



CASE STUDY

PAN-MASS CHALLENGE

Using a new fundraising technology to reach the growing audience of donors with donor-advised funds

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The Pan-Mass Challenge (PMC), a nonprofit organization based in Needham, Mass., is the nation's original fundraising bike-a-thon, and today raises more money for charity than any other single athletic fundraising event in the country. The funds raised support cancer research and treatment at the world-renowned Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, Mass.

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The Challenge

Meeting donors where and how they give

Once a year, thousands of cyclists gather for the common goal of raising money to fight cancer. These dedicated riders traverse the winding streets and roads of Massachusetts, riding up to 192 miles over two days on behalf of the scores of donors who have sponsored their rides.

In order to facilitate its riders' fundraising efforts, PMC is committed to providing tools in line with today's changing charitable landscape. For instance, as donors increasingly turned to online giving, PMC began offering credit cards as a payment option and this is now the most common tool for making donations. However, PMC also recognized that card processing fees were reducing the amount of each donation it received.

Identifying an opportunity to both reduce transaction fees and tap the growing number of donors with donor-advised funds, PMC launched the DAF Direct application in 2013 (which appears as an option when donors choose their giving method) to enable DAF donors to conveniently support individual riders directly from their DAF. Unlike credit card donations, DAF grants are not subject to a processing fee, which means 100 percent of the grant go to the charity.¹

The Solution

Spreading the word about DAF Direct ease-of-use

Now in its third year using DAF Direct, PMC continues its efforts to spread the word about this important donation option. Every registered rider receives an email template with an embedded DAF Direct link. By clicking the link, donors are taken directly to their DAF, where they can simply and easily fill in the amount to complete their grant recommendation.

Taking this outreach effort a step further, PMC created special targeted communications for DAF donors. Because PMC boasts a rider retention rate of nearly 75 percent, it was important to help riders tap into this highly desirable donor base. "The vast majority of our riders return annually with renewed enthusiasm and deeper commitments to both the ride and the goal, which is why, in addition to our regular email template, we created a specific email for fundraisers who had been supported by a DAF grant the previous year," explained David Hellman, senior vice president of operations PMC. "In this email, we tell the riders the names of the donors who used their DAF to support them in the previous ride. Armed with this information, the riders can get a head start on their campaign with people who are extremely likely to make a pledge."

The Result

DAF Direct drives increases in giving

While ridership in the 2014 Pan-Mass Challenge increased by a modest 200 participants, fundraising efforts rose significantly, particularly from DAF donations. In all, grants from the Fidelity Charitable® DAF program totaled \$1,949,757 versus \$1,653,283 for the 2013 event, while year-over-year the number of grants rose from 1,586 to 1,969. This translates to a nearly 18 percent increase in dollars and a nearly 24 percent increase in grant volume over 2013.

Use of the DAF Direct online application accounted for more than 600 individual donations from Fidelity Charitable donors totaling \$348,487—or almost 2 of every 5 grant recommendations.

“Our organization is very focused on making fundraising as easy as possible for our riders and for our donors,” added Michele Sommer, director of finance and administration for PMC. “DAF Direct is a great tool for taking the friction out of fundraising. By making it dramatically easier for DAF givers to recommend grants to the Pan-Mass Challenge, we’re finding they are more likely to come back year after year to support us. One of the reasons we have put so much effort into educating our riders about DAF givers is that this is an audience that has already put money aside and is looking for charitable causes to support. We have found these donations fit nicely with their overall philosophy of giving. So, by offering DAF Direct, which makes it incredibly easy to give, we have a win-win opportunity.”

“My advice to nonprofits considering adopting the application is just try it,” concluded Sommer. “Don’t worry about how it will be received. DAF Direct is very easy to implement and efficient to use. Just add it as an option, and see what happens. I think you’ll find that there are a lot more DAF donors out there than many people realize.”

In 2014,
the average grant
size from the largest
DAF sponsor totaled
\$990.



To find out more about the DAF Direct application, please visit DAFDirect.org.