

In-Memory Australia: Cinderella or Fairy Princess?

Back in January we ran a survey of in-memory fundraising among IAC members. We were keen to understand the current status and future potential of in-memory fundraising in Australia. Is it – as in the UK – in the ascendance? Or stuck in the basement, waiting for a fairy godmother? The results were not encouraging – only 15 committed (or perhaps kindly!) charities completed the questionnaire.

Based on these limited results, it appears that in-memory fundraising is still very much the Cinderella of Australian fundraising. Three quarters of respondents felt that their organisation was 'not very' or 'not at all' committed to in-memory fundraising currently. Two thirds received a total of less than \$50,000 known in-memory income over the past 3 years. In-memory activities were largely reactive – funeral collection envelopes and thankyou letters – rather than strategic. Five of the fifteen charities had no in-memory budget; seven more spent less than \$10,000 a year. Likewise, the amount of team time devoted to in-memory fundraising was tiny – for most, one staff day a week or a fortnight, if any.

There were a few glimmers of light. Two thirds of this (admittedly biased) sample believed that in-memory fundraising would be 'fairly' or 'very important' to their future strategy. As one large national charity put it "It's something we are interested in investing in as we see an audience for it for our cause". A specialist cancer charity said "We are not doing anything proactively, however that is going to change – more staff time will be directed here in future". One regional faith organisation was looking to "establish a formal in-memory program". At present, priorities focus on doing the groundwork : raising internal interest, investing in better marketing materials, and developing new products or events.

Despite the apparent lack of interest *now*, we believe that in-memory giving will become a significant Australian income stream in future. Our research – and the experience of hundreds of British charities – shows that in-memory is a significant motivation for engaging with charities; whether by giving money, participating in events, volunteering or leaving a legacy.

And it's not a one-way street. Donors appreciate the experience, the outlet, the reward it gives them and its role in helping them to remember. Many in-memory donors develop an enduring personal connection with the chosen charity as it represents a link to someone they have loved and lost – giving and fundraising can be an important way of ensuring their loved one will not be forgotten.

Good stewardship of in-memory donors is vital. Donors want to think that the charity is grateful for their donation, which is somehow as special to the charity as it is to them. The experience of the first interaction is crucial, and donors expect a swift acknowledgement and

a warm thank-you. They want charity communications thereafter to feel sensitive, appreciative and the more personal the better.

Despite the sensitivities, the rewards can be high. Based on the in-memory donations reported by the general public – from funeral collections and tribute funds to commemorative items (whether physical or digital) to event participation – we estimate that total in-memory giving is worth over £2bn a year to UK charities; that's 30% of fundraised income excluding bequests.

So if you are starting out in in-memory fundraising, where to begin? Perhaps it's best to focus on the in-memory supporters you know you have, and ensuring they have the best possible experience of supporting your charity. Here's a few tips from our Head of In-Memory Consulting, Kate Jenkinson:

- **Make sure you are capturing all in-memory motivations at point of contact** on your online donation form, and if possible the name and relationship of the person they're remembering. Offer a named person at your charity to talk to – person to person contact is really appreciated, especially for people in this climate who've been recently bereaved.
- **Make sure your thank you letter to known in-memory donors acknowledges their motivation** (and if possible, the loved one), and how much your charity appreciates gifts of this kind. This letter could be another opportunity to invite them to contact you and tell you more about why they've chosen your charity for gifts in their loved one's memory.
- Think about the possibility of **an in-memory landing page**, that affirms that in-memory giving to your charity is a 'thing'; shows your appreciation; uses a case study to normalise in-memory giving; inspires people; and suggests different things they can do for you in memory.
- Finally, you might like to think about how you can **make the best use of your charity's assets (physical and/ or digital)** to create a place for remembrance; whether this is with a physical commemorative at your premises, or an online destination like a tribute page or book of remembrance. Both options could really help raise awareness of in-memory giving to your charity.

If you'd like to know more about the In-Memory Insight findings, or how to develop an in-memory fundraising strategy that's right for you, contact Kate Jenkinson on k.jenkinson@legacyforesight.co.uk