

# 11 fundraising best practices when the shows can't go on

7 MIN READ



Arts and culture organizations often talk about creating loyal donors. Ditto for colleges and universities that work to maintain relationships with alumni and other supporters. Perhaps it's time we flipped that thinking on its head – is it about the donor being loyal to you or your organization being loyal to the donor? In today's uncertain times, our experts say the latter will serve you better.

Let's face it – people are worried. They've watched their beloved live events get postponed or cancelled en masse around the world. Broadway is dark. Campuses are closed and classes have moved online.

So, what exactly are fundraisers supposed to do in these uncertain times? We reached out to the AudienceView team, which includes former executive directors, general managers, individual giving managers and more, for their suggestions. Here are 11 recommendations for fundraising teams when the shows can't go on.

## 1. Call donors and ask how they are doing

Be that warm, friendly voice at the other end of the phone. This isn't about generating donations; it's about showing you care and sharing clear information. It will also strengthen the relationship over the longer term.

## 2. Be strategic about your outreach

Everybody is sending digital messages right now. If you're only communicating via email, you won't get anywhere. Go back to the basics and remember the importance of reaching out at the right time, with the right message via the right channel.

## 3. Let your data guide you

At AudienceView, we love analytics because they help organizations make informed business decisions. And it's all about data in a time like this.

Your data can show you who to reach out to, how to reach out and whether you have any potential prospects who might step up in tough times. You can also use your data to create a post-pandemic action plan that you can quickly kickstart once things return to normal. If AudienceView can help you with this, please [reach out](#)

to our team.

#### 4. Encourage customers to donate the value of unused tickets

When the time is right, customers will undoubtedly come rushing back to live events to heal their hearts and minds. Help your customers see how turning tickets for a postponed or cancelled show into a tax-deductible donation could be the difference in whether your organization survives through this unsettled time.

## 5. Create content that shows how donations have helped

Supporters love to see the difference their gifts are making. Write a blog post, record a podcast or make a video with your phone. It doesn't have to be fancy or perfect – but it should tell the story of where their donations helped and why.

## 6. Take learning and storytelling to the next level and make it exclusive to donors

Audiences are craving connection as we self isolate or find ourselves under “shelter in place” orders. Beyond blog posts, podcasts and videos, leverage the full power of the internet.

For example, pay an artist to do a masterclass. Perhaps you can leverage an existing sponsorship to help with costs. Or, create an engagement series where your artistic director or a producer give a talk, then host a Q&A at the end. Colleges and universities can also consider unique online learning opportunities for alumni.

## 7. Make backstage tours virtual

While venues are dark, your loyal supporters are likely longing for normalcy and remembering joyous times spent at your events. If you still have staff working from your venue, find someone with an outgoing personality – this could be an artist or a member of your development team – to take donors on a behind-the-scenes tour. Share your organization’s history, some memorable stories and explain how donor support continues to make a difference.

## 8. Get super savvy with social

In addition to what you're already doing, look for new ways to engage and generate revenue. Have one of your actors or opera stars take TheaterMania's [Broadway Hand Wash Challenge](#), tag their peers to join in and ask for donations to your organization. This is a great way to use your connections to support your organization.

[https://www.instagram.com/p/B91sdRIAlE4/embed/?cr=1&v=12&wp=1080&rd=https%3A%2F%2Faudienceview.c  
fundraising-best-practices-when-the-shows-cant-go-  
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## 9. Host a virtual fundraiser

Stars in the House is offering daily mini-concerts and conversations with stars from the stage and screen. Created by SiriusXM Broadway host Seth Rudetsky and producer James Wesley, it is raising spirits and asking viewers to [donate to The Actors Fund](#), an AudienceView Unlimited client that provides support for

everyone in entertainment. New shows will [air daily on YouTube](#) at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern until Broadway reopens.

They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so this could be something to pursue in your own community. Our experts recommend using YouTube Live because of its powerful bandwidth and ability to include fundraising links. People are willing to support the arts online if organizations can figure out how to do it! It's also worth mentioning that your YouTube live stream can be public, unlisted or private.

## **10. Partner to raise funds with other organizations in your community**

It seems like everybody is reaching out with a message or an ask around COVID-19. Inboxes are overflowing and consumers just don't have the time to read everything or the money to support everyone. Some people may be making micro-donations to several organizations so they can feel like they are supporting many different groups.

Instead, by bringing a group of organizations together to make a single ask, you can reach more people and show how a larger total donation could help the entire community. Be sure to figure out how contributions will be collected and split ahead of time to avoid misunderstandings.

Together, you can also work with other community partners to add value. Volunteers are needed for meal distribution and to deliver groceries, prescriptions and other urgent supplies to seniors and people who are immunocompromised. There's a lot of grassroots coordination going on and arts and culture organizations can play an important role. A donor would want to support that type of community effort.

## **11. Tackle your to do list**

What are the things that you've always wanted to do, but never had the time? Do those things now! As an example, spend time reflecting on your fundraising value proposition. Think about how you serve your community. Learn where you can improve and implement steps for positive change.

Our community is all in this together. Is there something your fundraising team is doing successfully in these unprecedented times? If so, we'd love to hear about it. You can reach us via [marketing@audienceview.com](mailto:marketing@audienceview.com)