supporter Journey

We refer to these steps as “the supporter journey” and break them down in our analysis by looking at source, destination, actions, and timing.

- **Source**—*how* the supporter re-engages
- **Destination**—*where* the supporter re-engages
- **Actions**—*which* re-engagement interactions the supporter takes
- **Timing**—*when* the supporter re-engages

²These are our most common social referral sources. Other social referral sources are used (e.g., Snapchat), but their traffic is too low to warrant detailed analysis.

Classy Campaign Actions

With Classy, organizations can choose campaign types based on the primary actions they want their supporters to take:

Donate

To contribute to an organization with a one-time or recurring donation.

Fundraise

To raise money on behalf of an organization, knowing that fundraising efforts can yield more awareness, engagement, and funds than the supporter could provide on their own.

Learn

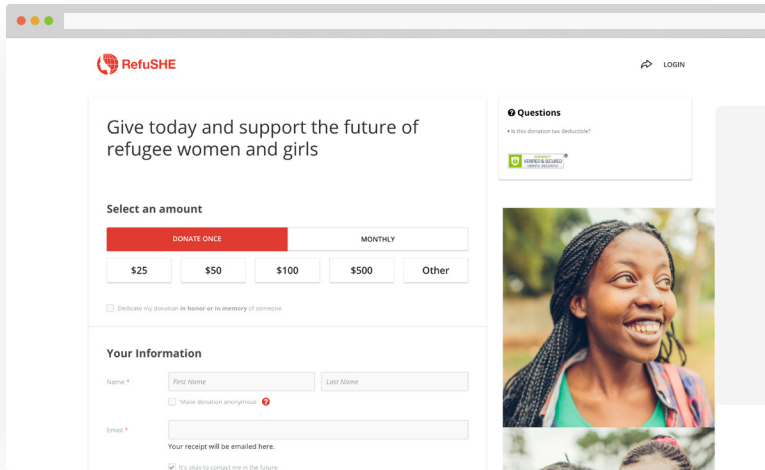
To gain more information (via storytelling) about the organization's mission and programs.

Purchase Tickets

To register for live events, contributing to a cause through active participation.

Classy Campaign Types

The various campaign types on Classy that help facilitate those actions are:

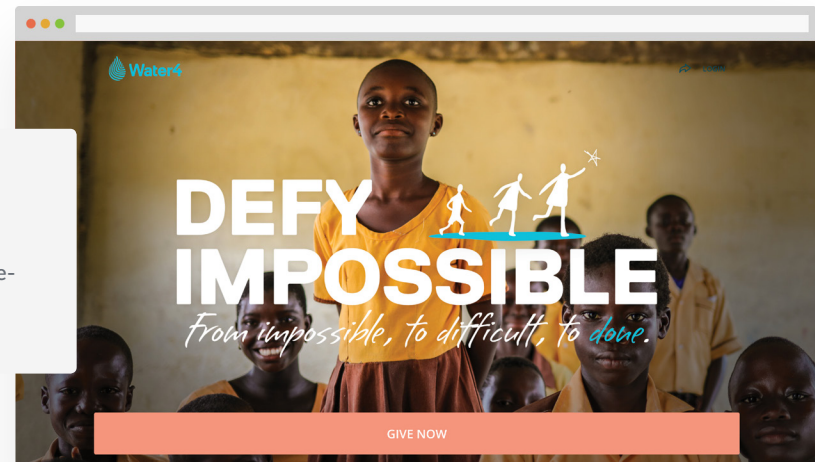


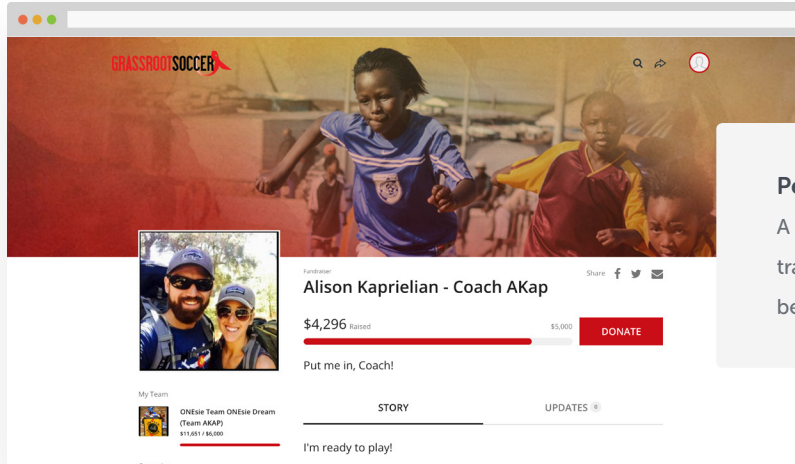
Donation Page

A page with a checkout form to process a supporter's donation. While a number of organizations choose to use some amount of space on this page for storytelling, we also know that shorter checkout forms generally lead to higher conversion rates. Primary call to action is to complete a one-time or recurring donation.

Crowdfunding

A campaign containing a landing page with opportunities for storytelling and impact transparency, followed by a checkout form. Primary call to action is to complete a one-time or recurring donation.



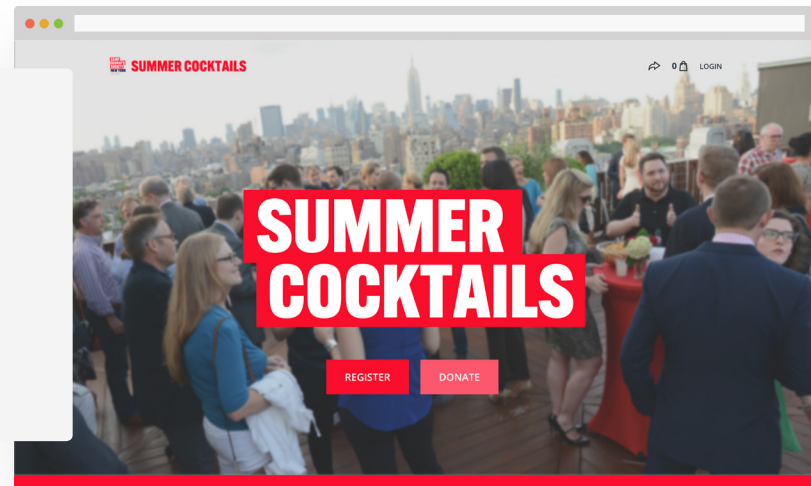


Peer-to-Peer

A campaign featuring a landing page with opportunities for storytelling and impact transparency, followed by a checkout form. Primary call to action is to fundraise on behalf of the organization.

Classy Events

A suite of event campaigns where the primary call to action is to register for an event or purchase a ticket, or to register for an event and create a personal fundraising page to fundraise on behalf of the organization. Each campaign contains a landing page with opportunities for storytelling and impact transparency, followed by a checkout flow allowing ticket purchases and/or donations. Primary call to action can be to purchase tickets or to fundraise.



In this report we further break out Classy Events into two campaign types:

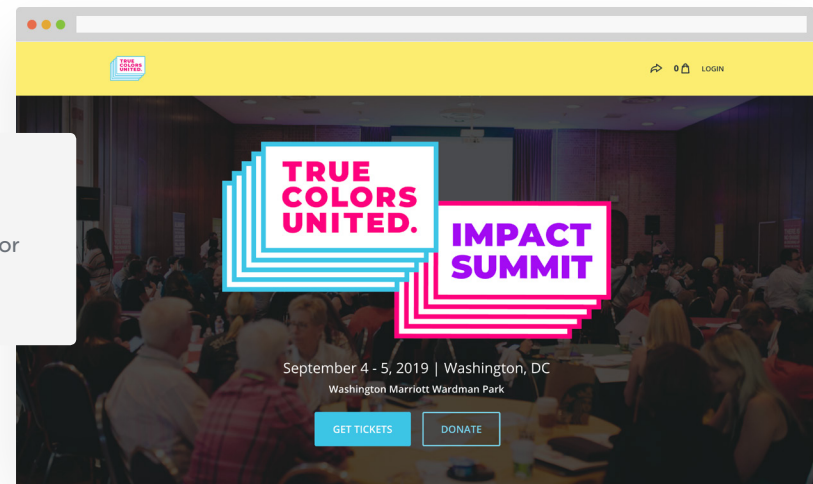


Registration with Fundraising Event

A Classy Event where registrants may fundraise on the organization's behalf.

Ticketed Event

A Classy Event where attendees can purchase a ticket or registration but do not fundraise for the organization.

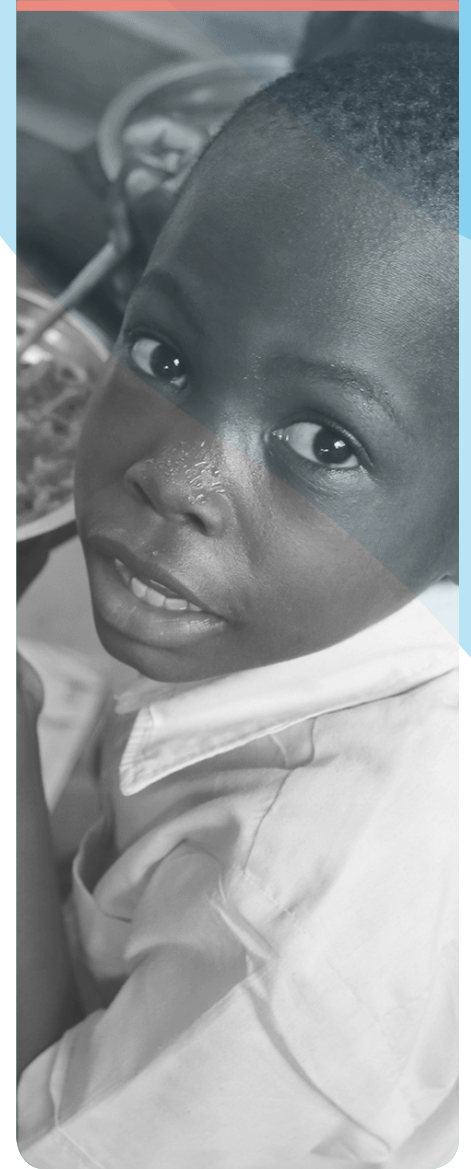


SECTION 1

Source

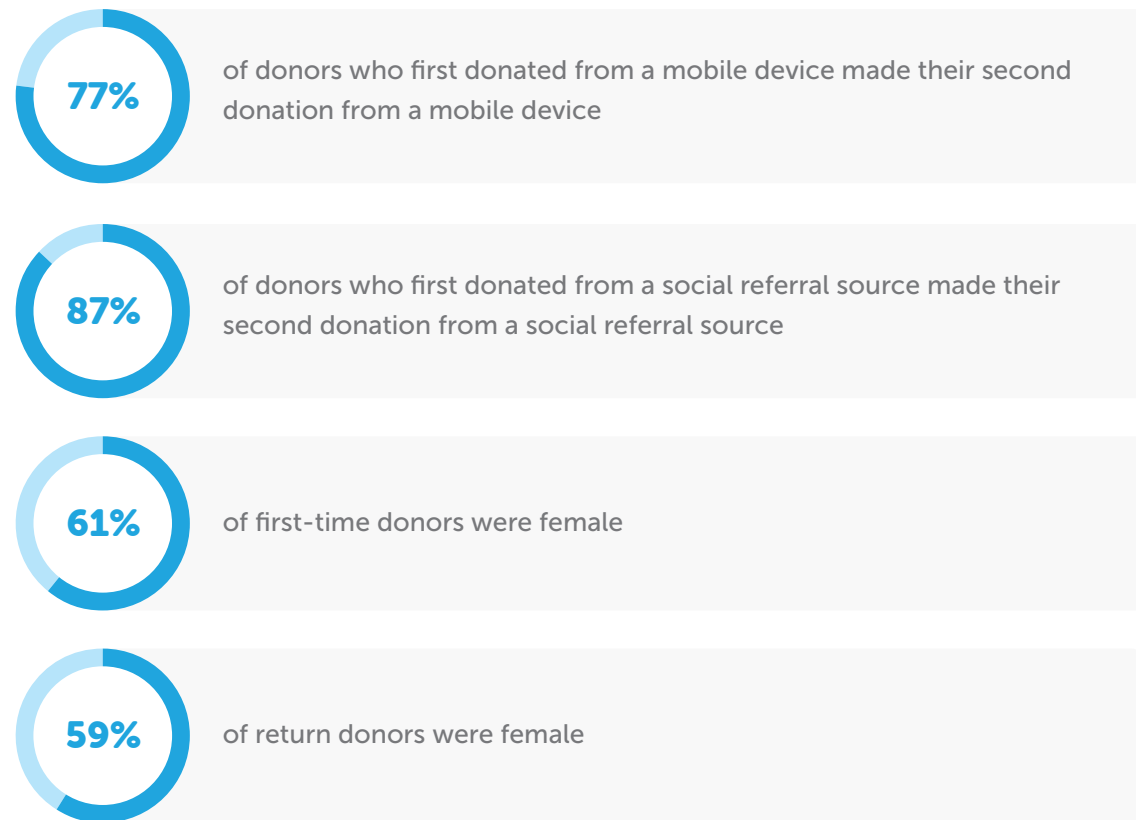


Giving Gateways and Donor Demographics



What mechanisms do donors use to get back to an organization? By understanding how second donations differ from first donations, organizations can better appeal to potential return donors in order to increase retention rates.

Key Data Snapshot

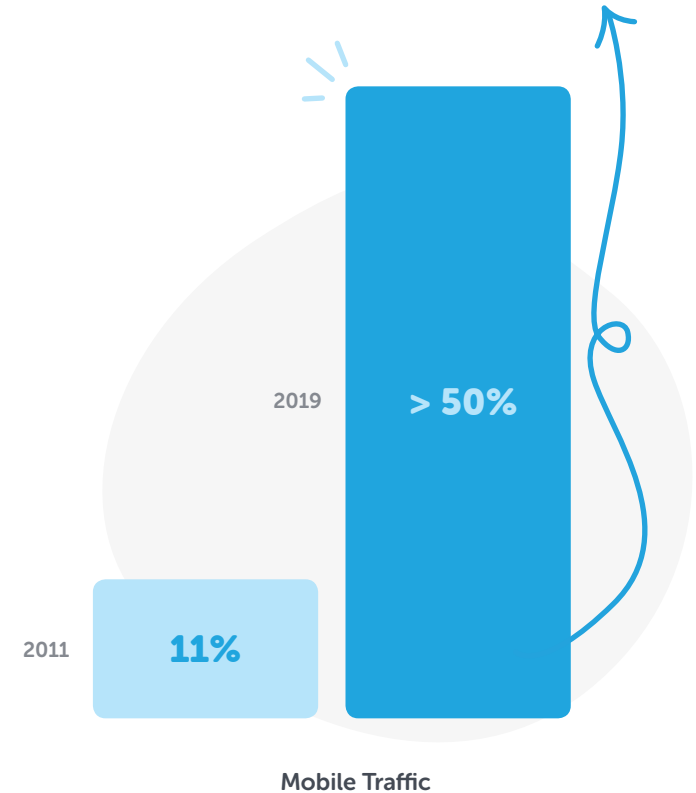


Device Platform

The State of Modern Philanthropy 2018 showed consistent growth in mobile traffic, which has gone up significantly since the early days on Classy—11% in 2011 compared to over 50% today. To find out whether this applies to second donations, we looked at whether return donors used the same device type for their first and second donation. We found across all campaign types, return donors *do* tend to use the same device type.

For example, of return donors who donated for the first time via mobile, 77% made their second donation also via mobile. The effect of returning with the same device was stronger, though, for return donors who started on desktop rather than mobile (90% returned via desktop again).

Original mobile donors are likely to return a second time on a mobile device. However, it's important to consider that this effect is not necessarily driven wholly by donors' preferences to return via the same device; it could also be influenced by organizations' preferences to use that specific medium to reach out to donors (e.g., through mobile advertisements).



Social Media Referral Sources

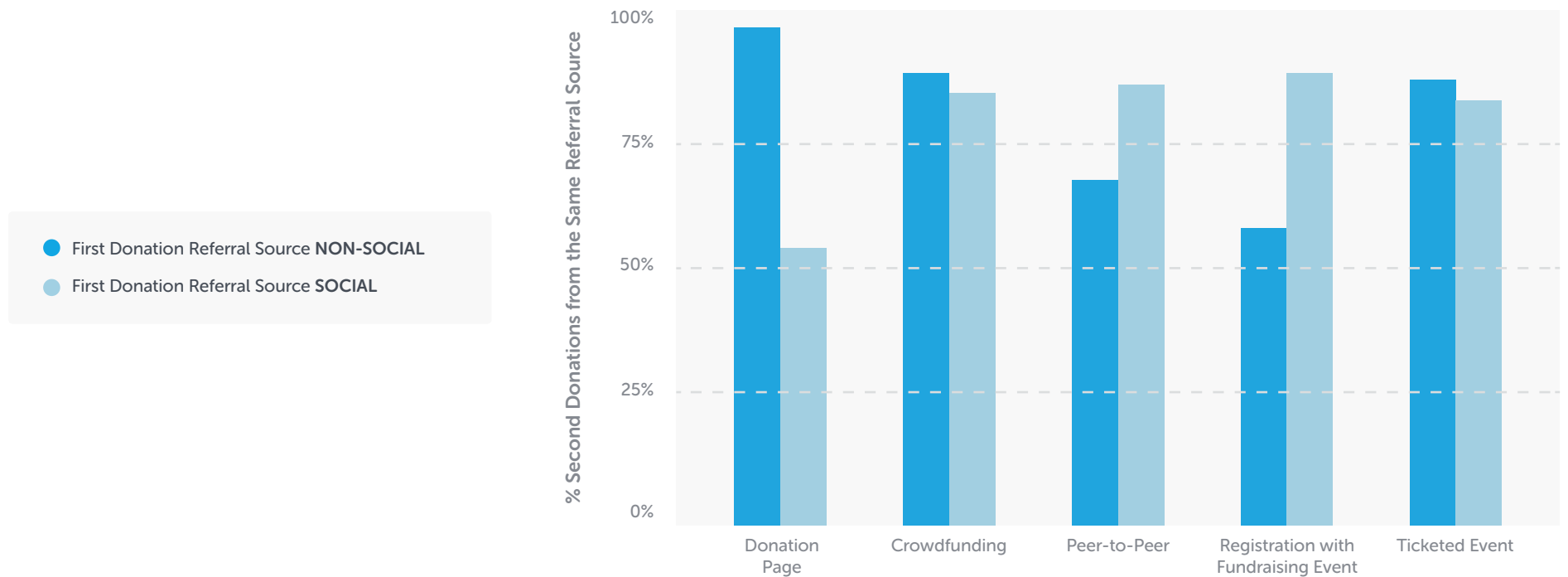
In addition to the importance of mobile, in *The State of Modern Philanthropy 2018* we reported that **most mobile traffic comes from social media referral sources (60%)**. Given that first-time mobile donors appeared to largely come back again via mobile, we wanted to see if referral sources are also consistent between first and second donations.

Our analysis found that similar to device platform, over half of the time, return donors transacted via the same referral source type as their first donation, across all campaign types. Of donors who started on a social referral source, 87% returned via a social referral source. However, when we looked at donors who first gave through a donation page, we found that the donors who arrived there via social media came back through social media 50% of the time.



But for peer-to-peer campaigns and registration with fundraising events, social media continues to be a strong driver, with a high percentage of donors who started on social media coming back through social media. This probably has to do with the inherent social nature of these campaign types.

Return Donors with Same Referral Source for First and Second Donation



Similar to device type, return donors came back via the same referral source type as their first donation. The effect varies by campaign type with returns via social being higher for peer-to-peer campaigns and registration with fundraising events.



Donor Demographics: Gender and Median Household Income

Finally, we wanted to see if return donors differed demographically from those who do not return. We looked at first and second donations on the platform and compared gender and median household incomes. For median household income, we used the donor's zip code to pull census data from the [American Community Survey](#).

We also examined gender because past research has indicated that [women and men differ in their giving patterns](#), and we wanted to see if this applies to the subject of donor retention. Median household income was also interesting to investigate as there is evidence that [ultra-high-net-worth donors are representing an even larger size of the giving pie](#).

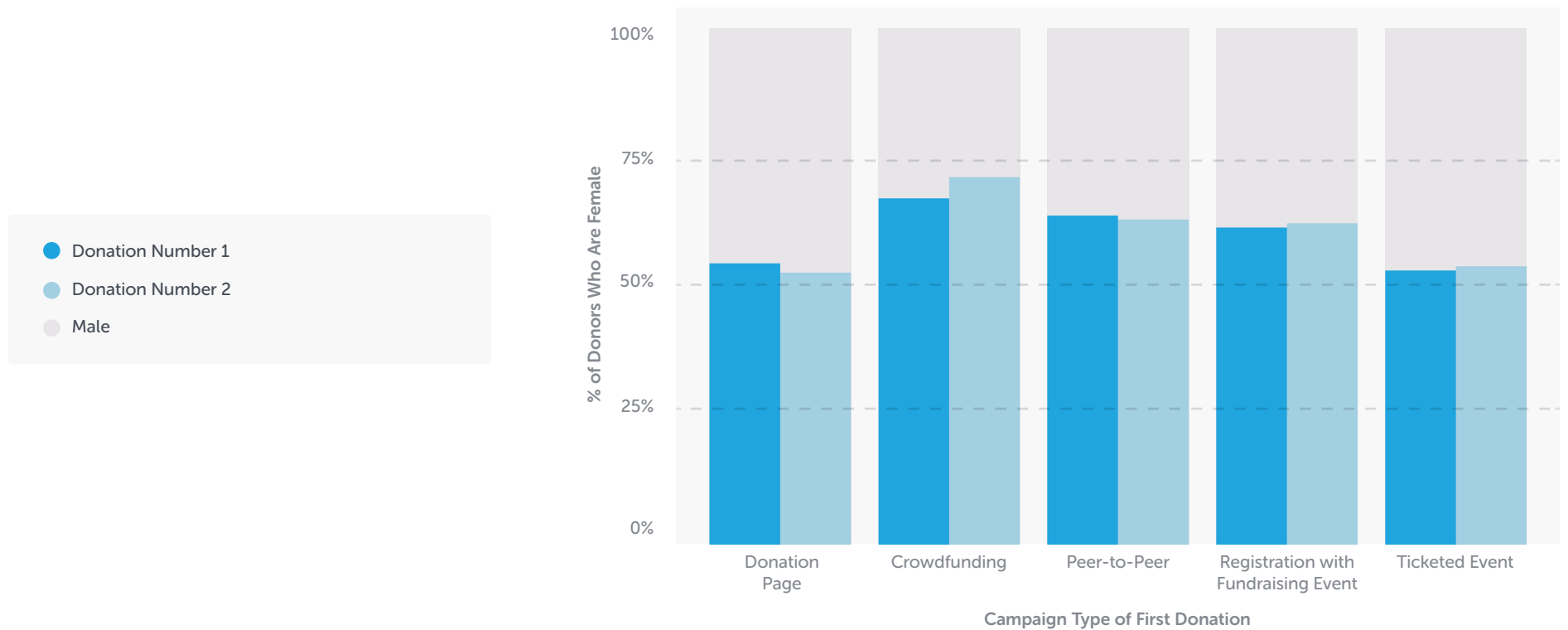
Regarding gender, first-time donors were female in majority across campaign types (61% of donors). This was mostly consistent for second donations (59% of donors). This suggests that the demographics of return donors are roughly the same as first-time donors.



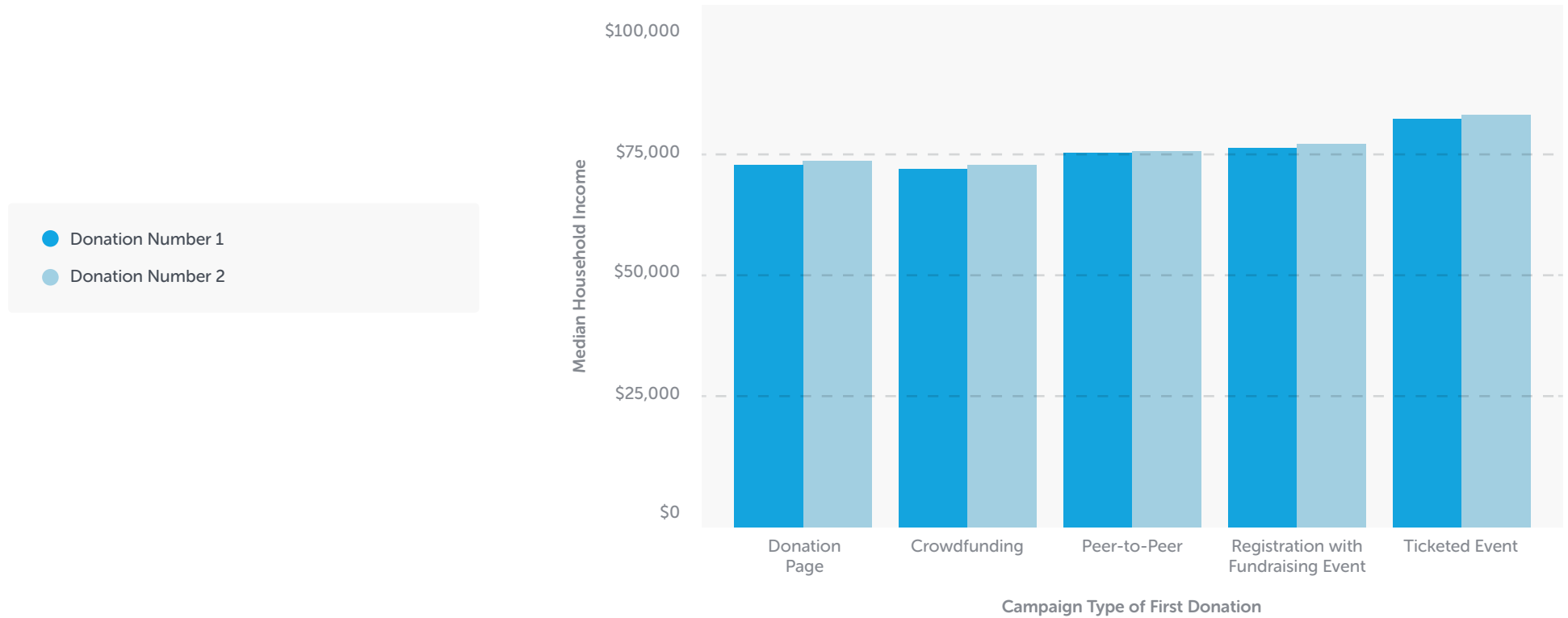
With regards to gender differences in giving a second donation, there were some campaign type differences, with donation pages being the most balanced by gender, while people who donated a second time who started on a crowdfunding page were more likely to be female. Although for both campaign types, the differences were not large.

Regarding median household income, we again observed very few differences, if any, between first and second donations. There was a slight difference by campaign type, where donors to ticketed events had higher incomes.

Percent of First- and Second-Time Donors Who Are Female



Median Household Income of First- and Second-Time Donors



For both of the demographic analyses—gender and income—we did not see dramatic differences between all first-time donors and those who return for a second donation. This suggests that return donors are from a similar pool as first-time donors.

³To build this plot for each donor, the median household income of their zip code was pulled using publicly available data. We then took the median of those values to get one data point per bar and build the plots.

Thought Starters

In summary, donors engage with organizations in a similar fashion for their first and second donations. When looking at gender or median household income, return donors are fairly indistinguishable from first-time donors, but you can better segment and target your donors when you know how they prefer to give to your organization.

Use the points and questions below to apply these findings to your strategy development.

- **Do you reach out to donors on desktop and mobile?**

Over half of return donors use the same device as their first donation. If you limit yourself to advertising on one medium, you could miss out on potential return donors.

- **Do you retarget return donors on social media more for certain campaign types?**

Return donors who originally donated on peer-to-peer campaigns via social media are most likely to return via social media. See how your social media strategy differs by campaign type, and how it may affect where donors come back from.

- **Do you use donor demographics to decide which donors to retarget?**

First-time and return donors show no difference in gender and median household income. Consider which variables outside of gender and income may make a specific group of donors more likely to donate again.

SECTION 2

Destination



St. Vincent Meals on Wheels

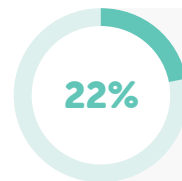


Campaign Type
Interactions

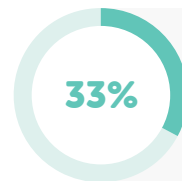
After a donor makes a gift, what happens next on their journey is vital to the health of your organization. Industry trends continue to point to a decline in first-time donor retention, and it's **more costly to acquire a new donor** than to keep an existing one.

To develop an engagement strategy that nurtures donors—and fundraisers—over time, it's important to understand how donors behave differently depending on what type of campaign they started, and through which they re-engaged with the organization. By understanding these behavior differences, organizations can better optimize their donor engagement strategy and ultimately retain more donors.

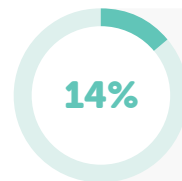
Key Data Snapshot



of return crowdfunding donors gave to a donation page



of return donors gave to the same campaign page



of peer-to-peer fundraisers became fundraisers again for the same organization

First Interaction Effect

In the Actions portion of the report, we will show that return rates differ depending on the campaign type at which a donor starts. Here, we look at how the campaign type *they return to* can differ.

Importantly, the combination of where a donor started and where they came back results in different return rates **and** different return donation amounts.

The below matrices summarize these findings. The rows indicate where the donor started their journey and the columns indicate where they returned. The values in the below matrix are return rates, conditional on if a donor returned.

For example, 90% of return donors that started on donation pages returned to a donation page. Interestingly, only 50% of return donors who started their journey on ticketed event pages returned to a ticketed event page. This indicates that if donors who donated to a ticketed event page re-engage, they are more likely to re-engage with an organization through another means versus only continuing their support for that organization through an event year over year. This may be due to events requiring deeper participation than making a gift online.

Percentage of Donors Who Returned to a Specific Campaign Relative to First Donation Campaign Type

		Campaign Type of Second Donation				
		Donation Page	Crowdfunding	Peer-to-Peer	Registration With Fundraising Event	Ticketed Event
Campaign Type of First Donation	Donation Page	90%	6%	4%	0%	0%
	Crowdfunding	22%	72%	5%	1%	0%
	Peer-to-Peer	4%	2%	90%	3%	1%
	Registration With Fundraising Event	1%	1%	3%	95%	0%
	Ticketed Event	17%	7%	22%	4%	50%

Destination | Campaign Type Interactions

Similar to the above, the rows of the below matrix indicate the campaign type at which a donor started their journey, and the columns indicate the campaign type to which a donor returned. However, in the below matrix, the values reflect median return donation amounts. We also looked at how the donation size between the first and second donation compared, but found minimal differences so it is not reported here.

Strikingly, return donors who initially gave to an organization's donation page gave noticeably more to that organization's peer-to-peer page than donors who initially gave to other campaign types.

Furthermore, donors who initially gave to a peer-to-peer campaign or Classy Events page (registration with fundraising event page or ticketed event page) gave more to the same organization's donation page than donors who started their journey at other campaign types. This result may be driven by engagement: the more a donor initially engages with an organization (such as through an event or through a personal connection driven by their social network), the higher their return donation amount is likely to be.

Median Donation Sizes of Second Donation Relative to First Donation Campaign Type

		Campaign Type of Second Donation				
		Donation Page	Crowdfunding	Peer-to-Peer	Registration With Fundraising Event	Ticketed Event
Campaign Type of First Donation	Donation Page	\$52	\$52	\$79	\$100	\$120
	Crowdfunding	\$50	\$50	\$53	\$53	\$100
	Peer-to-Peer	\$100	\$60	\$50	\$52	\$100
	Registration With Fundraising Event	\$100	\$100	\$52	\$50	\$100
	Ticketed Event	\$105	\$105	\$53	\$77	\$150

Return Donors Donate to Different Campaigns

We saw earlier that the campaign type at which a donor starts affects both the campaign type they come back to, and how much they give. In general, return donors come back to the same campaign type at which they started, but do they come back to the same specific campaign?

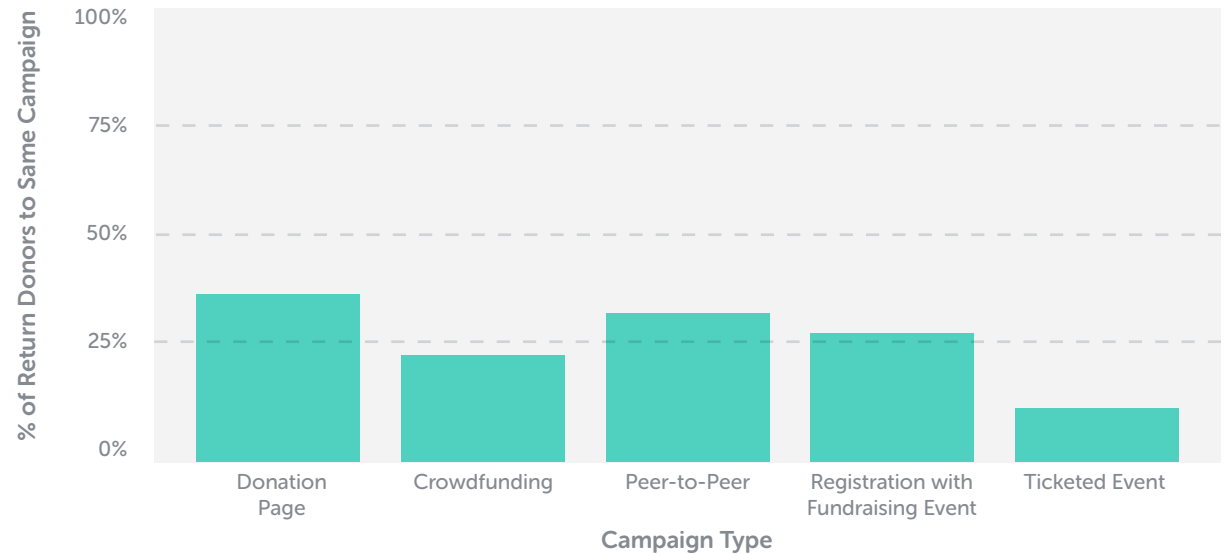
For example, if a donor who started at a peer-to-peer campaign came back to a peer-to-peer campaign, is it the same peer-to-peer campaign or a different one?

The below plot answers this question: 33% of donors returned to the same campaign at which they started. Donors who started their journey on a donation page were the most likely to return to the same campaign, while donors that started their journey on ticketed event pages were the most likely to return to a different campaign.



All Hands and Hearts - Smart Response

Return Donors Who Came Back to the Same Campaign as First Donation



Return Fundraisers

Clearly, return donors are important. But what about fundraisers? It turns out that return fundraisers are more valuable to organizations than one-time fundraisers. The median amount raised by peer-to-peer fundraising pages started by return fundraisers was more than double the amount raised by peer-to-peer fundraising pages for one-time fundraisers—\$501 vs. \$222, respectively.

For registration with fundraising events, these amounts were \$130 (return fundraisers) and \$53 (one-time fundraisers), respectively. Perhaps return fundraisers are more motivated than typical fundraisers after gaining experience with the organization and its cause. They may have learned more about fundraising and better understand how to activate their fundraising networks or leverage the technology to maximize their impact. Or perhaps after seeing the individuals' commitment to the cause, their networks were also more educated, engaged, and inclined to support. Whatever the reason, fundraiser retention is a worthy focus area for an organization wishing to grow its results and support for its cause—but the concept doesn't always get the same attention as first-time donor retention.

Despite this huge value in return fundraisers, for peer-to-peer campaigns, only 14% of fundraisers returned and created new peer-to-peer fundraising pages within the two-year timeframe of this report. For registration with fundraising events, 19% of fundraisers returned and created new fundraising pages. This reveals that organizations have an opportunity to raise considerably more money if they can boost their fundraiser retention rates.



Three Roots International



Team Rubicon

Top Peer-to-Peer Fundraiser Retention Rates

To showcase industry leaders on the Classy platform, we also pulled the top 10 organizations with the highest fundraiser retention rates. The median retention rate for these organizations was 29% (average 33%). To keep our customer data anonymous, the following high-performing organizations have been represented by their respective focus areas.

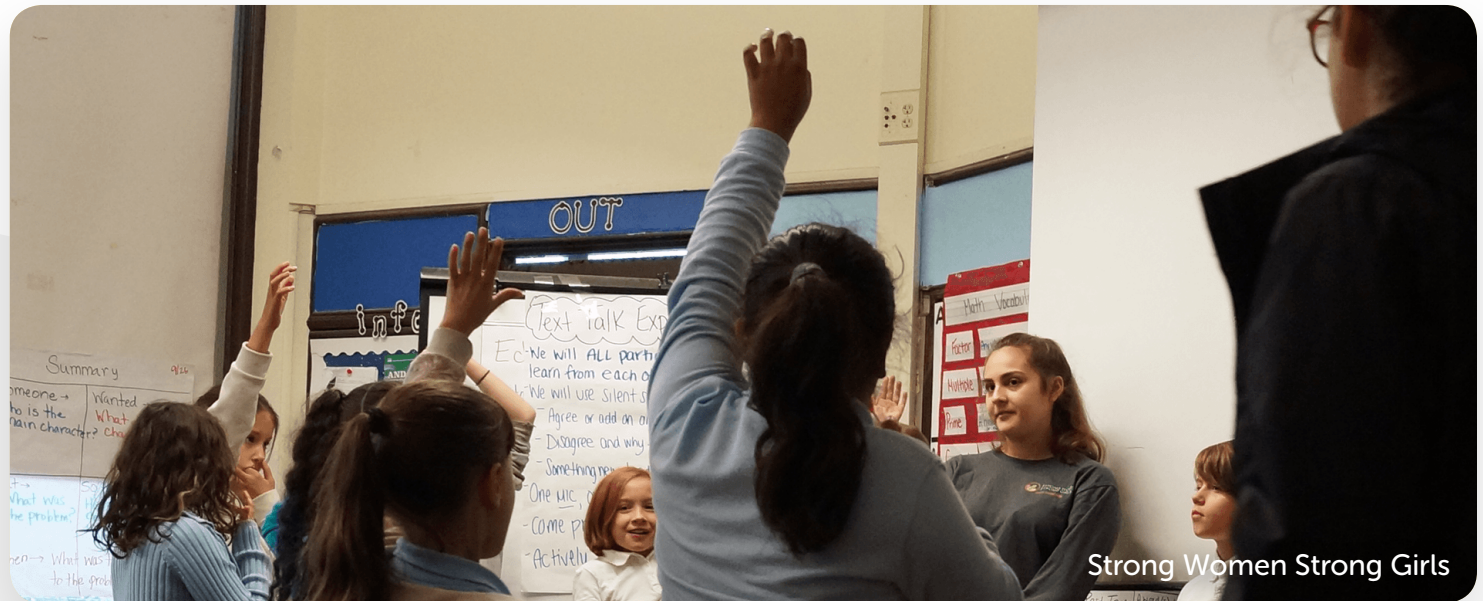
Top 10 Organizations With Highest Fundraiser Retention Rates

Cause	Headquarters	NTEE Code	% Fundraisers Return
Youth Rowing Club	CA	Human Services	56%
Support for Children With Parents Affected by Cancer	CA	Human Services	39%
Care for At-Risk and Critically-Ill Children	MD	Human Services	39%
Hunger Alleviation	IL	Public, Societal Benefit	33%
Childhood Cancer Research	GA	Public, Societal Benefit	31%
Faith-Driven Medical Assistance	TX	International, Foreign Affairs	27%
Homeownership Assistance and Restoration	IN	Human Services	26%
Support Services for Individuals with Down Syndrome	IL	Health	25%
Injury Prevention Awareness	CA	Health	25%
Catholic Youth Ministry	AZ	Unknown, Unclassified	24%

Note, must have had at least 50 fundraisers to start in report timeframe

Thought Starters

- **When you host an event, do you invite the people who have already given to your donation pages?** Return donors who first give to a donation page donate to ticketed events almost as much as those who start at ticketed events. Where a donor starts can affect how much they'll give to future events. Look at where your donors initially gave to come up with a guest list.
- **How do you engage with event attendees after your event?** Return donors who start at ticketed events donate more to donation pages than return donors who start at any other campaign type. Think about using your past event attendee lists for non-event-based appeals.
- **What's your fundraiser retention strategy?** Return fundraisers raise over twice as much as first-time fundraisers. Consider what resources you can dedicate to engaging with fundraisers and maintaining a relationship after their first fundraising experience.



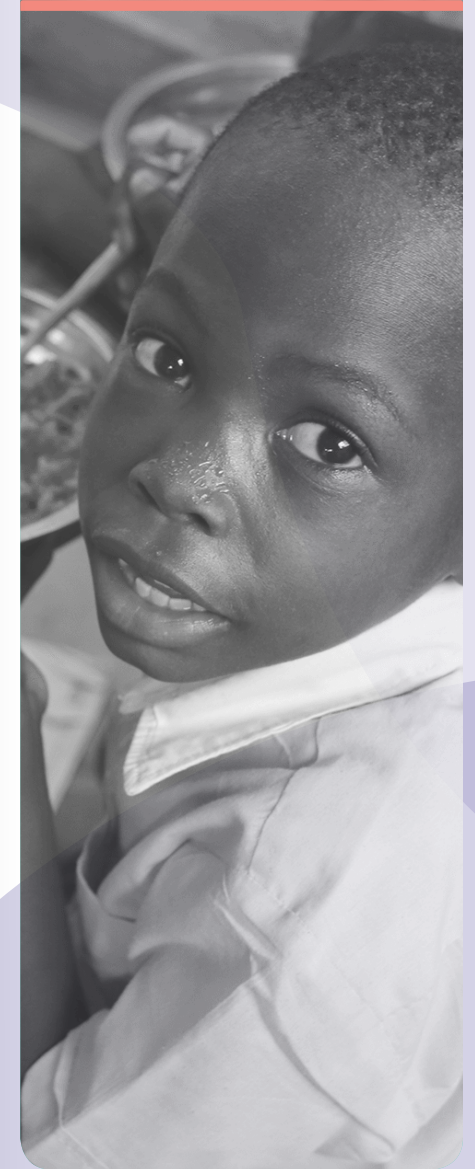
SECTION 3

Actions



Young Judeaa &
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Follow-Up Interactions



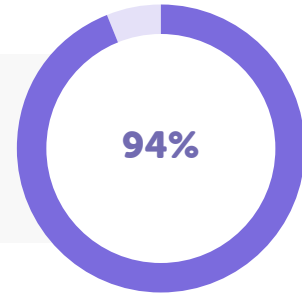
Of the many ways donors can re-engage with organizations, certain actions are more common than others. In understanding the probability of each, an organization can better identify high-value opportunities and build sound strategies.

Key Data Snapshot

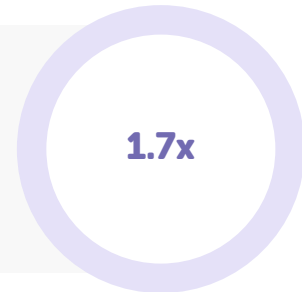


RedRover

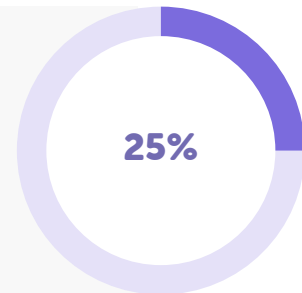
- **94%** of return donors gave another one-time donation as their second interaction



- Donors who started at a donation page were almost twice as likely (**1.7x**) to return to give a second donation, relative to donors who started on a peer-to-peer campaign



- **25%** of return donors who then became recurring donors, also gave another one-time donation as one of their follow-up actions (third, fourth, etc. action with an organization after their first donation)



Donor Follow-Up Action Choices

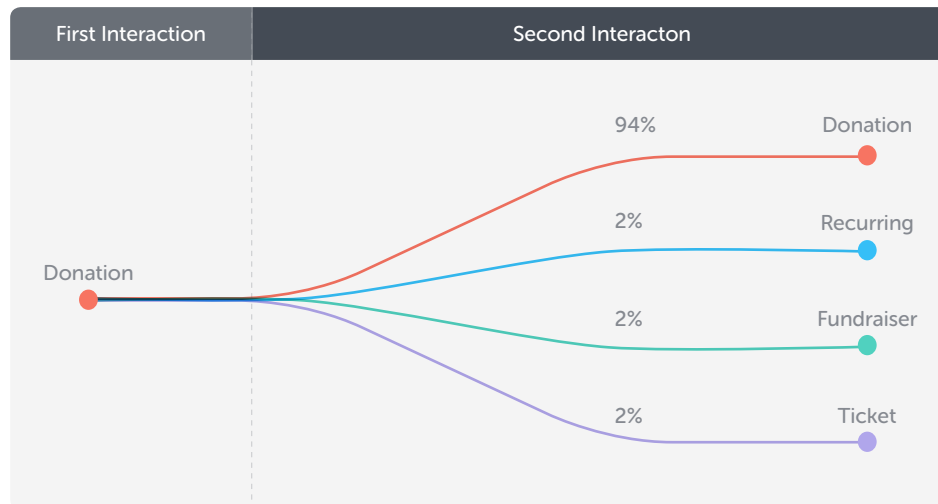
After giving a one-time donation, donors can re-engage with an organization in many ways.

For example, they can:

1. Make another one-time donation
2. Become a recurring donor
3. Become a fundraiser
4. Purchase an event ticket or registration

The most common second action for return donors was another one-time donation, with 94% of return donors making another one-time donation as their next action.

First and Second Interactions for Return Donors



If we zoom out and look at all donors who gave a second donation at any point in their journey, the campaign type with the highest donor return rate was the donation page, and the lowest was the ticketed event. One-time donors who started on donation pages were **1.7x** more likely to return than donors who started on peer-to-peer campaigns, and **1.9x** more likely to return than donors who started on ticketed event campaigns.

This may be due in part to the nature of a donor's engagement with these campaign types. For donation pages, the call to action is to support an organization, while for peer-to-peer it's more likely that donors are supporting an individual. It may be harder to retain donors who were drawn into the cause by a third party, which is why we see lower return rates to peer-to-peer campaigns and ticketed events.

Additional one-time donations happened after other follow-up actions as well. Of return donors who became recurring donors, 25% gave another one-time donation at some point. This further demonstrates that your recurring donors are potentially your biggest cause evangelists, willing to go above and beyond their already valuable recurring plan.

1.7x

One-time donors who started on donation pages were **1.7x** more likely to return than donors who started on peer-to-peer campaigns.

1.9x

One-time donors who started on donation pages were **1.9x** more likely to return than donors who started on ticketed event campaigns.



King County Sexual Assault Resource Center

Thought Starters

- Are your one-time donors more likely to give another one-time donation, or take another action?

Of all return donors, we found that 94% give another one-time donation as their next action. Take a look at your data to see what the most common follow-up actions are for your donors. You may need to further refine your re-engagement strategy.

- Which of your campaigns show the best donor return rates?

Donation pages have almost twice the donor return rate (1.7x) of peer-to-peer campaigns. Find which of your campaigns have the highest donor re-engagement rates and see how you can maximize the use of that campaign type in your overarching strategy.

- How many different actions can a supporter take?

Of return donors who become recurring donors, 25% then give another one-time donation. See how many different actions your typical supporter takes in their lifetime. Use that to see if there is an opportunity to offer new ways to engage with your organization; you may discover donors are willing to re-engage more often than expected.

SECTION 4

Timing



Rise Against Hunger

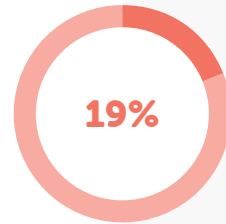
Time Between
Interactions

Determining when return donors tend to re-engage with organizations can help shape call-to-action initiatives, campaign recurrence, and best practices in fundraising.

Key Data Snapshot



349 days was the median length of time between a first donation and a second donation (for those who returned more than 24 hours after their first donation)



19% of return donors who gave a second donation returned within three months of their first donation and 29% returned within the first six months (for those who returned more than 24 hours after their first donation).



214 days was the median length of time between a first donation and a recurring gift (for those who returned more than 24 hours after their first donation)

Time and Retention

In the analyses below, we exclusively look at return donors who returned after 24 hours had elapsed since their first one-time donation. We chose this cutoff since we believe donors who returned the same day as their first donation make their own cohort of donors⁴, and we wanted to separate their behavior from the majority.

Before breaking down by interaction type, we found that overall, the median number of days between first donation and second interaction (making a second donation, becoming a recurring donor, or becoming a fundraiser) was 346 days. In the following sections we dig deeper into the timelines of each of these possible follow-up interactions.

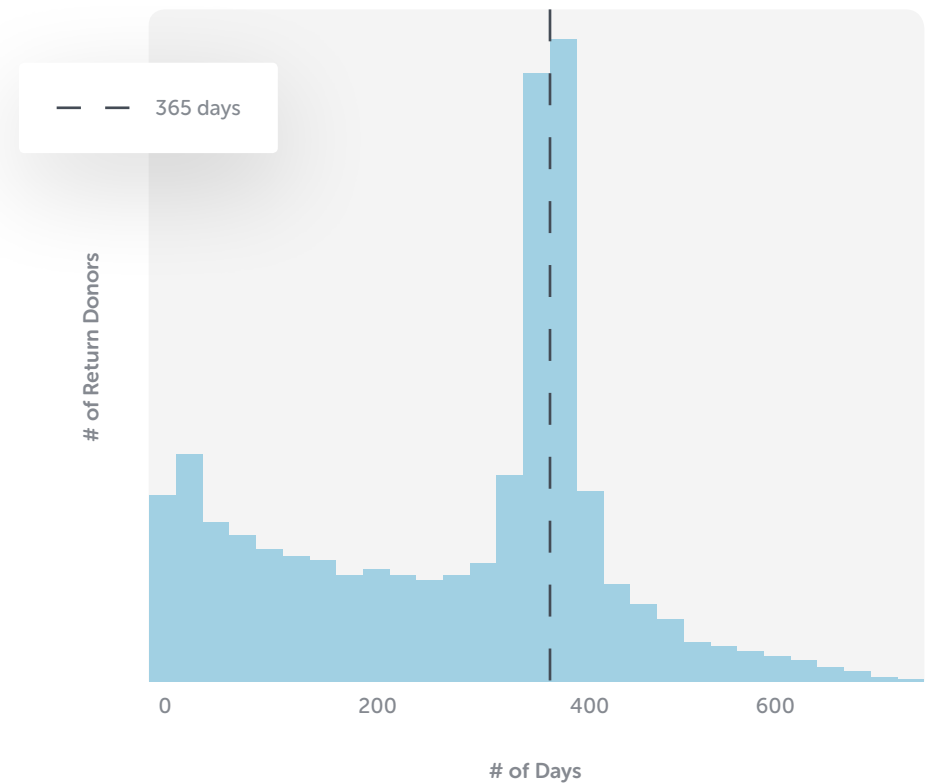


⁴For return donors who made a second donation, 14% did so within 24 hours. For return donors who became recurring donors, 6% did so with 24 hours. For return donors who became fundraisers, 7% did so within 24 hours.

REPEAT DONORS

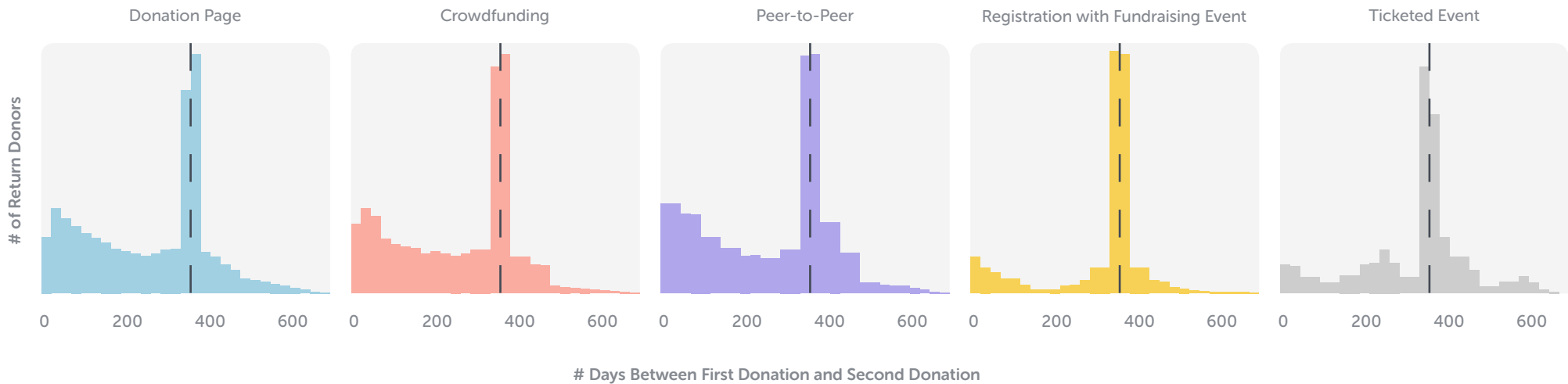
After giving a first one-time donation, donors returned typically around 349 days later to give a second donation, regardless of campaign type. We noted that donors tend to return around 300 to 400 days after their first donation, rather than earlier, marking the one-year anniversary of their engagement with the organization with a second donation. Roughly 50% of return donors will come back between 300 and 400 days after their first gift. In addition to the peak at one year though, we see that many donors come back within the first few months. Of all return donors who made a second donation, 19% came back within the first 90 days (roughly three months) after their first donation. In the first 180 days (roughly six months), 29% returned.

Days Between First Donation and Second Donation
for Return Donors



This same effect was seen across campaign types. Here, we used the campaign type of the donor's first donation, but note that the campaign type a donor returned to could have varied (donation page, peer-to-peer campaign, etc.). Donation page and crowdfunding donors tend to return throughout the year with a peak at the one-year anniversary, while other campaign type donors return earlier at higher numbers and at the one-year mark, but rarely in between.

Days Between First Donation and Second Donation by Campaign Type for Return Donors



Fewest Days Between First and Second Donation

To showcase industry outliers on the Classy platform, we also pulled the top 10 organizations whose donors had the fewest number of days between first and second donation. For these organizations, the median number of days was 60 (average 61). To keep our customer data anonymous, the following high-performing organizations have been represented by their respective focus areas.

Top 10 Organizations Whose Donors Have the Fewest Number of Days Between First and Second Donations

Cause	Headquarters	NTEE Code	Median # Days
Breast Cancer Support Services	CA	Health	16
Human and Financial Resources	LA	Public, Societal Benefit	22
Education for Girls	NY	Education	34
Faith-Based Humanitarian Assistance	MO	International, Foreign Affairs	41
Faith-Based Services Addressing Poverty, Addiction, and Abuse	CA	Human Services	58
LGBTQ Performance Group	CA	Arts, Cultures, and Humanities	62
Animal Rights Advocacy	CA	Environment and Animals	82
Disaster Relief	CA	International, Foreign Affairs	93
Support for Homeless	WA	Unknown, Unclassified	96
Child Hunger Alleviation	FL	Human Services	108

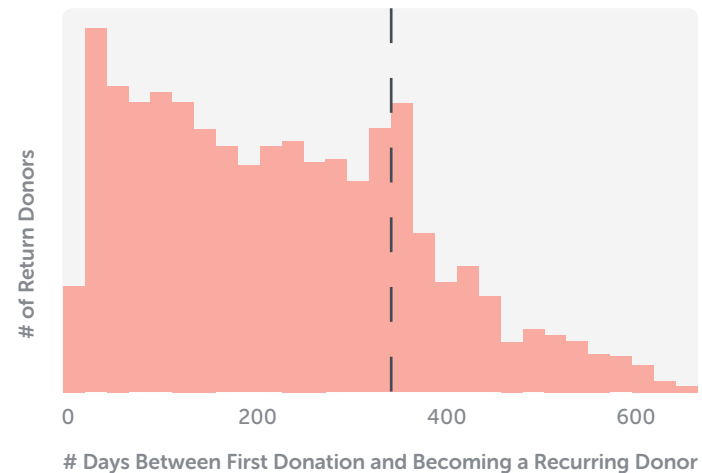
Note, must have had at least 100 return donors

RECURRING DONORS

A different trend occurs among return donors who gave once and then became recurring. This group returned sooner and was less likely to return to become a recurring donor as time progressed. Of return donors who became recurring donors, we found that the median length of time between those interactions was 214 days. That is a shorter window than we have observed for making another one-time donation.

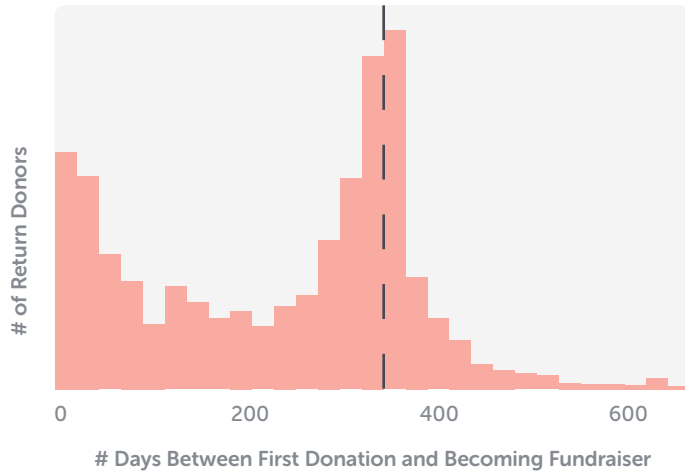


Days Between First Donation and Becoming a Recurring Donor



When we looked at organizations with the fewest days between a donor's first donation and becoming a recurring donor, we found many nonprofits excelling at activating recurring donors more quickly. For example, one top animal services organization has an impressive median number of only 40 days between first donation and recurring sign-up.

Days Between First Donation and
Becoming a Fundraiser



FUNDRAISERS

Fundraisers showed similar effects as return donors. Return donors came back to fundraise typically 297 days after their first donation. As for return donors who came back to give a second donation, there was a clear peak at the one-year mark. Looking at this same data, but this time by campaign type, we saw that donors who started on donation page, crowdfunding, and ticketed event campaigns often became fundraisers sooner than the one-year mark. On the other hand, donors who started on peer-to-peer campaigns and registration with fundraising events returned to fundraise shortly after their first donation and around the one-year mark.



Giving Tuesday Donors

Giving Tuesday continues to be a monumental opportunity for nonprofits. **In 2018, organizations raised nearly \$400 million online in the United States alone.** We also know that organizations on Classy acquire 4x more new donors on Giving Tuesday than on a typical day of the year.

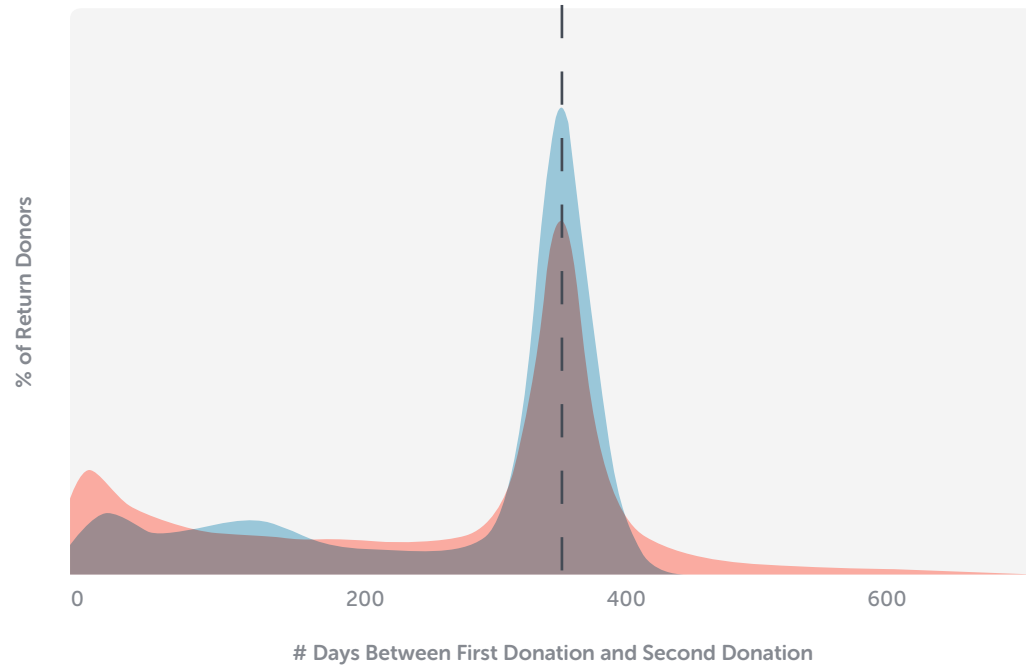
To better understand how organizations fold these new donors into their communities within the timeframe of our analysis, we wanted to know: do return donors who made their first donation on Giving Tuesday (November 28, 2017) come back on a different timeline than other donors? If we separate return donors into those who gave their first donation on Giving Tuesday, and those who gave on a day other than Giving Tuesday, the answer is, for the most part, no.

Those who gave for the first time on Giving Tuesday returned to give a second one-time donation typically 364 days after their first donation. Donors who gave their first donation on any other day of the year typically gave again after 347 days. The slight delay for the Giving Tuesday group may be because Giving Tuesday donors are choosing to re-engage specifically on the following Giving Tuesday. This is interesting to note for nonprofits participating in Giving Tuesday, because while Giving Tuesday donors are thought to exhibit markedly different behaviors than other donors, they actually follow a similar pattern when it comes to the timing between their first donation and second donation—following that roughly one-year-anniversary timeline behavior.



Days Between First Donation and Second Donation

- First-Time Donation Made on Any Other Day of the Year
- First-Time Donation Made on Giving Tuesday



In terms of other follow-up interactions, of return donors who became recurring donors, those whose first interaction with an organization was on Giving Tuesday became recurring donors faster than those that whose first interactions were outside of Giving Tuesday (median 194 days and 215 days respectively). For those who became fundraisers, again, return donors whose first interaction was on Giving Tuesday re-engaged sooner than donors whose first interaction was outside of Giving Tuesday (median 214 and 301 days respectively).



Thought Starters

- **What percentage of your donors return before their giving anniversaries?**
The typical time between first donation and second donation is 349 days, but 19% of donors return within just three months and 29% within six months. Consider how you can stay on their radar and engage potential donors throughout the year to inspire earlier repeat gifts.
- **Do you celebrate giving anniversaries?**
While organizations can work to lessen the number of days between first and second interactions, celebrating giving anniversaries is still an important tactic to consider. Remind donors of the impact they've helped to create and suggest creative ways to celebrate their giving anniversary—like starting a peer-to-peer fundraising page.
- **Do you ask your Giving Tuesday donors to become fundraisers?**
Return donors who make their first donation on Giving Tuesday typically return to fundraise after 214 days, unlike donors from other days in the year who return after 301 days. Consider how you might target this group for peer-to-peer fundraising opportunities.

Apply the Findings

We hope that our analysis and presentation of findings help your organization better understand donor behavior and build an effective fundraising strategy.

After you've reviewed the report in full, we recommend using the worksheet on page 14 to benchmark your own performance and identify opportunities for improvement. You can also leverage the "Thought Starter" sections of this report to gut-check your existing fundraising tactics and fine-tune or experiment with something new.

For more specific ideas, templates, and case studies on how to apply these findings in practice, subscribe to our industry-leading nonprofit blog.

[Check Out the Classy Blog](#)

About Classy



About Classy

Classy is a social enterprise that creates world-class online fundraising software for nonprofits, modernizing the giving experience to accelerate social impact around the world. Based in San Diego, CA, Classy is trusted by organizations of all sizes, from the fastest-growing nonprofits like Team Rubicon and The Trevor Project, to some of the world's largest social organizations, such as The Salvation Army, Robin Hood Foundation, and Shriners Hospitals for Children. Classy also hosts the Collaborative conference and the Classy Awards to spotlight the innovative work nonprofits are implementing around the globe. For more information, visit www.classy.org or follow Classy on Twitter [@Classy](https://twitter.com/Classy).

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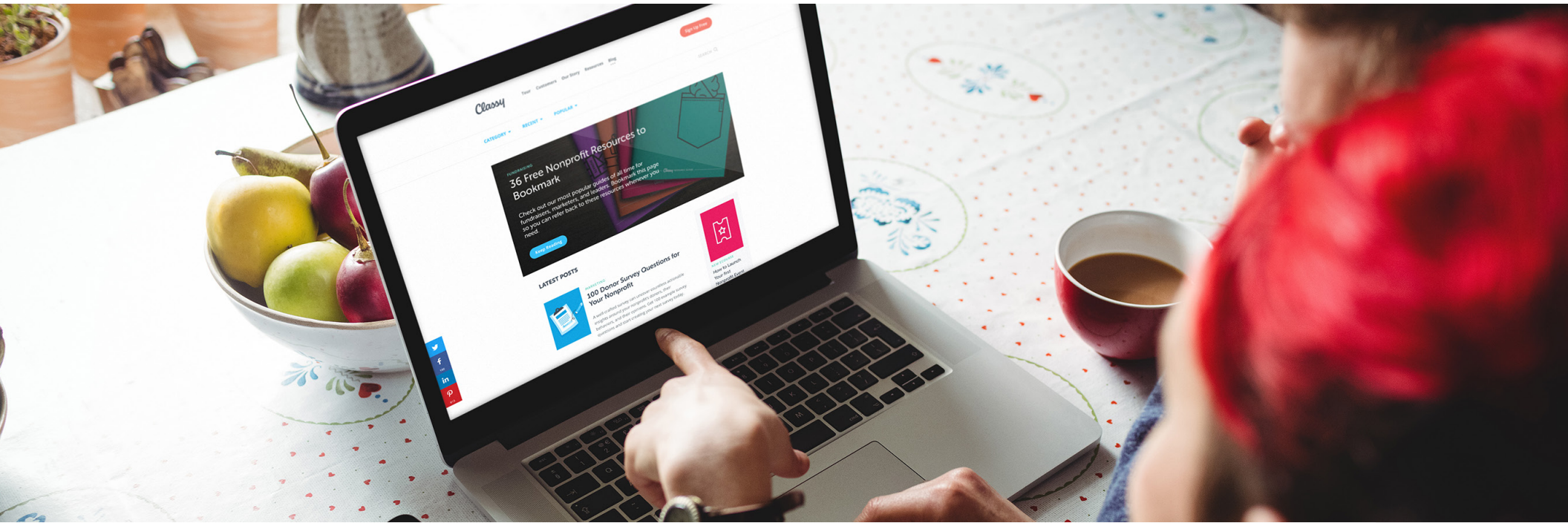
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