Fundraising Network

Beyond the Appeal: Building Relationships with Donors and Supporters

A practical template for turning ideas from the training into small, achievable actions at your centre.

THE CENTRAL IDEA
Fundraising is not only about asking for money. It is about building and sustaining relationships with people who care about the centre and helping them understand, trust and feel connected to what their generosity makes possible.

Use this planner to choose a small number of actions that will strengthen those relationships over the next 90 days. You do not need to do everything. Choose what is realistic for your centre and the people who will carry it out.

1. Start with where you are now

Reflect on your current relationships with supporters. Be honest rather than aiming for perfect answers.

Reflection area	Questions to consider	Notes
Who supports us now?	Who gives regularly or occasionally? Who attends activities, courses or retreats? Who has a connection with the centre but may no longer attend? Are there people outside the immediate sangha who value our work?	
What do we know about them?	Do we understand why people support us, what they value, or how they prefer to hear from us? Are we making assumptions?	
How do we communicate?	What do supporters currently hear from us, how often, and through which channels? Is communication mostly about asking for money, or do we also share news, progress and appreciation?	
How do we build trust?	Are we open about the centre's needs and how donations are used? Do we follow through on what we say? Do people know who to contact with questions?	
How do we show appreciation?	Do we thank people promptly and personally? Do regular donors hear from us between	

	appeals? Do we show what their support makes possible?	

2. Choose a relationship or supporter group to focus on

Choose one group rather than trying to reach everyone at once. Examples: regular attenders who do not currently donate; existing regular donors; occasional supporters; former members; retreatants; or people who have benefited from the centre's activities.

Who would we like to build a stronger relationship with?	What might they value or need from us?	What do we know — and what do we need to find out?

3. Identify opportunities to strengthen the relationship

Use these prompts to generate ideas. Choose one or two that feel useful and achievable.

Theme	Ideas to consider	Our ideas / opportunities
Communication	Send updates that are interesting and relevant, not just requests for money. Share centre news, activities, challenges and progress. Ask supporters how they prefer to hear from you.	
Trust and openness	Explain what donations support and why funds are needed. Be clear about costs or priorities. Share progress honestly, including when plans change. Make donation information and contact details easy to find.	
Appreciation and satisfaction	Thank people promptly and sincerely. Acknowledge regular gifts as well as one-off donations. Ask whether supporters feel	

	informed and connected. Show that contributions are noticed without making gratitude conditional on gift size.	
Showing impact	Give concrete examples of what generosity makes possible: keeping the centre accessible, supporting classes or retreats, maintaining the building or offering community activities. Use real examples; do not overstate impact.	
Making giving easy	Check that donation options are clear and simple. Explain standing orders, online giving and Gift Aid where relevant. Make it easy to ask a question or change a donation. Keep information accurate and up to date.	
Personal connection	Have a genuine conversation, invite feedback, reconnect with someone who has moved away, or ask what they value about the centre. Listen without turning every conversation into an ask.	

4. Set your 90-day priorities

Choose up to three actions. It is better to complete one or two meaningful actions than create a long list that nobody has capacity to deliver.

Priority / action	Who is it for?	What will we do?	Who will lead?	By when?	How will we know it helped?
1.					
2.					
3.					

5. Break the plan into three stages

Use these stages as a guide, not a rigid timetable. Adapt them to your centre's circumstances.

Stage	Focus	Possible actions	Our actions and dates
Days 1–30 Listen and prepare	Understand supporters and get the basics in place.	Review current communications; check donation instructions and Gift Aid information; identify a supporter group; ask a few people what they value and how they prefer to hear from the centre.	
Days 31–60 Connect and communicate	Take action to strengthen connection and trust.	Send a thoughtful update; thank existing supporters; share an example of what donations make possible; reconnect with a group; make a regular-giving invitation where appropriate.	
Days 61–90 Review and build on it	Learn what worked and decide what to continue.	Ask for feedback; review responses; check whether giving information is clear; thank people who contributed; agree the next steps.	

6. Plan your communications

A simple communication rhythm helps supporters feel informed and connected. Avoid contacting people only when you need money. Ensure communications are relevant and sent to people who have agreed to receive them.

What will we communicate?	Who needs to hear it?	How / when?	Who will do it?
A personal thank you or acknowledgement		Promptly after a gift	
A short update about centre life and activities			
A real example of what donations have made possible			

An explanation of a current need or invitation to give		When there is a clear reason and purpose	
A request for feedback or a chance to reconnect			

7. Review: what have we learned?

At the end of 90 days, reflect on more than the amount raised. Have relationships become stronger, communication clearer and supporters better informed?

Review question	Reflection / evidence
What did we actually do?	
What response did we receive? What did supporters tell us?	
Did people seem better informed, appreciated or connected? What makes us think that?	
Did anything lead to regular giving, renewed support or useful conversations?	
What did we learn about supporters and their interests?	
What would we do differently next time?	
What should we continue, stop or develop over the next 90 days?	

8. Our commitment

The one action we are most committed to taking is:

_____

Person responsible: _____ Target date: _____

Who can support or encourage us? _____