



Livestream Fundraising: Is It Really Just Peer-to-Peer Online?

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Social fundraising practitioners who grew up doing walks, runs and rides can have difficulty relating to livestreaming. We sometimes don't want to believe that these online (especially gaming) communities are real communities. But make no mistake — they are.

Relationships Inside Livestream Fundraising Efforts

There are three types of relationships in livestream fundraising that are critical to understanding why people watch streams, a prerequisite to donating.

1. The relationship of a single viewer to the streamer. Often, streamers will call out individuals who donate to them. That's a one-on-one relationship.
2. The relationship of the entire audience to the streamer. Sometimes, the streamer will address the audience as a singular entity (usually calling them "chat").
3. The relationship of each viewer to each other. In the community of a given streamer, people engage with one another outside of interaction with the streamer.

What Is Livestream?

If you're unfamiliar with livestreaming, go online and engage with a livestream as a viewer for a bit. Then, open a second screen and just listen as you do other work for a few hours. Donate to a cause or contribute to the livestreamer. How was it? Fun, right?

We should tease out a few terms. "Livestream" means just that — you are online looking at and hearing what a person is doing in real time. They are streaming.

Livestream doesn't necessarily mean gaming, gardening, dancing or anything more specific than emails are specific to a subject. It's an avenue for someone to showcase themselves online. Subject matter is independent of the communication method or tool.

Is Livestream Just Gaming or Other Stuff?

While gamers raise an awful lot of money doing livestream gaming for nonprofits' benefit, gaming is subject matter. As livestream became more mainstream, the word "gamers" was replaced with "content creators" as the content became more diverse and extended beyond gaming. People who are content creators and live broadcast are called "livestreamers" or "streamers." Really popular streamers with a significant audience are "influencers."

Who Is the Livestream Fundraiser Person?

Content creators are livestreamers, or "streamers." All are influencers, some more successful than others. These are the people who are doing the fundraising.

Nonprofits can use livestream as a tool in different ways. The three primary uses are:

1. Volunteer or paid influencers.
2. Volunteer non-influencers (this is most like the old-school peer-to-peer scenario).
3. Nonprofit broadcasting live events

Livestreaming is unique in giving you more sensory input than most other channels, except being in-person. You can see it. You can hear it. You can read the concurrent chat. However, what's really unique in some livestream fundraising are the influencers who enjoy the benefits of a parasocial relationship with their audience.

The Parasocial Relationship

“Parasocial relationship” is a term that refers to an emotional connection felt by people who view media personalities as actual friends, despite not having any (or limited) interactions with them. The “relationship” grows deeper the more people watch the media personality.

This is unique to livestream fundraising, as opposed to other forms of fundraising, and drives most high-revenue fundraisers. Influencers' parasocial relationship with their audience powers their ability to get donations.

Content Creators: Who/What Are They?

A content creator livestreams online, maybe gaming or showing you how to DIY your off-the-grid lifestyle, grow mushrooms or build a bat house. In terms of social fundraising, many have tried to equate the content creator to a team captain. This can sometimes be right, but more often, a content creator is much more like an event host or sponsor, depending on the size of their existing audience.

Influencers: Recruitment, Recognition and Retention

You recruit a content creator who has a significant audience.

“It’s a package deal — you get them, you get their audience,” Jordan Mady, manager of a content creator fundraising program for a major Canadian charity, said.

“They know the drill,” Mady added of the content creator. “Every piece of livestream is an event; it’s just that we’re fundraising for charity today.”

So, every person already knows what to do. No training is required, at least on that front. This livestreamer is a content creator with an audience — an influencer.

Livestream Donor and Fundraiser Data

In all areas of donor interaction, we as an industry are learning (the hard way) that donors will give us their data when they want us to have their data. We don’t own their data; they do. In this sense, livestream fundraising is very different from traditional peer-to-peer situations where we get donor data with the donation. The bar for us is higher in livestream. We are learning we must create situations that make the donors want to make sure we can stay in touch.

<https://www.nonprofitpro.com/post/livestream-fundraising-is-it-really-just-peer-to-peer-online/>