Cyber-Charity

Making the shift from snail mail to online customer donations.

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Session 4D: “Utility Support of Low Income Agencies”

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The Players

BGE

BGE, headquartered in Baltimore, is Maryland’s largest natural gas and electric utility. BGE’s more than 3,200 employees deliver power to more than 1.25 million electric customers and more than 650,000 natural gas customers in central Maryland.
The Players

Fuel Fund of Maryland

The Fuel Fund of Maryland provides resources to vulnerable Maryland families for heat and home utility needs. Last year the Fuel Fund assisted more than 7,000 households in the Baltimore region. The Fuel Fund was incorporated in 1981 as the Fuel Fund of Central Maryland, following the nation's first energy crisis during the late 1970s when an oil embargo squeezed supply, and energy prices soared.
The Problem

• The primary means of soliciting BGE customer donations to the Fuel Fund of Maryland has been the annual envelope campaign:
  – Postage-paid envelopes inserted in BGE bills in December and January each year

• For various reasons, that campaign has declined in recent years:
  – Total loss of ~$13.5 million in bill payments in the same period, with customer and BGE payments/credits.
Envelope Campaign historical results

The decade-long decline in total giving through the Envelope Campaign...

Included a $25,000 gift from one donor.
Obtaining new donors is key to the Fuel Fund’s future success:

- Fuel Fund has strong donor retention: 64% overall; 82% after the third gift
- Each new BGE customer donor contributes a lifetime total of $281
Clues to a solution:

• Increase in BGE customer “e-billing”
  – About 21% of BGE customers do not receive a hard copy bill today.

• About 352,000 BGE customers pay online at bge.com.
  – Based on the 2014 envelope campaign return rate of 0.47%, this option could acquire about 1,650 new on-line donors.

• Fuel Fund calculates that each donor contributes $281 over a lifetime
  – At 1,650 new donors that could raise $464,000 in contributions.
Make a Fuel Fund Donation

Your gift today helps ensure your neighbors have the power they need to keep the lights and the heat on. With your 100% tax-deductible donation, the Fuel Fund of Maryland, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, gives Maryland families in need a new beginning by providing financial assistance to restore their power, and the tools to afford their home energy needs. The Fuel Fund of Maryland is an independent charity and is not affiliated with BGE.

Donation Amount

Any Amount  $25  $50  $75  $100  No Donation

Your donation will be reflected as a separate charge from BGE. Your donation will process on 06/02/2018 from the account designated as “Bank of America Checking”. You may make a donation for any amount between $1 and $1,000. For donations of more than $1,000, please contact the Fuel Fund of Maryland directly. It will be in addition to your BGE payment of $1,000.
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The Details

Requirements:

• BGE must be able to track all donations for auditing purposes;
• Customers should be able to donate any amount they choose (*up to $1,000*);
• Customers must be logged in to their account in bge.com so they do not have to submit personal and payment information;
• The donation should not appear on a customer’s account as an excess credit or as an item owed showing on the bill;
• A bill message should acknowledge the donation in the month it is paid;
• The program must be able to provide Fuel Fund with donor information, for tax acknowledgement purposes.
Results

2017 Donations

Donations
Donors

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Tausende

$0 $5 $10 $15 $20 $25

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 2,500

Donations
Donors
Results

Donations trend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Donations</th>
<th>Donors</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>9046 Tausende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>8902 Tausende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 - annualized</td>
<td>11165 Tausende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018 through May</td>
<td>4801 Tausende</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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“A/B Testing” (assigned randomly by account number)

A - During Payment Process, Preset Options of 25, 50, 75, 100 + Any Amount

B - During Payment Process, Enter Amount Only -- No presets

C - During Payment Process, Preset Options of 5, 10, 15, 25 + Any Amount

D - During Payment Process, Preset Options of 5, 10, 15, 25, 50, 75, or 100
Issues: “I’m tired of seeing this!”
Issues: “Oops, I donated my bill amount.”
What’s next?

• Settle on one of the four test options
• Fuel Fund would like customer emails
  – Looking into adding opt-out feature
  • “Check this box if you do not want to share your email with Fuel Fund.”

Questions?