

The Power of Supporter Journeys in Building Relationships

BY BLACKBAUD PACIFIC



In an increasingly digital world, establishing and maintaining meaningful connections with supporters has become a growing challenge for social good professionals.

We all know the pain of being over-communicated with, especially when it comes to our overflowing inboxes, where a simple ‘unsubscribe’ click is all that’s needed to put an end to what could have been a promising supporter relationship.

In this whitepaper, we explore how thoughtfully planned and well executed multi-channel supporter journeys can help social good organisations effectively communicate with donors and supporters as they seek to establish relationships, grow deeper connections, and achieve their mission.

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Understanding Supporter Journeys

A supporter journey is a carefully planned and personalised series of interactions that guide individuals from their initial engagement with your organisation to achieving specific goals, such as giving a second gift, becoming a regular giver or even a major donor.

Instead of relying on “one-size-fits-all” communications, supporter journeys enable social good organisations to leverage their understanding of their supporters and respond with tailor-made experiences, marking a shift from an organisation-centric approach to a supporter-centric strategy.

A well thought-out journey will help supporters feel appreciated and valued, while also providing your organisation valuable insights into your supporters’ preferences and behaviours.

The end result is improved retention, increased lifetime value, and enhanced overall satisfaction.

The Importance of Journey Mapping

The foundation of effective journeys lies in mapping how individual supporters will engage with your organisation at every stage of their journey.

By mapping each touchpoint, decision, and exit point, social good organisations can gain a true understanding of their supporters, enabling them to tailor communications and interactions accordingly.

Saiful Nasir from CXD Labs explains:

“Journeys are about understanding how your supporter interacts with your organisation to achieve their goals.

These include the moments your supporters encounter, the decisions they take, and the points where they decide to either exit their journey or take different paths moving forward.”



It may sound like an ambitious undertaking. After all, planning mass-audience communications pieces is much simpler than adapting your communications to each separate supporter.

However, the benefits can be enormous, both for the supporter and for your organisation, as Saiful explains:

“Supporter journeys help organisations understand and see the full gamut of interactions and engagement points that each supporter has.

They give you a 360-degree view of your supporter, and help you see all interactions, which means you can communicate much more effectively with your supporters in a way that is meaningful to them.”

How Social Good Organisations Can Use Supporter Journeys

A true supporter journey is all about the impact of small moments that build on each other to lead the donor to the desired outcome.

Creating effective supporter journeys will mean being flexible and supporter-focused, rather than simply creating a marketing schedule or automation that works for you.

Sean Patrick Holland, Principal Solutions Architect at Blackbaud Pacific, emphasises three key ways that supporter journeys are used by social good organisations, especially in Australia and the wider Pacific region.

“Organisations are finding success with supporter journeys for: sign ups and lead generation via mailing lists, events, and other communications; retention for lapsed donors; and donor conversion to encourage single gift givers into regular givers.”

Importantly, supporter journeys can use any channel, even beyond our traditional mass-media understanding of communications channels.

The regular modes still apply: EDM, DM, phone calls, social media marketing, but so do ‘irregular’ channels: any moment of in-person interaction, a link click, a video view, a supporter updating their details.

Any of these interactions can be measured, tracked, and incorporated into your journey.

Let’s consider how you can begin creating your very own supporter journey.

How To Create Supporter Journeys

Supporter journeys start with the end in mind, and so creating effective journeys requires a mix of goal setting, understanding your organisation’s supporters, and defining success.

Sean Patrick says:

“The key step is to start with your organisation’s goals and plan the journey around that end point.

“In design and implementation, the first question should be: ‘Why do you want to do this, and what are you hoping to achieve?’”

Establish Your Goals

In the social good space, organisations have the benefit of being able to set clear goals based on various milestones, such as:

- Acquiring new donors through social media
- Converting one-time givers to regular supporters
- Encouraging long-term donors to give a gift in their Will



Once you consider the specific goal, the process of journey mapping and creating specific communication moments becomes much easier.

The key is that you are considering the goals from the perspective of the supporter, and you will build your automation around their experience, rather than the other way around.

Understand Your Supporters

Each organisation relies on the generosity and support of the community, but your specific mission and movement in the world will attract certain audience demographics.

Understanding your supporters goes beyond a static knowledge of certain factors, like age, giving history, and so on.

A supporter journey allows you to interact with your supporters as they travel along the journey, giving your organisation the potential for powerful relationship-building interactions.

Saiful says,

“The last few years have highlighted the importance of a single, consolidated view of the supporter. This includes all interactions and engagement points, across different channels and often across different platforms.

“Supporters are now engaging with your brand across different platforms – some on your fundraising platforms, others on your actual website, and if you have different brands, it adds another layer of engagement complexity. Having a consolidated view of all those interactions is becoming more important to better understand how best to deliver a great experience for your supporters”.

Define Success

Well-written goals make measuring success easier, but some metrics are harder than others to track. That’s why success measurement and feedback loops are incorporated into a successful supporter journey.



Critically, this differs from our previous understanding of automated communications.

Usually, automated marketing journeys are set in stone and can cause pain for supporters and your organisation when things don’t go right.

As Sean Patrick illustrates, feedback loops are one of the reasons that supporter journeys are so important – because of their capacity to create communications that are fluid, and responsive to each individual supporter.

“Today, we’re using journeys for ‘benefit realisation frameworks’, helping organisations track and measure their success. The way we approach things is to start with the goal and the idea, but then ensure that we’re measuring the success.

“We always determine how we can create a feedback loop to fix any steps where things are consistently going wrong. To keep things not locked in stone but flexible.

“In the social good space, people too often see their communications as set and stagnate, but that’s not necessarily the way forward.”

The Pathway to Successful Supporter Journeys

SET YOUR GOALS

- Structure your journeys around:
 - Your organisational goals and objectives for supporter engagement, retention, and growth
 - The supporter's point of view regarding these goals
- Set clear, measurable goals that help you creatively define and write journeys

UNDERSTAND YOUR SUPPORTERS

- Talk with your supporters, and validate that your baseline is a reasonable reflection of how they want to engage with you
- Understand how your stakeholders want to engage with your organisation

DEFINE SUCCESS

- Ensure feedback loops are in place to continually improve the journey

CREATE YOUR FIRST SUPPORTER JOURNEY

- Your CRM, as the foundation of your engagement ecosystem, contains valuable information about your supporters that, when analysed effectively, helps you establish your journey baseline
- Try it out on your own team to provide objective insights into the experience you are offering. Review and refine your journey before you roll it out for real
- Continue to capture meaningful detail about your constituents that will enhance your engagement and journey return on investment
- Communication should be targeted to your supporters based on their preferences and behaviours.



Take the First Step Towards Creating a Supporter Journey Today

Supporter journeys are more than a series of automated emails or SMS contact – they are meaningful, multichannel engagement moments that are designed around improving retention and sustainable growth of your supporter base.

They help to frame all interactions from the perspective of the most important people in your organisation – your generous, visionary supporters!

It is the effective coordination of CRM data and analysis, meaningful moments across multiple channels, and personal relationship building, that help to create the connection needed for supporters to become committed, lifetime members of your wider community.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Below are some resources and tools that can help you build powerful supporter journeys, backed by a depth of data that allows for complex interaction and success tracking.

- **Blackbaud's Fundraising CRM Solutions**

Find out more about our three fundraising and relationship management solutions. For small to enterprise organisations.

- **Blackbaud Professional Services**

Blackbaud's team understands nonprofit challenges, offers software expertise, fosters skill development, empowering you to craft impactful supporter journeys independently.

- **[TOOLKIT] The Supporter Experience**

Learn how to kick-start your supporter experience strategy in four easy-to-follow steps, with the new Supporter Experience Toolkit.

- **[GUIDE] Your Guide to a Successful CRM Implementation**

This guide provides insights and strategies for implementing a successful CRM system to enhance customer relationships and drive business growth.

Get in touch with Blackbaud today to find out more about how we can help your organisation create powerful supporter journeys that build strong relationships.

Email info@blackbaud.com.au or use the button below and we will get back to you.

Get in touch

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