Sample Database Specification
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Introduction

This is a sample specification from Charity Consultants Ltd for a major donor/capital campaign fundraising database.

It outlines fundraising database specification we use to help fundraisers and IT people start to produce a detailed database specification if:

a) they are buying a new database or
b) checking whether an existing organisation's database might be adapted for fundraising.

Bear in mind that if you are going out to tender or versioning an existing database for a major donor campaign it will need to be far more detailed with field by field specifications but if you want to get up and running quickly this will probably help.

The detailed requirements indicate the level of detail required for effective fundraising research into existing and potential donors plus prospect management.

As a first step in testing the suitability of your database for a major gift or capital campaign review this list, ticking the boxes where you believe your system can deliver this feature.

This specification is divided into five sections defining requirements for:

- A basic record of donors, prospective and possible donors
- Anecdotal information
- A donations history
- An earmarking system
- Gifts and pledges

It aims to cover the main purposes of the system in identifying possible or prospective supporters and recording information about them. As you are going through the checklist feel free to add additional requirements as you see fit. All we ask is that you send us a copy of your final database specification so that we can improve the brief for other capital and major donors.

However please bear in mind that this is not a formal piece of IT advice or consultancy. You may need to check this with your IT advisers. However the basis of this model has been used for over 15 years; whilst the technology and software changes the essential needs of capital and major donor fundraisers to manage their friends and supporters seems to be as old as fundraising itself.
The basic record

- The basic record of donors, possible and prospective supporters needs to contain:
  - name, address, telephone, email and fax number allowing for at least 6 lines of address. The system needs to be able to accommodate the complexities of the UK system of title and salutation.
  - three optional address, telephone and fax numbers for home, office or holiday addresses. (minimum of one address).
  - a definition of whether the person recorded is:
    - a cold prospect
    - an existing supporter
    - a warm prospect – i.e. they are capable of making a large gift, are interested in our type of cause and we have a way of meeting them.
    - hot prospect - we are currently in discussion with them.
  - a mailmerge and word processing facility which allows a choice of:
    - first name or title/surname on letter
    - formal name on envelope and address on letter. This again needs to recognise the peculiarities of the English version of titles as defined by Debrett's Correct Form.
    - a facility to de-duplicate against name and address
    - automatic postcoding of UK addresses
    - a way of signalling if a record being added is recorded anywhere else on the database, not necessarily as a prime record itself.
  - all of these records need to be capable of selection and analysis by:
    - counties and postcode
    - categories which identify areas of common interest

Anecdotal information

- The software should contain at least one area for comments or notepad. This provides a facility to record comments about a prospect in chronological order.
- There are five types of comments:
  - to present a complete picture of a supporter's past contact with the charity; probably some form of chronological contact log.
  - to indicate which staff and volunteer fund-raiser has the lead position on any prospect.
  - summarises the size of potential gift identified by research and the network of known personal/business contacts.
  - summarises what mailings supporters or prospects have received.
  - to record general information about the subject.
- This information will need 3 levels of confidentiality rising from:
  - open to all authorised users of the system to
  - restricted to fundraisers
  - restricted to members of the senior management team (usually for anonymous donors).
Linking Common Areas of Interest

As well as recording basic information, such as address and comments about donors, the fundraising database identifies potential donors from desk research and paper files. The crucial value of the database is linking existing supporters to prospects. If we can identify such a relationship the charity can ask the existing supporter to open a door to the prospect.

- These potential links will cover the following areas:
  - donor/support, committee member, other
  - age
  - family relationships
  - education - secondary
  - further
  - military career
  - career
  - directorships
  - residences
  - voluntary sector involvement (past and present)
  - support to other voluntary organisations
  - links to charity’s activities e.g sufferer within family from disease which the charity works to counter
  - interests
  - personal friendships
  - recent business dealings
  - clubs
  - potential allegiances (where known)
  - religious affiliation (if known)
  - national/international interests/known regional preferences
  - region
  - sector
  - nationality
  - ethnic origin (white, black-Caribbean, black-African, black other (please specify), Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, other (please specify).
  - additional fields

In each case these are search fields with a facility to make comments against each field.

The above information and any anecdotal information (see anecdotal information above) must be capable of transferring to a word processing facility to complete briefing notes and reports for fundraisers operating at chairmen/CEO level.

In addition all database fields and comments need to be searchable using key words. It is estimated that initially 100 key words will be used.
Donations history

- The system needs to be able to post donations to separate accounting areas.
- Information needs to include:
  - Amount/gift in kind details and value
  - Cash/pledge
  - Date of first payment (by year) and last payment
  - Income this year
  - Income last year
  - Highest donation
  - Lowest donation
  - Number of gifts this year
  - Number of gifts last year
  - Number of gifts earlier years
  - Number of gifts over lifetime
  - Total value of gifts over lifetime.
- The source of each donation needs to be codable (up to 100) and subject to analysis.

Earmarking

- Many gifts will come earmarked for specific projects. Fundraisers need to be able to:
  - Specify earmarking
  - Advise operational and finance functions of earmarking
  - Know when earmarked funds are allocated
  - Receive a simple report once funds are spent
  - Receive a simple report one year after funds are spent.

Gift Aid & Pledges

- The software will have analysis packages to handle forward pledges under Gift Aid pledges. As well as producing Gift Aid reports and tax reclaim facilities the system needs to note pledges and handle analysis of payments against commitments.
  - The charity will operate at four levels of such promises:
    - Likely to pledge
    - Verbal pledge
    - Written pledge
    - Donation.
- Pledges must be capable of splitting income across earmarked areas and tax or Gift Aids applied across these areas.
- The fundraising database needs to be able to include all relevant procedures to allow the charity to liaise with donors, link to accounts and satisfy the Inland Revenue for the purposes of Gift Aid.