

INTERVIEWS WITH UK FUNDRAISERS

November 2017



ToucanTech

Community database & fundraising software

Meet development directors from leading UK Charities

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Introduction

Fundraising is the lifeblood of the UK's many charities, from Cancer Research UK to the British Heart Foundation. These organisations collectively raise billions of pounds every year for causes that are close to our hearts, such as humanitarian crises in the developing world or ensuring that the most vulnerable members of our society back home receive the care they deserve.

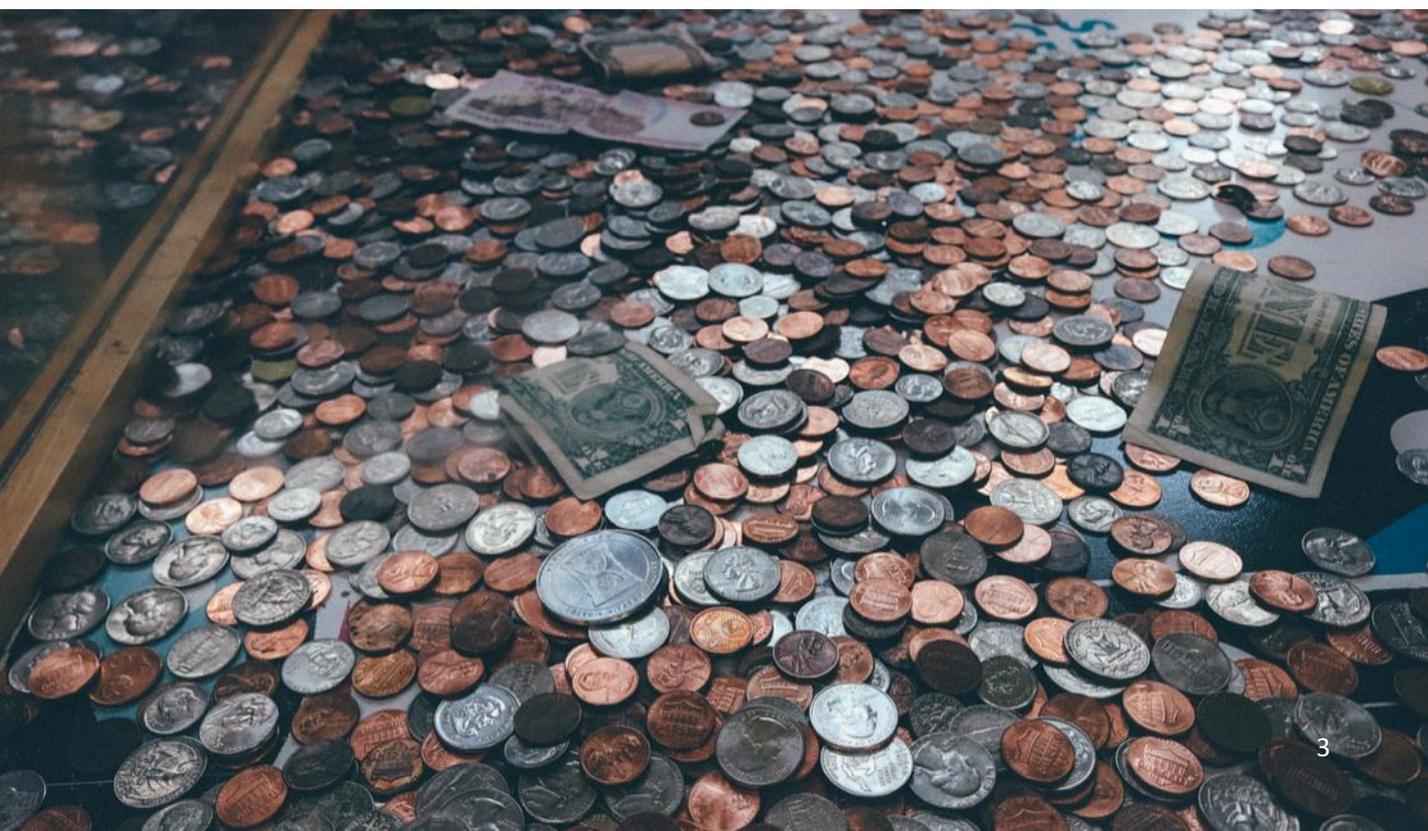
They also aim to entice more people to give their time, skills and other resources to make a positive impact on the planet through volunteering work. As Fiona Chilton, Head of Mass Participation Fundraising for Marie Curie UK, says: "Getting up each day, knowing that what you do helps people, is amazingly rewarding."

Charities' success in enticing gifts from the general public and wealthy donors, trusts and foundations — the top 100 charities' income reached £9.5 billion in 2015 — will pique the interest of any fundraiser, including those in the education sector.

More interesting still is that charities are succeeding at a time when they face unprecedented challenges. A recent report from the Charities Aid Foundation found that charitable giving overall had fallen by 20% in a year. Not only are donations falling but several once reputable UK charities have been embroiled in fundraising scandals, notably allegations of abuses of fundraising guidelines and data protection rules at telephone fundraising company GoGen, which it denied, but which led to its closure.

Many charities are thus hoping to combat common challenges by becoming more innovative in their methods of raising finance and support. The Children's Society, for example, is using new technology to raise money to support young runaway children in Newcastle. The charity has rolled out mobile, web, app and widget tools to give supporters real-time thank you's and updates from local project workers. The aim is to re-engage their current donor base by showcasing the impact of their gifts —crucial to fundraising success.

Below, we've charted the most effective fundraising techniques of four of the UK's largest charities. Read on for candid, insightful and inspirational advice from fundraising leaders in the charity sector.





<https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media-centre/response-to-ico>

Tim Hunter, Director of Fundraising at Oxfam GB



“You have to understand how your donors like to communicate. Some prefer electronic communication, which has led us to try new things like advertising through Facebook — a new area of fundraising that is increasingly important.”

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

Oxfam focuses on three areas of work. The first is humanitarian situations, which includes the situation in Yemen at the moment where there is a civil war causing terrible malnutrition, food crises and virtual famine.

There are always new crises in the world, but we also want to fundraise for things that will change the world longer-term. We call that development work: for example, working with communities on the ground in Africa, Latin America and Asia, trying to help communities generate more money from their agriculture and to become more resilient to natural disasters such as flooding.

The third area is our broader work campaigning to stop the things that keep people poor, such as global supply chains: in the UK, our food—such as tea and chocolate — comes to us through an extended supply chain and we want to make sure the small farmers at the start of that supply chain get a fair reward for their work. To do that, we work with big companies and government regulators.

What are the most effective methods you have used to solicit new donations?

A lot of people give to Oxfam knowing we work across a broad range of issues and are happy to contribute across those three key areas. In that instance, we use mass broadcasts such as an SMS appeal; you can make a donation simply by responding to a text message.

But we also have supporters such as trusts and foundations which often give slightly larger amounts for specific emergency situations. For a long-term development project, to appeal to a trust or foundation, we will talk to them face-to-face, put forward a formal proposal in writing, and make it clear what the outcomes of that donation will be.

Info Box

Charity location: London

Size of development team: 150

Annual fundraising goal: £110 million



It varies, however. Some supporters are more traditional and prefer appeals in the post, while some prefer electronic communication. So, we have to understand their preferences and try to match them. That has led us to try new things like advertising through social media such as Facebook — a new area that is increasingly important to our fundraising efforts.

How did you get into a career working in fundraising and development?

Through, mostly, working for charities. I worked for UNICEF and before that I worked in the UK for the NSPCC. I wanted to do something which was about social change and the fundraising side of charities enables me to do that.

What is a typical day like?

I run a large team of people so, inevitably, there’s quite a lot of meetings to make sure the team is doing well — the management side of my job. When an emergency situation arises, my schedule changes and I am pulled into a meeting about Oxfam’s response to the crisis. You have to be flexible, as you never know what is going to happen.

What is the largest donation you’ve received during your time at the charity?

We received an anonymous donation two years ago of £3.1 million from somebody who had made a lot of money in a business career and wanted to make a significant donation in the area of international development. It was unexpected and extraordinary.

Tell us something most people don’t know about charity.

Did you know that we had a project last year in which we lit a refugee camp using urine? One of the issues in the developing world is women not getting safe access to sanitation in refugee camps. So, we ran a project with the University of the West of England, called “Urin-Tricity”, in which we turned the chemicals in pee into a fuel cell which can generate electricity. The idea was to provide lighting so that women could use sanitation and in safety rather than potentially being victims of abuse.

What advice do you have for anyone starting a new development office in a school or college?

Really think about why someone would give to your cause; what’s the motivation you are trying to appeal to that will hopefully make them want to donate to your cause? Get that case strongly in place before you start thinking about fundraising campaigns and techniques.



<http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/4134049>

Fiona Chilton, Head of Mass Participation Fundraising for Marie Curie UK



“There is no one-size-fits-all approach to effective fundraising, but getting to know the potential donor is really important. Listening to them is one of the most effective things you can do.”

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

At Marie Curie, we believe in a better life for people and their families living with a terminal illness and need to raise over £100 million a year from voluntary funding to ensure we can keep working towards this goal. The money donated by our generous supporters helps pay for nursing care in people’s homes and our hospices, along with our campaigning work, which fights to ensure people can access high-quality care when they need it most.

What are the most effective methods you have used to solicit new donations?

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to effective fundraising. Each ask for a donation needs to be thought about and should be approached in the appropriate way, depending on the audience. What is effective for one audience may not be effective for another. But having spent much of my career in community and events fundraising, getting to know the donor or potential donor is really important. Listening to them is one of the most effective things you can do.

How did you get into a career working in fundraising and development?

Following a year-long graduate programme in Hong Kong, I was at a loss and didn’t know what to do with my life. I had an amazing friend out there who had been the Chairman of RAG (Raise and Give, a university charity fundraising group) at our old university and by talking with her this whole world of professional fundraising came into light. It was something I had never even thought of as a career before.

On my return to the UK, I got a temporary contract with the charity Sue Ryder, in which I supported their partnerships in the north of England. This was an amazing foot in the door and, from this, I went on to be a community fundraiser, and then moved to London with Sue Ryder to work in its events team. That move was the real step change in my career, and I was promoted and stayed with the charity for six years.

Info Box

Charity location: London

Size of fundraising team:
296

Annual fundraising goal:
£100 million+



<https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/get-involved/local-fundraising#oZtDFtDz4YDf6L97>

Nearly four years ago, I moved to Marie Curie, as it is a cause that is close to my heart. My nan got to die at home, but unfortunately without the care and support that she needed, and she died in pain – I would not want other families to face this. My aunty was cared for by a Marie Curie Nurse, so I have also seen first-hand the incredible work of the charity. This personal motivation is really important to me and is something that keeps me in the sector. Getting up each day, knowing that what you do helps people, is amazingly rewarding.

What is a typical day like?

Varied! My fantastic team of fundraisers is responsible for things such as our [Great Daffodil Appeal](#). It is really important to spend time with them, encouraging them to raise even more money – our success and our failures are shared; we need to work together to raise as much money as we can.

A day could be spent in a meeting with our community fundraising team, discussing how we can make our flagship Great Daffodil Appeal even more engaging, or discussing with our corporate team what the commercial opportunities are around our Blooming Great Tea Party, or, as I have been doing recently, speaking with supporters who will do a trek in the Indian Himalayas and have currently raised £90,000 for Marie Curie – a fantastic achievement.

Tell us something most people don't know about charity.

Marie Curie supports people with *any* terminal illness. This could be dementia, Motor Neurone Disease, or Parkinson's. Most of the people we provide care for have terminal cancer, but in the community and in our hospices, we are set up to support people with any terminal illness. The charity is also the biggest charitable funder of end-of-life-care research in the UK, which is another area that our fundraising contributes to.

What advice do you have for anyone starting a new development office in a school or college?

Be persistent and be resilient. You can face a lot of “no thank you’s” in fundraising, but when you get a yes, it makes it all worthwhile. And be passionate. If you aren't passionate about what you do and about changing the world, the likelihood is you won't get there. Make sure you believe truly in your work; that will go a long way.



<https://bedford.diabetesukgroup.org/>

Katie Simmons, Assistant Director of Engagement and Partnerships, Diabetes UK



“It’s crucial to do your groundwork and understand what your supporters and potential donors want from you, and to match that”

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

Diabetes UK has a vision of a world where diabetes can do no harm. Alongside work to support people living with diabetes such as our Helpline, we’re committed to funding the best new research to ensure we achieve this aim. This includes developing better treatments, new technologies, and one day a cure. Only 0.5p of every research pound is spent on diabetes research, but with over 4.5 million people living with the condition in the UK, we must do all we can to bring in more funding.

What are the most effective methods you have used to solicit new donations?

Our fundraising portfolio is broad, covering regular and one-off giving, events, corporate and major donors, and we’re lucky to have the support of thousands of committed donors and fundraisers. We aim to make sure that our fundraising is exciting and engaging, and that people want to join us to tackle the diabetes crisis.

At the moment we’re in the middle of one of our flagship events, the Million Step Challenge, which has been a really successful way for us bringing together thousands of people to not only raise money but also to get healthier.

How did you get into a career working in fundraising and development?

I’ve worked in fundraising for the majority of my career, starting out at the NSPCC, which was a great foundation in what excellent fundraising looks like. I’m fortunate to have worked in several brilliant national charities including Great Ormond Street and Bliss. I was involved in fundraising and event organising at school and university, and it felt like a natural fit.

Info Box

Charity location: London

Size of fundraising team:
60

Annual fundraising goal:
£28 million



<https://bedford.diabetesukgroup.org/>

What is a typical day like?

There's no such thing as a typical day! I might be reviewing budgets, meeting with my team to plan new activity, updating our board on our progress, meeting donors, or attending events to find out about new developments in the sector. I aim to spend as much time as possible with my team and have a hands-on leadership style, and am inspired by their energy and creative thinking. As in any large organisation, and with a team of 60 staff, staying on top of email is a constant battle!

What is the largest donation you've received during your time at the charity?

Our portfolio covers everyone from people giving a few pounds a month, to our philanthropy programme, in which people commit to give a significant amount of money, and both are really valuable to us. One of our most successful recent events with our highest value supporters was a Royal Gala, hosted by our patron HM, The Queen. Earlier on in my career I worked with a major UK energy supplier who pledged support of over £1 million.

Tell us something most people don't know about your charity.

The charity sector is staffed by incredibly talented and driven professionals who are committed to doing the very best for their cause and their supporters. And, not many people know that Diabetes UK was founded by the author HG Wells.

What advice do you have for anyone starting a new development office in a school or college?

With any new fundraising project, it's crucial to do your groundwork and understand what your supporters and potential donors want from you, and to make sure you match what you offer with what they are looking for.



<http://www.logoed.co.uk/2012/04/18/mental-health-foundation/>

Mark Rowland, Director for Fundraising and Communications at the Mental Health Foundation



Info Box

Charity location: London

Size of fundraising team:
16

Annual fundraising goal:
£5 million

“Make the most of what you already have: pupils, parents, business contacts and the wider local community, which can work together and be bigger than their sum of parts”

What projects are you fundraising for in 2017?

We have a range of exciting new work that is being planned under the banner of what we are calling “Thrive Work”. These are new projects which we think would have a tangible and long-lasting impact on the nation’s mental health, but for a number of reasons haven’t been developed or invested in. Our focus is on preventing people getting unwell and, while I can’t say what the new ideas are just yet, they are good examples of what the voluntary sector can do to spot and fill gaps which the government and private sector haven’t filled. We want to be an organisation that takes risks, pioneers new ideas and then scales the ones that are successful.

What are the most effective methods you have used to solicit new donations?

Two approaches seem to be providing strong results. One is targeted adverts through Facebook, inviting people to provide us with their details to receive a free guide to good mental health, which is followed up with a phone call. The second approach is providing a series of mental health tips via mobile phones. These build on a value exchange approach to fundraising.

How did you get into a career working in fundraising and development?

I left university and read about a man called [James Mawdsley](#) who had gone to Burma and staged a peaceful protest against the country’s human rights record. He was arrested and given a 17-year prison sentence. My first job was to run the campaign to get him out of jail and raise the profile of the issues that James had highlighted. James was released after 14 months in solitary confinement. I had worked myself out of a job, but my former boss suggested that many of the same skills I’d learnt from campaigning could be applied to a career in fundraising.



<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work>

What is a typical day like?

A typical day includes three or four meetings and lots of emails. A good day includes doing a deal or persuading someone to do something new. Most days also include a run, which is vital to me feeling energised and positive.

What is the largest donation you've received during your time at the charity?

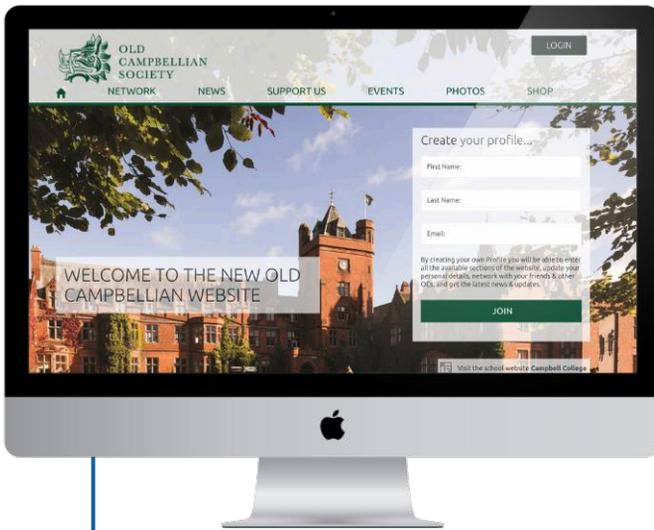
The largest single gift I have personally solicited was £622,000, from a venture capitalist who had sold his business and wrote to 20 charities asking them to give him their value propositions on how they'd use the money. I remember him saying, "I don't invest in ideas; I invest in management teams who can execute!"

Tell us something most people don't know about the charity.

People are paid; they are professional; working for a charity is a career choice like any other profession.

What advice do you have for anyone starting a new development office in a school or college?

Discover the hidden treasure; make the most of what you already have: pupils, parents, business contacts and the wider local community. And recruit the right people who will work together, being bigger than their sum of parts.



About ToucanTech



ToucanTech is a beautiful alumni software for schools and universities. Combining a community website, database, CRM, email engine, events management, fundraising and news, it's an affordable all-in-one system to stay in touch with former students and potential donors.



Database

Import, filter, group, search and update records in a few clicks



CRM

Track activity, measure engagement, run fundraising reports and more



Community

Connect your alumni on a private network, synced with social media



Fundraising

Process and log donations, set up campaigns, record GiftAid, track donors



News

Publish news stories and other content, tag people and share on social media



Gallery

Post photos, artwork, archives, year books and tag people and share



Events

Plan your dinners, reunions and concerts, send reminders, book tickets



Mentoring

Match students and alumni with careers advisors, post jobs, track progress



Clubs

Set up sub-groups within your network, with their own news and events



Email

Create and track all your communications, including mass emails



Resources

Create a library of useful resources, anything from school magazine PDFs to useful websites



Shop

Open your own online shop selling your school merchandise