8 mistakes You're Making with Your Donation Program & How to Fix Them!

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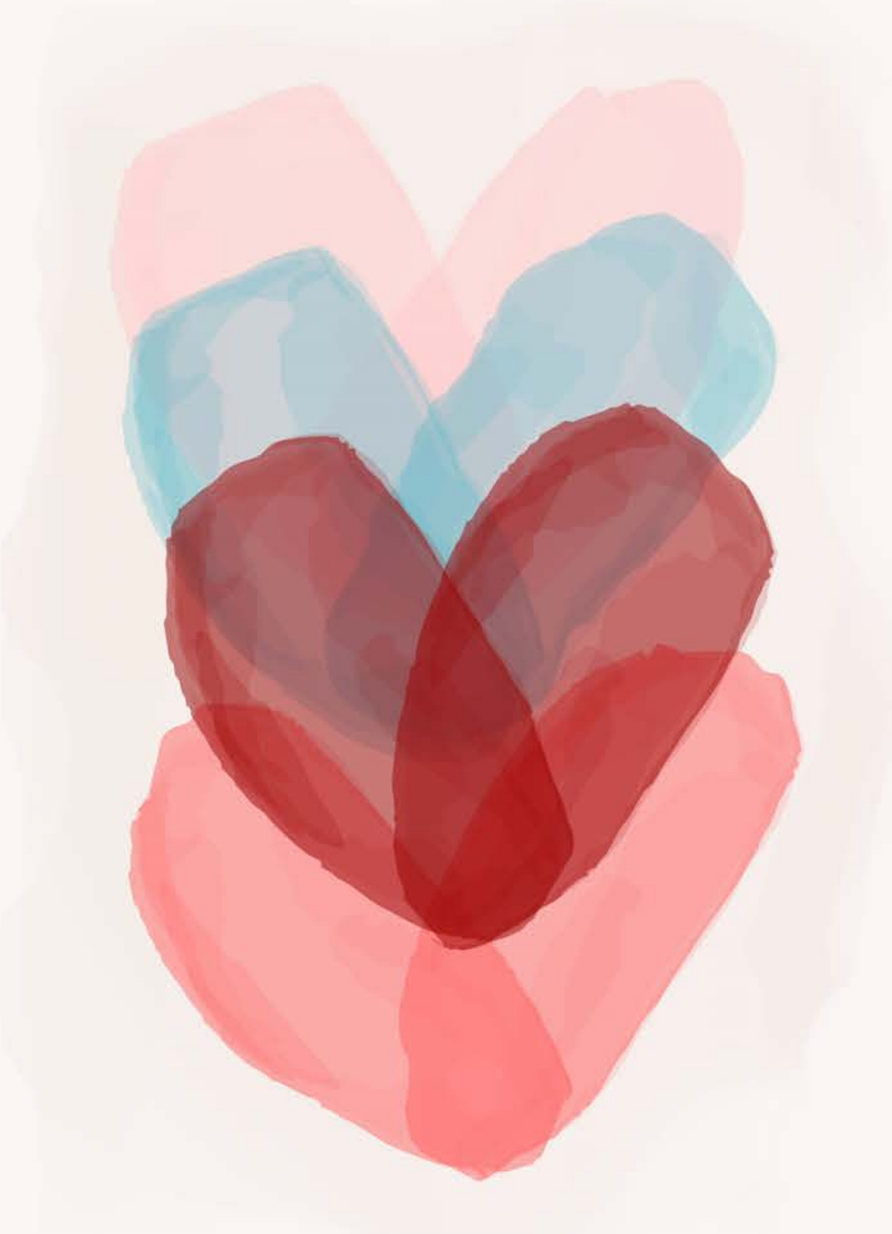


Your heart's in the right place

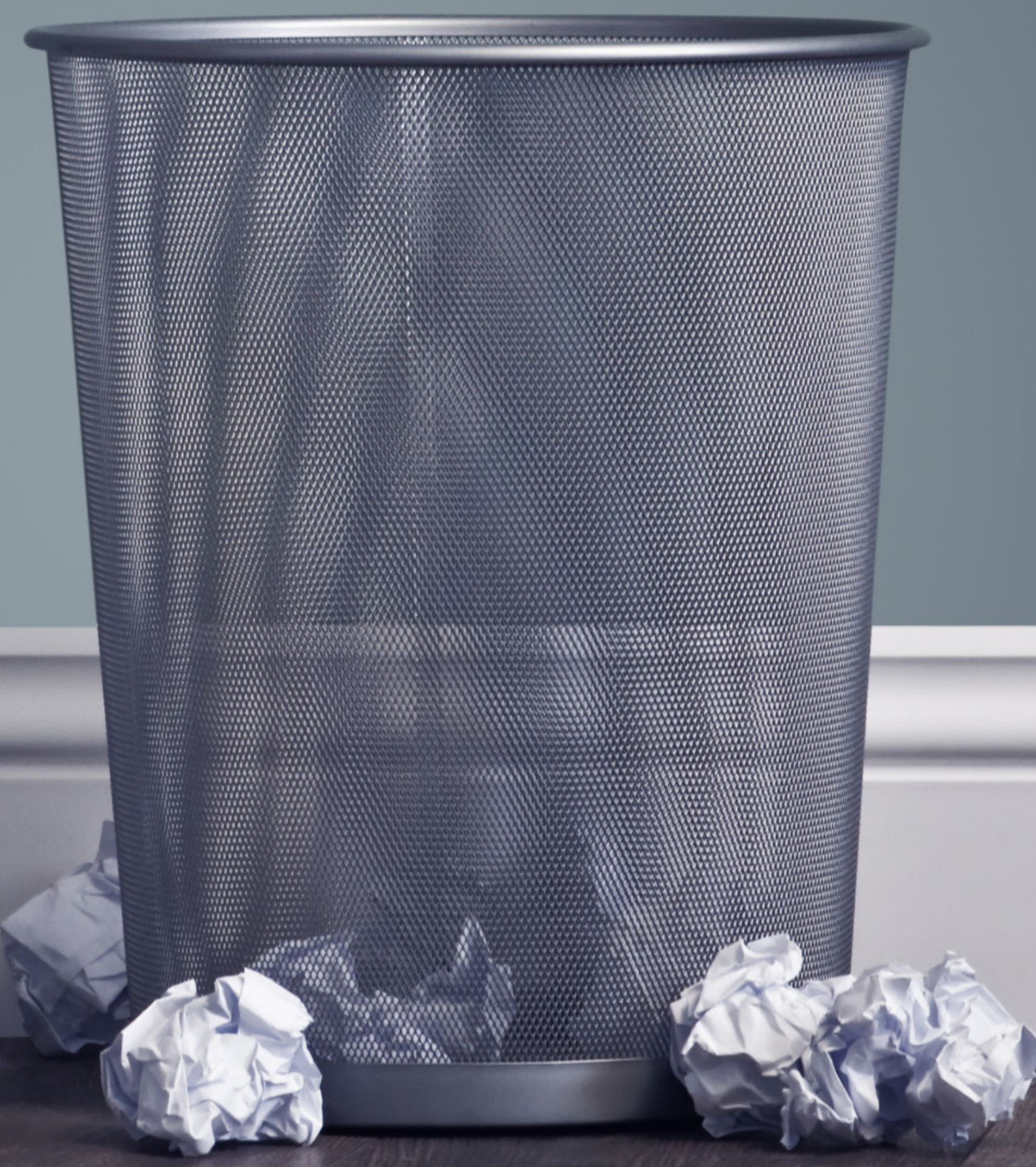
Your company has a donation program in place to process and organize all the donation requests you're getting from the community. Whether you're a hotel supplying charity auctions with coupons for luxurious stay packages or a major sports team donating tickets to the big game, you're feeling good about what you're doing to help!

But wait—are you completely sure your donation program is working as well as it should? Maybe there are gaps in the workflow. Perhaps there are administrative headaches. Or you could be saying "yes" too many times when you should be saying "no" instead.

Although having a donation program is definitely rewarding, you have to make sure it's not causing you too much trouble! Here are eight mistakes you could be making, as well as ways to fix them.

1 Throwing that letter or email in the trash

You have the "Leaning Tower of Donation" letters on the corner of your desk, and the donation folder in your inbox blinks with yet another request. Thinking you simply cannot handle another request, you move that email straight to the trash. Sure, you've made things easy for yourself—by putting it "out of sight out of mind." But in the meantime, you've left this charity in limbo about your business supporting their cause—which doesn't make your company look good at all.

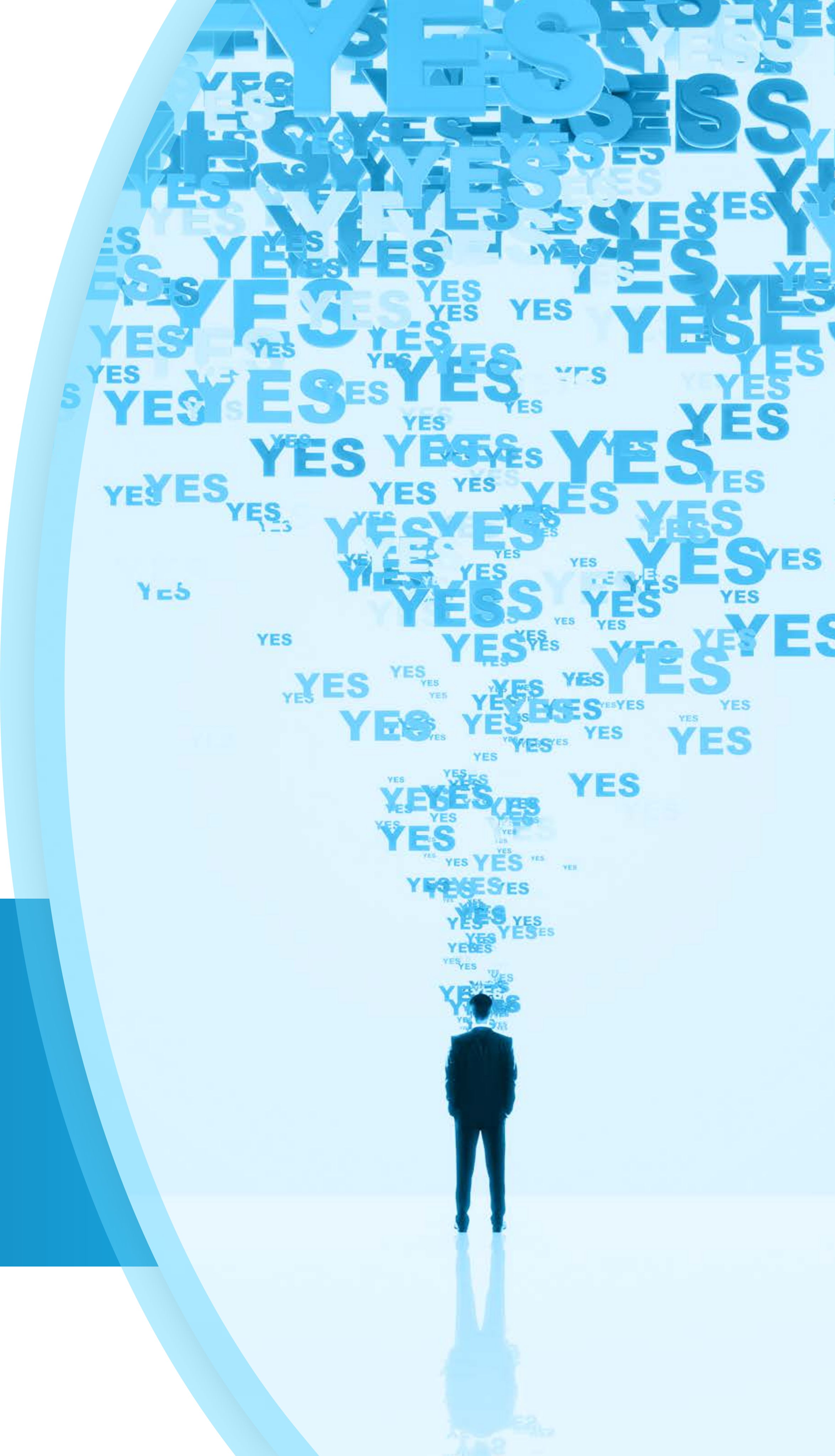


TIP: Acknowledging that you received the request and providing an answer (whether yes or no) makes your company look communicative, attentive, and best of all, socially responsible. Keep email and letter templates on hand for quick and easy replies.

2 Saying "YES" to every worthy cause

If you approve every donation request, you could be wasting time and money if your donations are not coming back into your business in some fashion. If you donate $20,000 in certificates simply because you accept every request, and only $7,500 get used, you should ask yourself, "Why are we donating so much?"organizations who are not in line with your mission to begin with.

TIP: Establish criteria for who you support and who you don't. Having specifics to look for when reviewing a donation request will help you make your decision that much faster – and don't feel guilty about turning down a few causes, especially ones that don't align with your company's goals.



3 Making too many exceptions to your guidelines

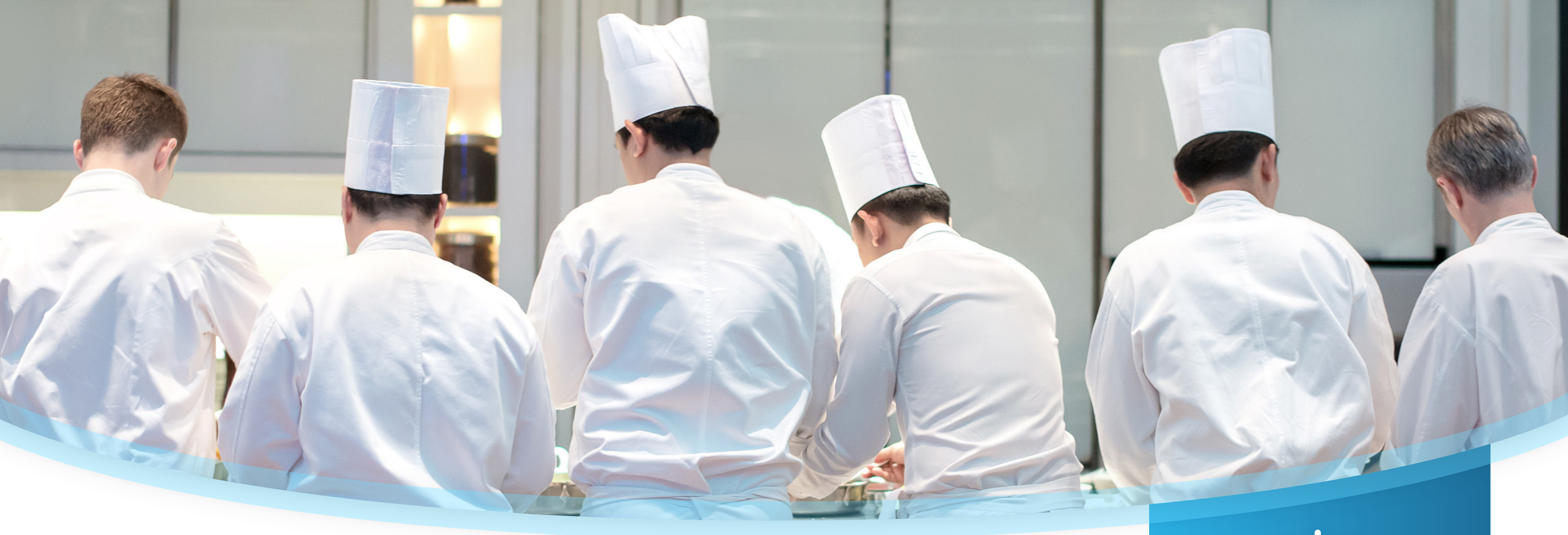
The requesting organization either meets your criteria, or it doesn't. Making exceptions here and there will slow down your process, and in turn you could be inviting last-minute requests from organizations who are not in line with your mission to begin with.

TIP: Make your "rules" and stick to them! It's important to be nice, but when you're making too many exceptions, you're hurting both your own process and the charities that are already waiting for their requests to be filled.

4 Keeping your donation program a secret

If a requester doesn't know that your company's donation request process has moved to an online request form, they will call, fax, email or even stop by to ask you for donations. It can be difficult to capture all the pertinent info in the moment, which can lead to lost donation request opportunities and disappointed nonprofits.

TIP: Have a designated area on your website which clearly outlines who is eligible and how to submit a donation request to you. Better yet, place this information on the Contact Us portion of your website so when they are trying to find your phone number or email address, they will find the donation form instead.



5 Having "too many cooks in the kitchen"

Most donation coordinators would say you are lucky to have multiple people involved in the donation process. Lots of companies receive so many requests that it is a full-time job for multiple people! However, this can lead to the classic "left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing" syndrome, where messages get lost or misinterpreted and tasks fall by the wayside.

TIP: Make sure everyone with their hands on the donations is following the same structure and workflow as you. If everyone is clear on how it works, nothing will slip through the cracks or be forgotten.

6 Not sharing your donation process with your colleagues

You may have what you think is the most efficient charity program in the country. But if a requester calls the front desk and the person on staff isn't clear on the donation request process in place, it can really throw a wrench in things.

TIP: Make sure any department or employee who may have a donation request come to them in error knows what to tell the requester, without needing to send them to you. Quickly create a "how-to-submit-a-request" script and share with your whole team.

7 Accepting donation requests from multiple avenues

Most charities will send in their donation requests any which way they can get them to you - fax, phone, email, snail mail, magic carpet or carrier pigeon. Receiving requests every which way is a recipe for additional administrative chaos for you.

Have all your requests submitted in the easiest and most sustainable way—online. Go paperless—save a tree. Go electronic—save your sanity!

8 Thinking requesters are “just requesters”

Donation approval or denial notification templates are a highly unused outlet for promoting other good things that your company is doing. Do you have your own fundraising program? Private event space? Discounted ticketing program for under-served youth? Let them know!

> See what other ways you can educate requesting nonprofits and charities about what you do. Become a beacon in your community and watch your business grow.

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