



A Few Broad Observations from Further on the 2019 M+R Benchmark Study

On April 25th, M+R published its **2019 Benchmarks Study** comprised of data and questionnaire feedback from 135 nonprofits. The study explores the data from multiple angles – fundraising, advocacy, marketing.

While every program is built uniquely, it's helpful to have a finger on the pulse of what other organizations are doing and to have industry-benchmarked numbers that can be easily referenced in discussions with internal stakeholders. We certainly appreciate the work M+R does to create this report and share with the community.

Our goal at Further is to make sure our clients are on the leading edge of their peer group. Below, we've provided some observations on the data contained in the M+R study based on what we're seeing across our broad spectrum of clients, which encompasses many different sectors and sizes of organization.

- Since mid-January Further has been contextualizing the difficult 2018 Q4 for most non-profits with the perspective that 2017 was the actual outlier—albeit on the high side. It's reassuring to see the numbers to back up this thesis and know this should be mainly a correction and not 'the end of the world'.
- We see the need for increasing conversations about the proper role for email in the overall donor journey. Its continuing decline as a driver of engagement and revenue could be interpreted as a dire call for other channels to pick up the slack. And while that's partially true, we believe that organizations will benefit the most by evolving their characterization of email to view it first and foremost as an influencer of file health and secondarily as a revenue driver. If you're curious enough to hear us out on this, we're happy to [discuss further](#) with you.
- Sustainer campaigns aren't just to 'fill in the gaps' during slower periods anymore. The trend toward sustainer giving is now fully on the upswing and monthly giving should be a primary option for both prospects and core donors. We continue however to abide by our thinking that the best way to acquire more new donors is to increase qualified donor traffic to the site and



make the decision to choose monthly giving as easy and compelling as possible. Whether or not sustainer-first campaign messaging is ideal is still out for review in our book – and of course this means further testing. As the data changes, so does our approach.

- What about those <\$50 donors? Are they worth acquiring at all? Does the proportion of bodies vs. revenue influence your calculation on this front? We agree with our clients choosing to follow the ‘big tent’ philosophy to maximize growth, but how we allocate resources to various segments and the ask options we present donors with may need to change—in some cases more dramatically than others. Of course the first step is to see where you fall on the scale of 92% of all revenue coming from \$50+ donors.
- Facebook Fundraisers: Based on these numbers, we believe we have some time before non-profits succumb to Facebook entirely and become beggars instead of fundraisers. (You can read more about Further’s evolving thinking on Facebook Fundraisers [here](#)). Undoubtedly it’s a growing trend but with only 7.5 participants per fundraiser and knowing you won’t get those people’s data for retention or further engagement without investing some serious time/resources, it may be worth (at least for many sectors) letting it ride and focusing on the channels that are more easily influenced for growth.
- Mobile first... mobile only... There is some hard thinking needed about how to best utilize mobile in balancing a strong growth of both traffic/awareness and fundraising effectiveness. While you’re doing that thinking, consider how retargeting performance might influence your decision-making regarding mobile....

A final thought While a paltry 1% year over year growth may seem discouraging, we urge you to keep three things in mind:

- 1) As M+R pointed out, 2017 was a high-water mark that we’re comparing against. Reversion to the mean is a natural occurrence.



- 2) Not all aspects of digital fundraising were growing (or shrinking) at the same rate. There is still much opportunity if you know where to look for it.
- 3) Great strategy will always beat average strategy. You need to think creatively, ambitiously, and take calculated risks to ensure your program climbs to best-of-breed performance.

How does your organization's data compare? We'd love to hear your feedback. You can contact us [here](#) and follow us via the social media channels below.

Further is a leading direct response agency focused on helping nonprofits strategically navigate the complexities of digital fundraising. The company was founded on the philosophy of being Driven by Data, Powered by People™ and is intensely committed to achieving fundraising scale and efficiency within the fragmented digital landscape.

