



The State of
**Nonprofit
Marketing**

2024 EDITION

Nonprofits have the unique opportunity to connect on a level of deeper trust with their supporters over the average company.



ZOOMING OUT: A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

The non-profit world is constantly evolving, and 2024 is no exception. While economic uncertainty, stricter data privacy rules, and changing donor habits present challenges – there's good news! Proven strategies exist to help nonprofit organizations achieve key goals and development targets.

The key to nonprofit success? Connecting deeply with your audience and igniting their passion for your mission. In today's competitive environment, standing out from the crowd is crucial.

At the heart of nonprofit growth is the unwavering ability to connect people to your mission, driving year-over-year revenue. The current landscape, crowded as it may be, offers a unique chance to distinguish your cause and resonate more deeply with your audience.

Reaching higher revenue goals, even with limited budgets and staff, requires more than creative and innovative ideas — it also demands effective use of personalization, segmentation, and automation — the trifecta of marketing success.

After surveying 446 nonprofit marketers, leaders, and experts, one thing has become abundantly clear:

Raising more funds for your mission starts with a strategic investment in marketing. This empowers your team to build the systems and processes that expand your supporter base, generate more targeted campaigns, and measure success more accurately.

Investing in your team goes beyond mere resources — it's about nurturing a group of talented innovators and strategic thinkers who bring your mission to life every day. Together, we're not just facing the year ahead; we're setting the stage for unprecedented engagement and growth.

400+
RESPONDENTS



26 QUESTIONS



DISCOVERY FIRST.
STRATEGY SECOND.



TRANSFORMATIONAL
+ LONG-TERM
CONNECTIONS

Zooming in: Additional insights

At Feathr, our ethos is that marketing is at the heart of the mission. Too often, nonprofit marketing and communications teams are seen as support functions rather than primary drivers of the cause. Consequently, this can result in marketing being underfunded and undervalued.

In this year's report, we found a few key themes that shed light on the current state of nonprofit marketing and highlight how to turn these challenges into opportunities in the year ahead.

- **1. Email continues to reign as the most effective marketing channel.** Most nonprofits attribute email as the most reliable channel for connecting with supporters, and plan to either maintain or increase investments in it next year.
- **2. Nonprofits need greater financial flexibility to invest in better marketing tools.** Tight budgets mean little to invest in effective marketing technology, resulting in data scattered across platforms. This fragmentation hinders effective campaign management and reporting, creating a roadblock to strategic decision-making and tangible results.
- **3. Adaptability will be the strength of forward thinking organizations in the future.** With cookie deprecation, the rise of AI, and a generational transition in donor demographics, the importance of continuous learning and resourcing the necessary knowledge and tools is crucial.

Our sector is quickly evolving. With it, there is a pressing need for nonprofits to become truly digital-first. While traditional channels hold value, successful marketing is multi-channel, engaging supporters across various touchpoints. With the right systems in place, nonprofits can capitalize on engagement opportunities, keep pace with modern innovation, and create a more personalized experience for their supporters.



The future continues to
be all about **deepening
connections with your
community.**



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"Operating a charity is not free"

It's a tale as old as time: Nonprofits are perpetually asked to prove themselves through their programs, their impact, and their fund distribution. Over the past decade, [Dan Pallotta has been redirecting the conversation about the overhead myth](#) — the pervasive misconception that nonprofits should drastically minimize spending on overhead costs.

As the [Council of Nonprofits puts it, "operating a charity is not free,"](#) and it's essential to invest in the organization's capacity to deliver its mission effectively. Enlightened donors and grantmakers now recognize that administrative and marketing expenses are crucial for sustainable operations.

Although the conversation about the overhead myth is changing, most nonprofits strive to keep overhead low. This financial rigidity trickles down to fundraising, operations, and marketing teams, resulting in even tighter budgets and resource allocation compared to last year.

So what can organizations do today to meet their goals while working under these challenges? One recommendation is to reevaluate how you view and manage your resources. Streamlining your fundraising and marketing efforts through integrated tools can be a significant step forward.

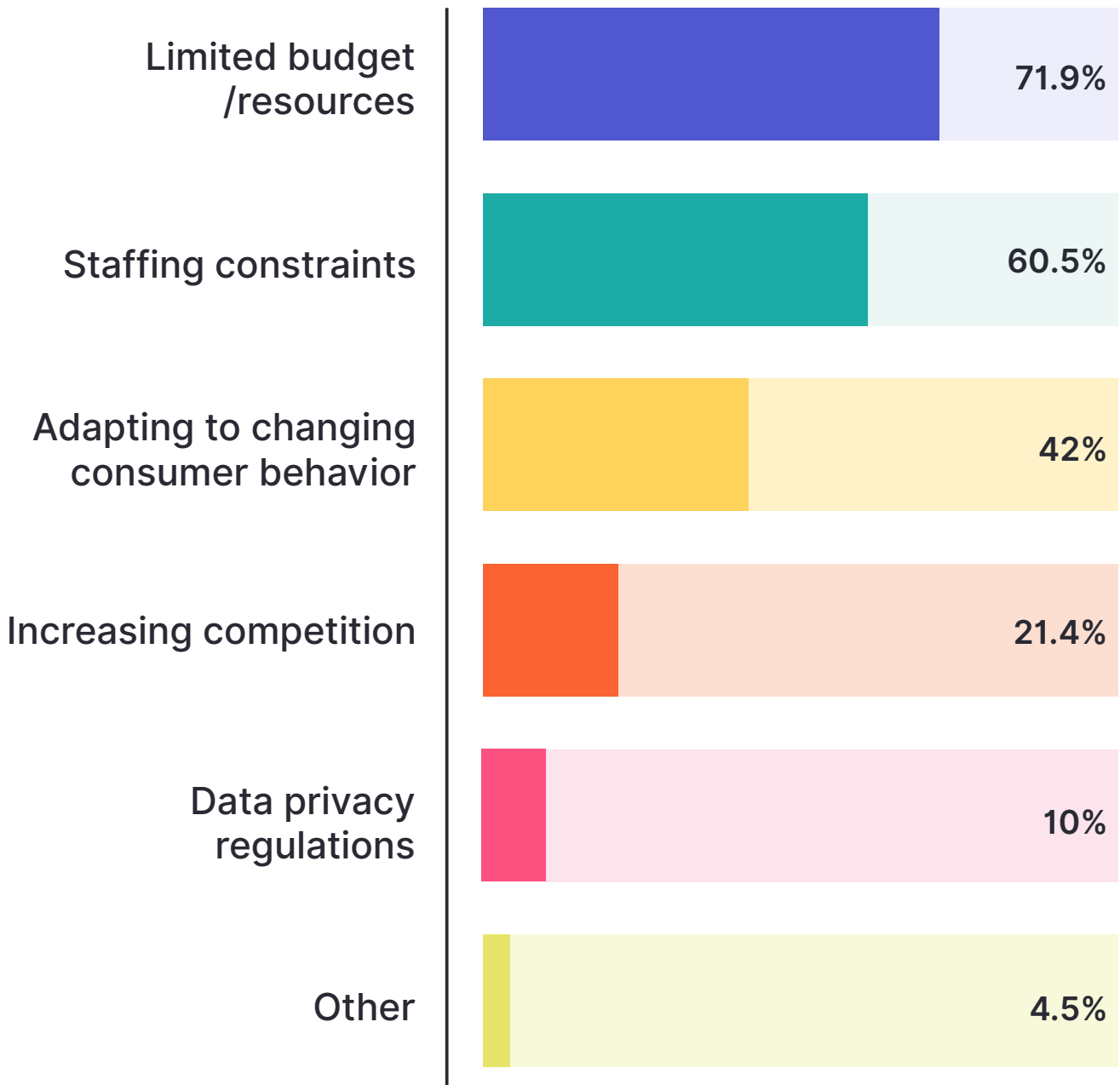
Instead of juggling multiple platforms, consider how consolidating your efforts with an all-in-one marketing solution could free up resources, enhance efficiency, and ultimately allow you to focus more on impact and less on overhead.

In navigating these challenges, it's not about reducing costs in a vacuum — it's about smart investment in tools that amplify your reach and effectiveness without the need for extensive resources. This approach not only aligns with modern donor expectations but also sets the stage for more strategic and impactful operations.





What challenges do you foresee in achieving your marketing goals this year?



MARKETING DESERVES A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Over 65% of nonprofits surveyed operate with an annual marketing budget of less than \$100,000. When budgets are this tight, marketing departments frequently consist of fewer members, which can complicate their ability to implement strategic initiatives.

Underfunded marketing departments often find themselves in a reactive position rather than as proactive partners. Consider a scenario where leadership announces a last-minute fundraising campaign with a goal of \$100,000. Ideally, marketing should be involved from the outset, identifying target audiences, selecting the best channels, and crafting impactful messages. Instead, they are often brought in too late, forced to scramble to meet an ambitious goal within a tight timeframe.

In the rush to execute, critical activities such as scheduling appeals and managing thank-you communications can overshadow the necessity to pause for campaign re-evaluation. Regularly convening with your team to assess which strategies are hitting the mark or falling short is crucial. This practice allows for necessary adjustments and helps you optimize current and future campaign performance.

“You need to be debriefing fast and often. What is working? What is not working? Why? How do we stop doing what's not working, or scale up what is? I think that's both an internal conversation as much as it is valuable to be having with your agencies,” says Tobes Kelly.

By integrating marketing into the strategy discussions from the beginning, nonprofits can fully leverage the true potential of their fundraising efforts. This integrated approach fosters data-driven decisions, ensuring the right message reaches the right people at the right time.

Transitioning from reactive 'order takers' to proactive strategic partners empowers marketing teams to align more closely with fundraising objectives and accomplish more good.

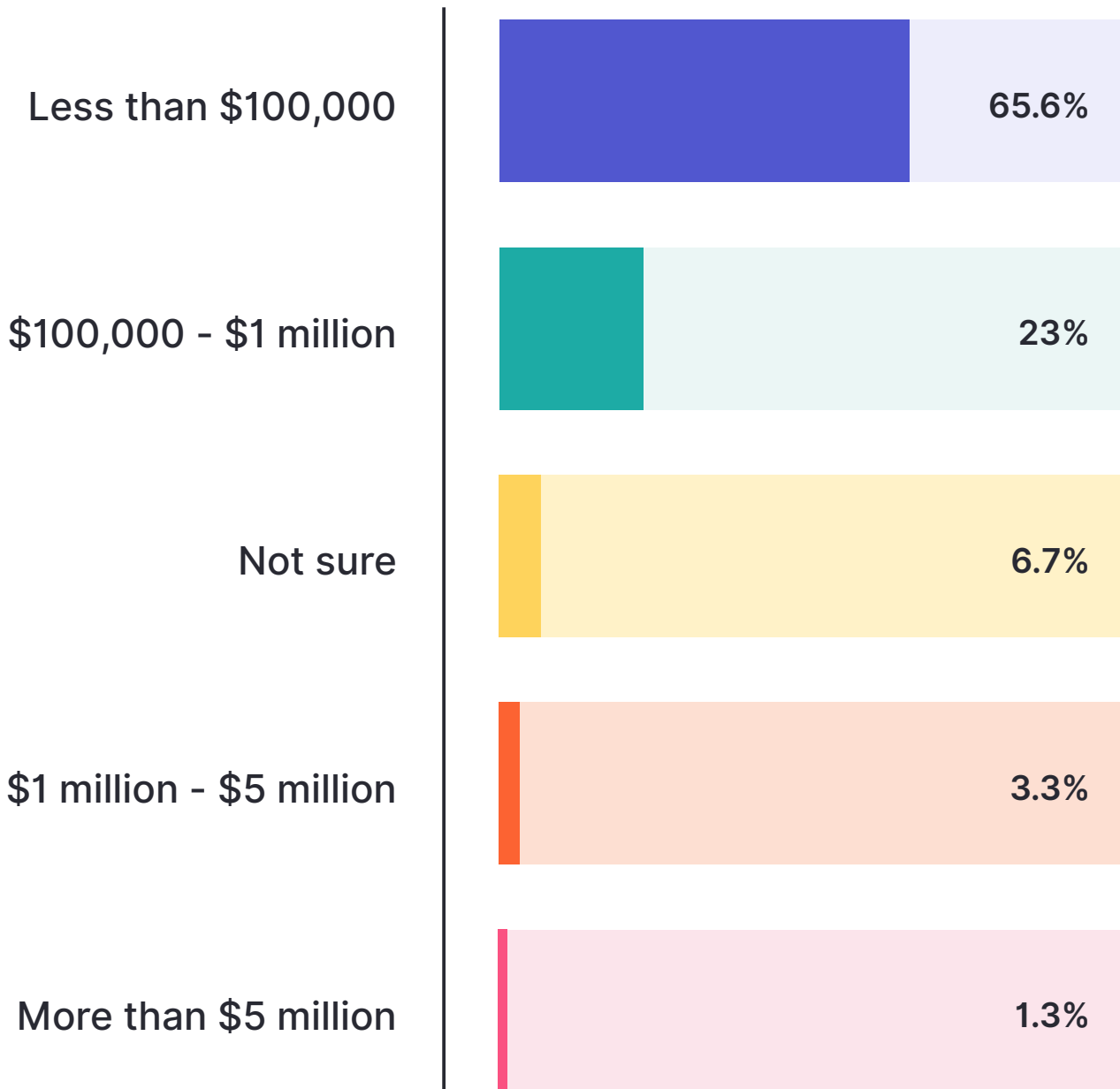
As Courtney Bugler, President & CEO of ZERO Prostate Cancer, observes, “Marketing and fundraising are ultimately the same thing. They're relationship-building and storytelling. They just do it in different ways.”

Giving marketing a seat at the table means viewing marketing not just as a supplementary service but as a fundamental component of a nonprofit's strategy for success and impact.





What is your annual marketing budget?

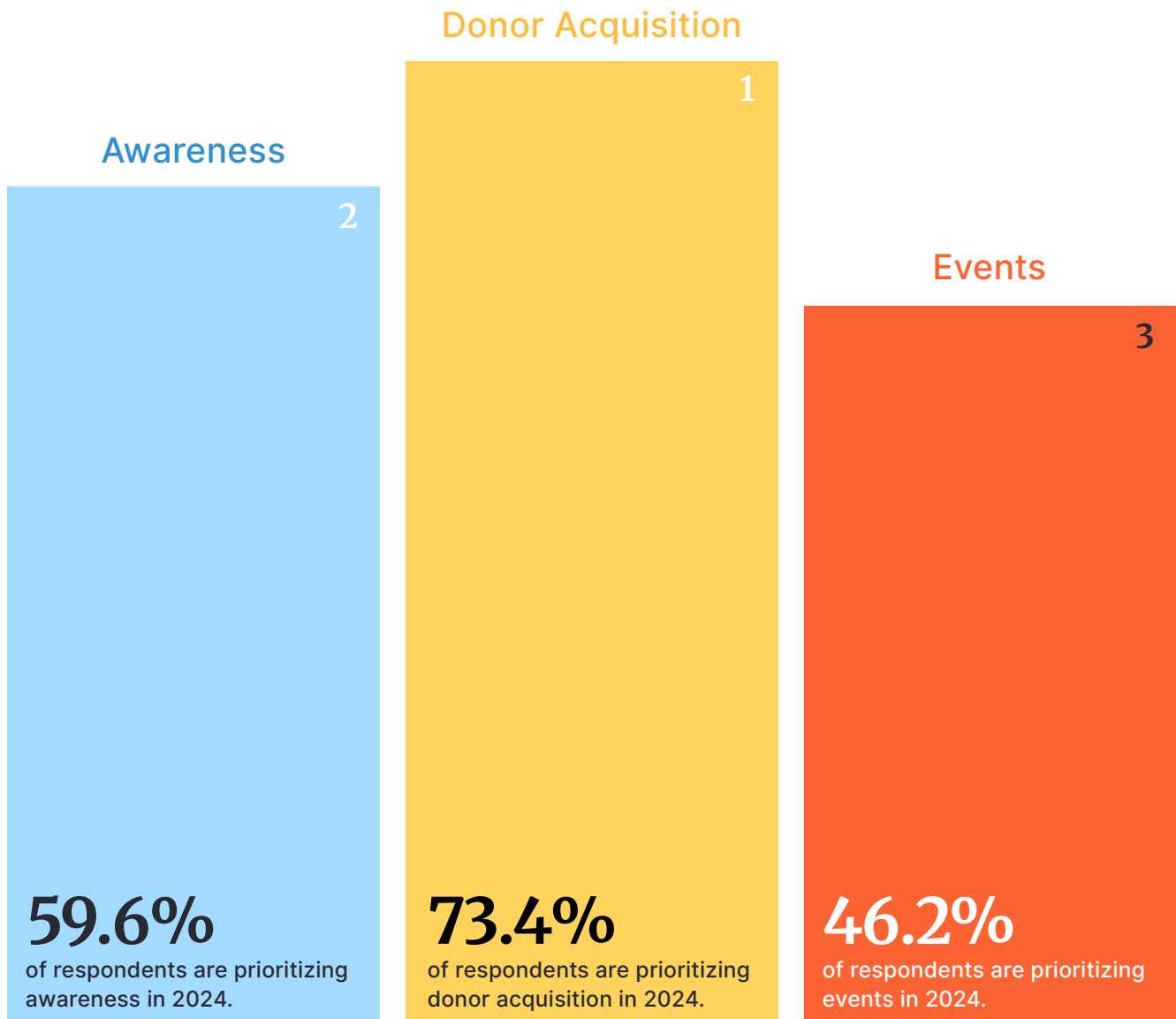


Key plays in marketing

Effective marketing helps you connect with the right audience in a meaningful way, rather than casting the widest net possible. It's about relevancy over reach. This way, your messaging is getting in front of those who are most likely to engage and respond.



What are your top three (3) marketing priorities this year?



1. From hello to lifetime loyalty

Our research shows donor acquisition and awareness continue to outpace retention. Seventy-four percent of nonprofits marked acquisition as a top marketing priority, yet only 44% prioritize retaining donors. Although acquisition and retention are both important to the mission, there's a notable imbalance between the two. This translates to a significant gap, where attracting new supporters gets more attention than keeping existing ones engaged and feeling connected.

Acquisition should always have a place in your marketing strategy — it's simply good for business to continue attracting new people to your cause. However, don't underestimate the power of retention. Retained donors typically show higher engagement levels and are more inclined to contribute more often and in larger amounts.

Plus, nurturing relationships with existing supporters costs 3x less than finding new ones. Because retained supporters value your cause, they will continue to spread the word and advocate for your cause, which will bring new folks to your door.



73.4%

of respondents are prioritizing donor acquisition in 2024.

2. Email remains top dog

For nonprofits, email continues to lead the pack, surpassing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and peer-to-peer fundraising.

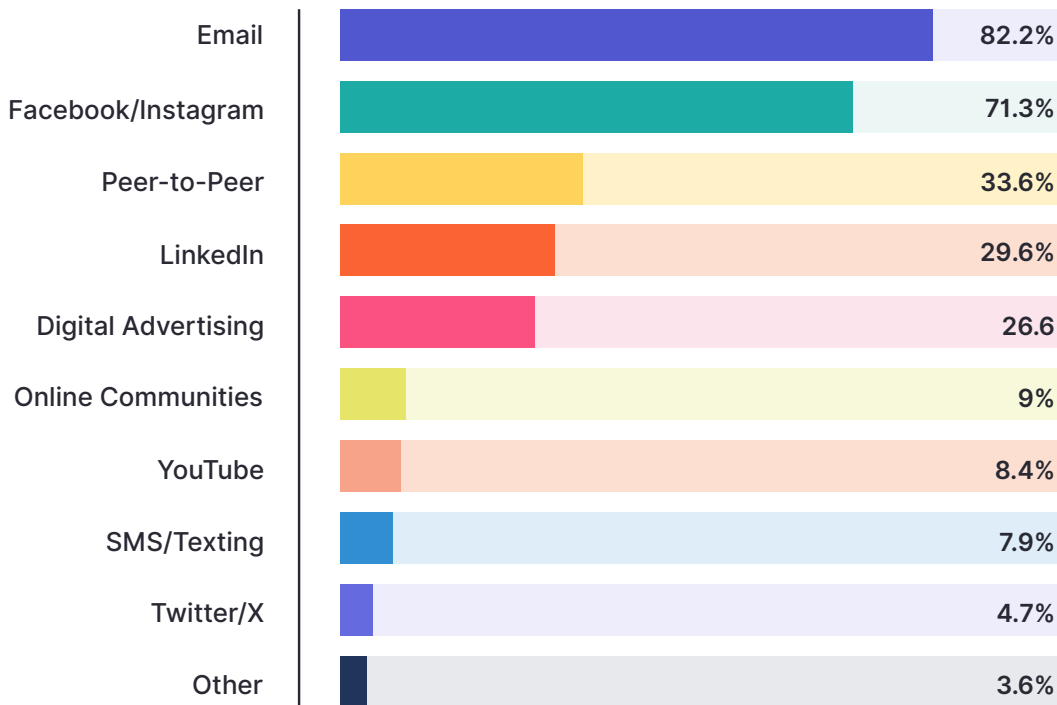
The secret to its success? Direct access. Email allows organizations to connect with supporters in a meaningful way, in a space where they're more likely to see and engage with your message.

However, as supporter fatigue becomes more of a concern, there are a few tactics that can keep them engaged and interested in your cause:

- 1. Stay up to date with email guidelines:** Stay on top of the latest email deliverability best practices to ensure your emails land directly in your supporters' inboxes. For instance, have you made the necessary updates to the new standards for bulk email?
- 2. Segment for impact:** Don't blast generic messages. Segment your audience into specific groups based on behaviors, interests, or demographics. This allows you to tailor your content, ensuring each email resonates deeply and ignites engagement.
- 3. Tell engaging stories:** Craft compelling narratives showcasing the impact of your work, success stories, and heartfelt testimonials. These stories bring your mission to life, inspiring action and fostering deeper connections with your supporters.
- 4. Express gratitude:** Show your donors how their contributions are making a difference and express the gratitude your organization has for them.



In terms of digital marketing, which three (3) channels do you find most effective for reaching your supporters?



“Doing geofencing, doing email campaigns, ads on Facebook — all of these things, over the past nine months, have tripled our email base. **We have 66,000 contacts in our network now as a result of these Feathr campaigns.** That’s something we would have never been able to do or buy or accumulate in that short an amount of time.”

-Tammy Flynn, Director of Philanthropy
 Peninsula Community Foundation of Virginia

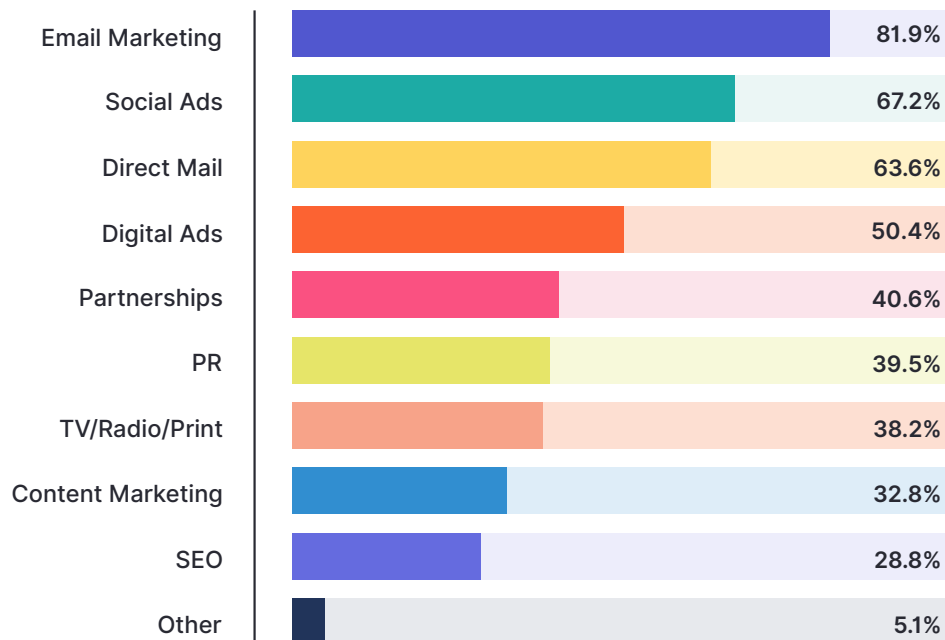


3. From print to pixel

While direct mail remains as one of the top three channels in terms of investment, there's a clear shift towards digital. This year, we're seeing a significant increase in digital investment, with paid social media advertising experiencing a whopping 102% increase and digital ads overall growing by 12% compared to last year.



Which of these channels did you invest in last year?



Supporters are interacting with nonprofits differently than they were 10 years ago. Today, a successful approach requires a blend of traditional methods and digital strategies, like ads. Whether it's raising awareness, promoting events, or driving donations, ads can effectively amplify your message across platforms.

Multi-channel marketing is about being present in your supporters' world, wherever they happen to be. By crafting a seamless and engaging journey across channels, you create a unified experience that resonates with your audience's interests and preferences, closely aligning them with your cause.

Cindee Starkie, VP of Marketing and Communications at Starlight Children's Foundation, captures it perfectly, "Our best job as nonprofit marketers is understanding there's a world full of people who are looking to make a difference. They just need to know how and where. And so our job is to connect them with the how and the where."

With the growing spend on social media and digital ads, nonprofits are recognizing the role these platforms play in captivating diverse audiences. Social media not only offers a space for storytelling and community-building but also allows for highly targeted advertising. Meanwhile, digital ads are evolving, and using tactics like retargeting presents an opportunity to connect with supporters in a more personalized way wherever they are online.



How do you plan to invest in the following channels in 2024?

Cutting Back	4.4%	7.3%	2.5%	11.2%	13.8%
No Change	37.9%	36%	61.5%	55.1%	39.3%
Increasing Investment	41.6%	48.6%	31.9%	20.9%	25.5%
N/A	16.2%	8%	4.1%	12.8%	21.5%
	Digital Ads	Social Ads	Email Marketing	Direct Mail	TV/Radio/Print



4. What's on the horizon?

Video marketing

As nonprofits increase their social media spend, video content will cater to the evolving preferences of those active on popular apps like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These social spaces are dominated by visual content, so viewers will come to expect but also engage more with videos.

This is an opportunity for nonprofits to cut through the noise and drive engagement through meaningful, heartfelt stories. But with a limited budget, marketing teams might run into some hurdles along the way. Here are some tactics to consider:

- **Don't be afraid to repurpose content:** Optimize your resources by repurposing existing content. Turn blog posts into video scripts, transform photos and graphics into engaging video stories, and leverage snippets of longer videos for different platforms.
- **Be authentic:** Authentic, behind-the-scenes glimpses can resonate deeply with viewers and foster a sense of trust. Don't feel pressured to create high-production videos—raw footage recorded on your phone can be just as impactful.
- **Tell real stories:** Focus on the stories of the real people and animals that you support. How can you use them to connect with your audience's emotions and inspire them to take action?

Personalization

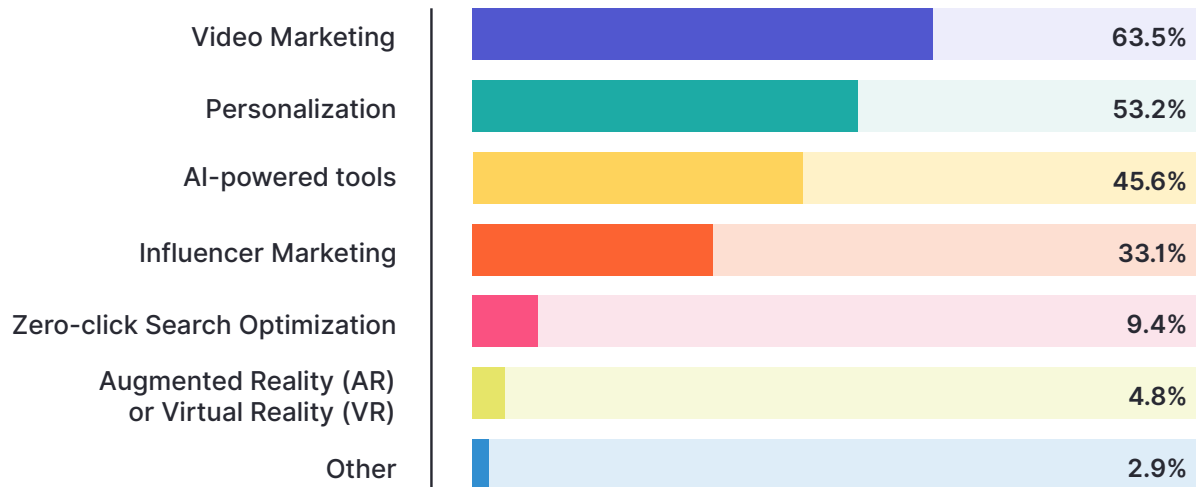
Organizations are shifting their focus from one-size-fits-all generic appeals and crafting communications that resonate on an individual level. This goes deeper than just including the supporter's first name; it's about understanding their interests in your cause, their past engagement with your organization, and their unique giving journey.

Personalization fosters empathy and understanding. By tailoring your communication to a supporter's interests and past interactions, you demonstrate genuine care for their connection to your mission. This builds stronger relationships and creates long-term stewardship.

"The marketing that you're doing is going to induce so much other giving. When we do marketing campaigns that are focused on fundraising we often see volunteerism increase, or we see food donations increase, and we see new community connections that arise," says [Katie Adkins](#), Director of Communications at the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri.



What emerging marketing trends are you investing in addressing in the upcoming year?



Navigating new frontiers

The work that your nonprofit does is inherently centered around building genuine relationships with supporters. But let's face it, fostering lasting connections takes more than just passion.

Empowering your team with the right tools fills crucial gaps, allowing you to scale your efforts efficiently. Here's how embracing advanced marketing technology can elevate your mission:

- **Uncover your superpowers:** Data intelligence reveals which messaging resonates best, what channels your audience prefers, and which tactics drive engagement. No more guesswork — you'll know exactly how to connect with your supporters in a meaningful way.
- **Personalized connections at scale:** Every supporter should get that white-glove experience that your major donors receive.

Marketing automation can auto-trigger communications for you, making it feasible to nurture deeper connections, even for smaller teams.

- **Measure what matters:** Organizations should be monitoring key metrics like click-through rates, conversion rates, and donation amounts for each campaign. This helps you identify which strategies are most effective, understand supporter preferences and behaviors, and pinpoint areas for optimization.

Marketing success isn't just about good intentions. It's about creating measurable impact. Measurement provides tangible proof that your marketing efforts are paying off, aligning closely with your mission's goals.



[Camille Currie](#), VP of Marketing and Communications at NAF, says “I think that many look for only the positive, right? What data is really going to amplify us? And of course you want that, but I think it's also important to perhaps spotlight data that shows the gap. Because in the gap, there might be some gray space where you might be able to really leverage and to tell a story that's fresh and new.”

The metrics nonprofits track depend heavily on specific marketing goals, which could range from growing fundraising revenue to deepening donor engagement to raising general brand awareness.

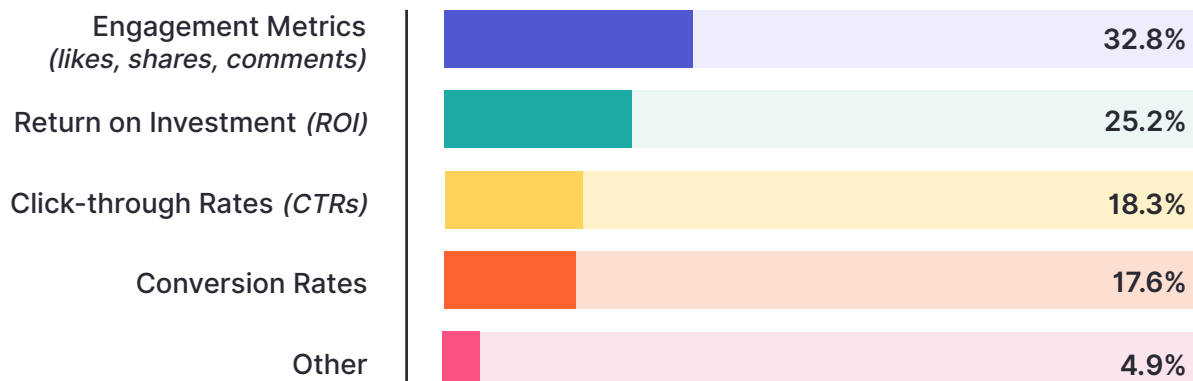
Our research found that more nonprofits are more focused on social metrics (likes, shares, and comments) rather than engagement metrics like click-through rates (CTR) or conversion rates.

Social metrics are a valuable starting point, but they're just one piece of the puzzle. While likes and shares tell you your content is resonating, they don't necessarily translate into meaningful action. Metrics like CTRs and conversion rates offer a clearer picture of how effectively online content drives supporters to take specific actions, such as signing up for newsletters, registering for events, or making donations.

By focusing on the right metrics, nonprofits can refine their marketing strategy, maximize their impact, and turn online engagement into outcomes for their mission.



How do you primarily measure the success of your marketing campaigns?

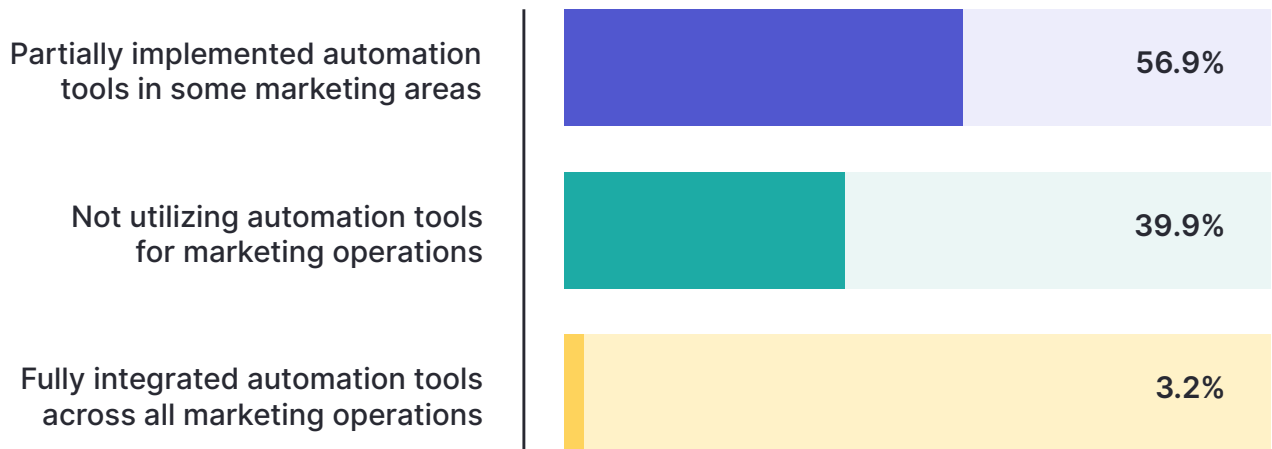


CLICK, SET, GO

For nonprofits operating with limited resources, automation is a necessary tool to streamline processes, reduce manual workload, and ensure consistent engagement with supporters. It creates a smarter allocation of resources, freeing up valuable time for staff to focus on more strategic tasks. Despite its benefits, our research finds that a significant 40% of nonprofits have yet to adopt automation in their marketing operations.



To what extent is your organization utilizing automation tools and processes to streamline marketing operations?



Marketing automation helps nonprofits streamline workflows and deliver personalized donor experiences with ease. So what holds back broader adoption?

Often, the perception that software solutions are a luxury can deter nonprofits, especially for organizations operating on tight margins. Additionally, the lack of in-house expertise to manage these tools can be a barrier.

Either way, overcoming these hurdles doesn't have to feel like a daunting task. By focusing on the ROI potential of automation — such as **improving staff productivity, deepening connections with supporters, and generating more donation revenue** — marketing departments can build a convincing case for adoption. With the right approach, integrating automation into your marketing strategy can transform how you engage with your community, making your efforts not only more effective but also more rewarding.



CONNECTING THE DIGITAL DOTS

Many nonprofit marketing teams pour their hearts into crafting creative campaigns, but they're then left with the uncertainty of how performance will be tracked. Without a comprehensive marketing platform, launching a campaign feels like throwing a message in a bottle — hoping it reaches the right audience but unsure if it will.

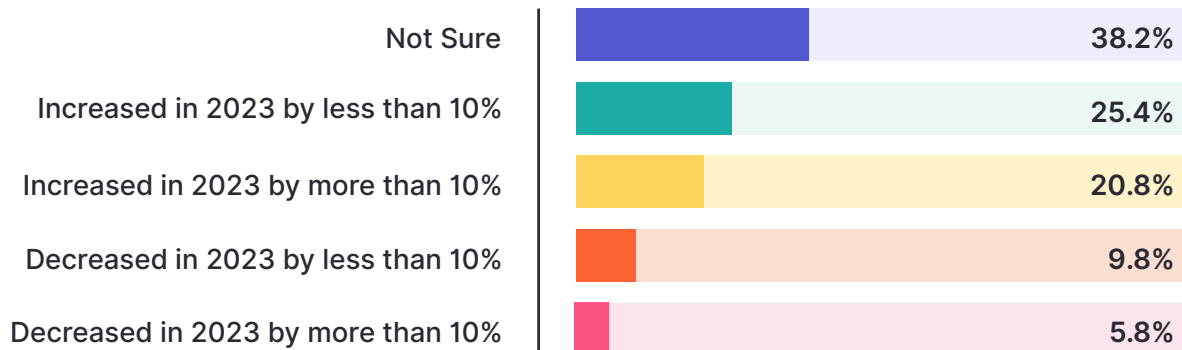
This limited visibility presents an opportunity for growth: Unifying data gives you a better understanding of which channels drive the most traffic, which content your supporters are engaging with, and which calls to action are

converting. With an end-to-end view of their data, nonprofits can optimize their strategies for even greater success. Clear insights mean informed decisions can be made, empowering marketing efforts to flourish with confidence and purpose.

The good news is digital fundraising is growing at an unprecedented rate. However, the challenge lies in seeing the full picture of these efforts. Our research indicates that many nonprofits lack relevant insights — including how their online giving has changed year over year.



How did your online giving grow / decline between 2022 and 2023?



Effective marketing embraces an integrated approach. It's not about measuring each channel individually. It's about seeing the bigger picture: the holistic journey your supporters take as they interact with your brand across different platforms.

When you cannot see how your channels work together, your marketing growth gets stunted: how do your supporters first learn about your cause, and what touchpoints guide them into taking action? With this knowledge, you can craft a more connected experience for your supporters. Without it, you risk creating disjointed interactions and missing opportunities to engage and inspire your audience.

"It was exciting to onboard a new platform where I knew I was going to be able to **understand the whole picture** of the digital experience for the people that we were working with, that we were trying to create a narrative for. And obviously that doesn't just happen through one email or one ad or one visit to our website. **So it's been exciting to be able to explore the relationship that our donors, our volunteers, our neighbors build over time by the data that we can get in Feathr.**"

-Katie Adkins, Director of Communication
The Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri



Move over boomers, it's millennials' turn to shine

A generational shift is on the horizon for philanthropy, fueled by the impending wealth transfer. While millennials and Gen Z won't magically become millionaires and billionaires overnight, this transfer is expected to create a more level playing field. For these younger generations, it could mean more financial freedom, potentially easing the burden of student loans and homeownership.

But regardless of the wealth redistribution, actively engaging younger donors is crucial for nonprofits. Traditional donor bases, like the Silent

Generation and baby boomers, are gradually phasing out. The spotlight is now on millennials — many of whom are entering their prime spending years with greater financial stability and growing philanthropic capacity.

Our research finds that the majority of nonprofits are already thinking ahead by expanding their engagement to younger donors or actively developing engagement strategies to reach millennials and Gen Z.

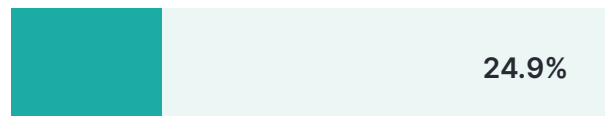


How is your organization preparing to navigate the wealth transfer from baby boomers to younger demographics in terms of donor engagement and fundraising strategies?

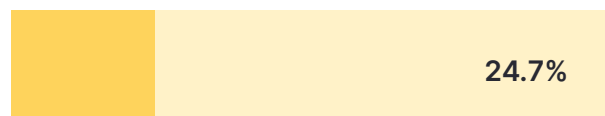
Strengthening relationships with existing boomer donors while also engaging younger demographics



Developing targeted engagement strategies tailored to younger donor preferences, including millennials and gen z



Not actively preparing for the wealth transfer



THE CASE FOR AI

While there is a pretty high interest in AI-powered tools, only 6% of nonprofits are actively investing in them. Similar to automation, AI has the potential to help marketers do more with fewer resources, but there's a gap between interest and adoption. This can likely be attributed to three main factors:

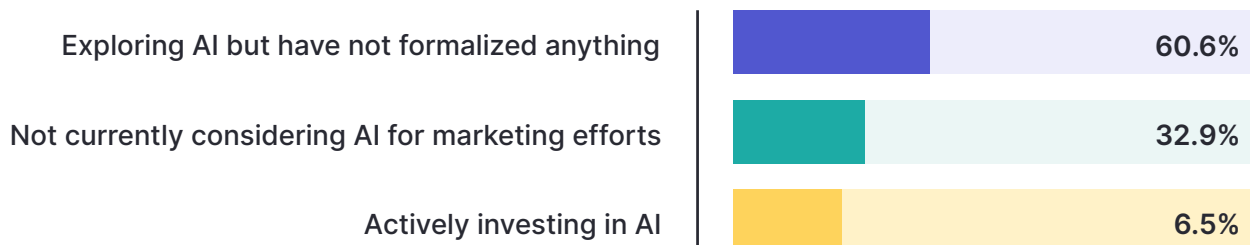
- 1. Cost constraints:** AI can be expensive. From implementation to training, the financial cost can be prohibitive for many resource-strapped organizations.
- 2. Knowledge gap:** Effectively using AI solutions requires specific technical expertise that many nonprofits simply don't have in-house. The prospect of hiring new staff or dedicating time to training existing employees can feel daunting, especially when resources are already stretched thin.
- 3. Ethical concerns:** Nonprofits rightly prioritize responsible data use and ethical AI practices. Understanding and ensuring these complex considerations are met can be a significant challenge.



These barriers are real. But with increased awareness, strategic planning, and the right partnerships, nonprofits can leverage AI to unlock its potential and help marketing teams streamline their workflows.



How is your organization approaching the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in its marketing efforts, if at all?



IS IT REALLY COOKIEPOCALYPSE?

As you know, third-party cookies are being deprecated. These cookies, used by browsers to track user behavior across different sites, are being phased out due to growing concerns about privacy. Google has [already rolled out features](#) to restrict website access to these cookies.

This change is huge because third-party cookies have been a key part of how nonprofits (and pretty much everyone else online) understand their audience's online habits. Keeping pace with these changing data regulations can feel overwhelming, so here's what we recommend: ←

- **Embrace first-party data:** Shift your focus to collecting and leveraging valuable first-party data directly from your supporters. This includes website behavior, email engagement, and donation history. By building a robust first-party data pool, you can gain deeper insights into your audience and tailor your messaging accordingly.
- **Create engaging content:** Create high-quality, engaging content that resonates with your target audience. Valuable content attracts visitors, encourages website interaction, and ultimately helps you organically collect valuable first-party data.
- **Double down on email marketing:** Make sure your supporters are segmented accordingly. Explore unique parameters like donation history, campaign engagement, and event attendance. Then tailor your communication for each segment to create more personalized and meaningful interactions.
- **Explore retargeting ads:** Reconnect with visitors who have shown interest in your cause but haven't yet taken the next step. These ads can be a strategic way to keep your nonprofit top of mind and gently nudge supporters toward an action.



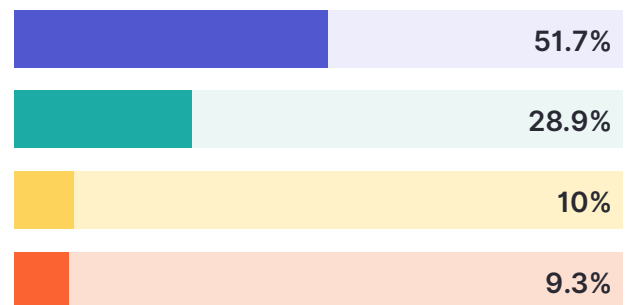
With the impending sunset of third-party cookies, how is your organization strategizing to adapt its digital marketing tactics and maintain audience targeting capabilities?

Not yet formulated a strategy for adapting to the sunset of third-party cookies because we don't know where to start

Not yet formulated a strategy for adapting to the sunset of third-party cookies but working on plans

Exploring alternative tracking methods and first-party data strategies

Partnering with platforms that offer alternative targeting solutions



Concluding Remarks

THE PATH FORWARD



As we move forward, the importance of aligning good intentions with practical tools becomes increasingly clear. To meet and exceed higher-set KPIs, nonprofits need the right resources, continuous professional development, and a proactive, digital-first mindset.

Tried-and-true methods still have a place, yet the trend is clear: your supporters are increasingly turning to online channels, whether it's exploring your mission on your website or registering for your event via social media. This digital interaction is a pivotal part of their journey with you. In fact, research from NextAfter finds that [digital-first](#)

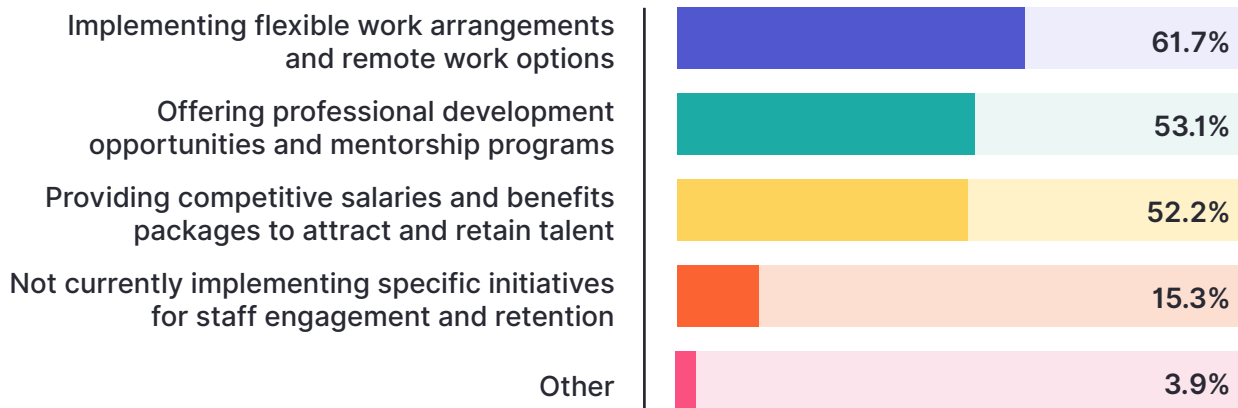
[organizations are growing 12.7% faster](#) than the average nonprofit.

Keeping pace with the rapid evolution of digital marketing is challenging, but by staying updated with the latest trends and platforms, you can communicate your message with clarity and inspire action that makes a difference.

The best part? **Over half of nonprofits recognize the power of professional development and mentorship** to help navigate this ever-changing landscape.



In light of evolving workforce dynamics, what initiatives is your organization implementing to enhance staff engagement and retention, particularly within marketing and fundraising teams?



The future continues to be all about deepening connections with your community. You don't have to have it all figured out right now, but taking small, deliberate steps toward understanding and engaging with your audience can make a significant difference.

Remember, these challenges are also opportunities to learn and grow. Effective marketing places your audience at the forefront, fostering meaningful connections that build a sense of community and shared purpose that resonates far beyond the immediate goals.





NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

The survey comprised 26 carefully curated questions. We mostly featured multiple-choice options, complemented by several ranking lists to gauge priorities. We also asked questions about respondents' roles and the size and nature of their organization.

We promoted the survey through Feathr's platform and email channels, and incentivized respondents by offering a \$250 Amazon gift card to randomly selected winners.

ABOUT OUR RESPONDENTS

The majority of our survey respondents hailed from these key areas: marketing, leadership, and fundraising. Their roles are integral in providing the most relevant insights for our report focused on nonprofit marketing.

Additionally, we gathered data on the size and revenue of their organizations. Understanding these aspects offers a deeper perspective on each organization's capacity to invest in their teams and technology, enriching our analysis with a more layered context.



The Nonprofit Marketing Platform

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