

Donor retention: an exploratory study of door-to-door recruits

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- *Door-to-door fundraising, where recruiters knock on the door of domestic dwellings to solicit a regular donation, is an increasingly popular recruitment technique. However, reported levels of attrition remain unacceptably high and in some cases charities may lose up to 50% of their new recruits in their first year of giving. In this exploratory study of 5000 active and 5000 lapsed recruits the demographic and attitudinal profiles of each group are compared. The paper concludes that lapsed donors are significantly younger than active recruits and experienced some form of pressure at the point of recruitment. Lapsed supporters were also significantly less happy with the quality of ongoing communication.*

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Introduction

In the last decade UK nonprofits have engaged in a variety of different techniques to raise voluntary income from members of the public. The use of media such as direct mail, telemarketing, radio advertising, direct response television (DRTV), press advertising, inserts and the Internet is now common. More recently there has been a rapid growth in the use of more personal techniques and in particular the use of face-to-face canvassing to solicit regular donations on the high street. Charities employ agencies to co-ordinate this activity and it has been estimated that 690 000 new supporters were recruited in 2002, who will give an estimated £240 million to good causes over the subsequent 5 year period (PFRA, 2005).

The growth in so-called 'face-to-face' or 'direct dialogue' solicitation has been highly significant for charities as it has opened up a new market, a younger cohort than the traditional donor. Extant research has indicated that 85% of these recruits are under 40 and that 60-75% of them are not supporting another charity (PFRA, 2005). However, a further study conducted by Sargeant and Jay (2004a) suggests that although this may have been true in the early years of its introduction, face-to-face recruits are now giving to an average of four charities so the notion of them as 'charity virgins' is no longer accurate.

Face-to-face solicitations are designed to recruit individuals into a low to medium value regular or 'committed' gift. Agencies are remunerated for each recruit they are able to generate, although in a bid to reduce perceptions of undue pressure being applied at the point of recruitment, most now offer a form of rebating should the donor lapse within a prescribed period (typically 12 months).

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Charities, therefore, only pay for the recruitment of donors beginning to indicate a pattern of loyalty to the organisation concerned.

Alongside the development of face-to-face, charities have experimented with the use of door-to-door fundraising. Here, teams of recruiters knock on doors of domestic dwellings, but as with face-to-face, instead of collecting the cash that was historically the norm for charity solicitations, these individuals now solicit low value monthly gifts through the mechanism of a direct debit (an automated payment, made directly from a donor's bank account to the recipient organisation). Unlike face-to-face that grew from telemarketing, door-to-door activity was originally undertaken by agencies with experience of soliciting payroll donations and who had spare capacity to employ their skillset in a somewhat different environment.

Interestingly, both face-to-face and door-to-door donor segments are now exhibiting high rates of attrition, it not being uncommon for charities to lose up to 50% of supporters between Years 1 and 2 of their giving. While we now understand something of the reasons for this in the context of face-to-face we presently understand very little about the cohort of donors who are recruited by 'door-to-door' fundraising (Sargeant and Jay, 2004a). Data on their demographic profile are lacking and although levels of attrition are reported as high we also understand little about the reasons these individuals might elect to terminate their support and the strategies the sector could adopt to retain them. In this paper it is our intention to address these issues and to provide for the first time some insight into the nature and behaviour of this category of supporter by studying and comparing lapsed and active individuals. We begin, however, with a brief review of the loyalty literature to isolate those factors that might play a role in the retention of door-to-door recruits.

Literature review

A wealth of evidence from the marketing literature, particularly from the early 1990s suggests that repurchase intent (see for

example Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Anderson and Sullivan, 1993) and repurchase behaviour (Newman and Werbel, 1973; LaBarbera and Mazursky, 1983; Sambandam and Lord, 1995) are driven by customer satisfaction. More recent work has suggested that in fact satisfaction explains only a small percentage of the variation in repurchasing behaviours (Bolton, 1998) and Reichheld (1996) estimates that 65–85% of defecting customers do so in spite of being satisfied. Similarly Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997) determine that dissatisfaction may not necessarily lead to the termination of a customer relationship.

The consensus beginning to emerge from the literature is that while satisfaction is a significant factor, the relationship between it and subsequent loyalty is not a linear one. Customers who are extremely satisfied are significantly more likely to remain loyal over time than customers who are merely satisfied (see for example Coyne, 1989; Jones and Sasser, 1995; Mital and Kamakura, 2001). Working in the voluntary sector context, Sargeant (2001) found a similar pattern for donors giving through the medium of direct mail suggesting it would also have relevance to door-to-door recruits.

Other writers have noted that trust can play a key role in retention (e.g. Szymanski and Henard, 2001) while Hart and Johnson (1999) conclude that since trust is a stronger emotion than satisfaction, its impact can be greater. There is no consensus on this issue, however, since Ranaweera and Prabhu (2003) find that the impact of satisfaction on retention is greater than that of trust. In the context of the voluntary sector, trust has been recognised for some time as playing a central role in the development of donor-charity relationships (Sargeant and Lee, 2002). Sargeant and Lee (2004) provide empirical support for this relationship and indicate a relationship between trust and facets of giving behaviour, notably the proportion of an individual's charitable pot that will be donated to a focal organisation. It seems likely that it might therefore simultaneously impact on loyalty, but this has yet to be explored.

The concept of customer value has also received considerable attention, with many writers concluding that where organisations meet or exceed value expectations, loyalty will ensue (see for example Reichheld, 1994; Heskett *et al.*, 1997; Reichheld *et al.*, 2000). Although, as Khalifa (2004) notes, the concept of value has been over-used and misused, the consensus of extant work suggests that value is determined by customer perceptions and not by supplier assumptions or intentions (Belasco and Stayer, 1993; Woodruff and Gardial, 1996; Anderson and Narus, 1998; Lanning, 1998). As Doyle (1989, p. 78) concludes 'value is not what the producer puts in, but what the customer gets out'.

There are two perspectives on value that have a relevance to the fundraising context. The first concerns the dimensions of the quality of service provided by the fundraising department and the components of that that may act as delighters, satisfiers and dissatisfiers (Joiner, 1994). Such an approach is based on the well established disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1997; Rust and Oliver, 2000) and indicates that in a bid to build retention, charities should isolate those factors of the service that genuinely add value for donors and invest in these areas. In the fundraising context economists such as Andreoni (1989, 1990, 2001) have recently argued that the personal utility derived from a gift can take a variety of different forms and have explained giving by reference to public good theory, exchange theory and the so-called 'warm-glow-effect' where the benefits of giving are purely psychological in nature. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that donors receiving greater personal value from their gifts (in whatever form) will be significantly more likely to be loyal.

The second perspective reminds us that customers acquire and use products to achieve favourable ends (Wilkie, 1994; de Chernatony *et al.*, 2000). Thus, donors identifying that their previous giving has had the desired impact on the beneficiary group may also exhibit considerably greater loyalty over time. Indeed, Sargeant (2001) provides some empirical support for this proposition. However, in

the context of donor-charity relationships the agency role played by nonprofits complicates the issue (Stark, 1989). While donors may be concerned with the impact of their gift, most have no objective way of assessing this, relying instead on charity initiated communications to provide insight. Although conceptually interesting, this source of value is therefore difficult to disentangle from the value generated by communications that we alluded to above.

Studies examining loyalty in the context of fundraising are rare. Extant work reinforces the notion that donors need to be segmented and a variety of interactions targeted specifically to appeal to each unique group (Tapp, 1995; Payne and Holt, 2001; Ewing *et al.*, 2002). Ideally these interactions should be tailored to reflect the complex set of intrinsic and extrinsic motives for support (Sargeant, 1999; Shelley and Polonsky, 2002).

In seeking to explore the primary determinants of loyalty among door-to-door recruits, it would therefore seem wise to explore the central constructs of trust, satisfaction and donor value. To this it may be appropriate to add the idea of 'pressure' since there is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that a key reason for attrition may be the perception that the donor had 'no choice' but to sign up to a gift (Sargeant and Jay, 2004b). While empirical studies in this domain are rare, the literature on social desirability bias does suggest that in face-to-face situations individuals will often respond in ways they feel will please the solicitor or are consistent with societal norms (Fisher, 1993; Krosnick, 1999). When the fundraiser is no longer present they may then reverse their decision. There is some support for this proposition from work on face-to-face recruits, where feelings of pressure were shown to result in donors terminating their support subsequent to completing their direct debit mandate (Sargeant and Jay, 2004a).

Methodology

To address the factors that might be driving retention in this context a quantitative research

study was designed. Working in partnership with five large national charities drawn from a variety of different causes, a sample of 5000 active door-to-door recruits and 5000 lapsed door-to-door recruits was assembled. Potential participants were selected at random from the databases of the participating charities and were all giving low value monthly gifts through the medium of a direct debit. The overall response rate achieved among active and lapsed supporters was 21 and 18%, respectively.

A series of demographic questions were posed to develop a profile of this category of supporter, with differences between active and lapsed supporters being explored. Chi-square tests and one-way analyses of variance were performed to highlight significant differences between the two groups. Both groups were also asked a series of attitudinal questions about their relationship with their chosen charity, the value they derived from this, the extent to which they trusted the nonprofit and their satisfaction with the quality of service provided. Again, comparisons were undertaken, in an attempt to identify the underlying reasons for donor attrition. The impact of the factors highlighted in the literature review was then explored through the medium of a logistic regression. Finally, lapsed supporters were asked directly, why they had terminated their support.

Results

Demographic profile

As already stated the sample included both active and lapsed supporters and we will consider their demographics first to examine whether there are significant differences in profile that may help account for lapsing behaviour. There were no significant differences in the gender of respondent, both groups were predominantly female, 71.2% of active supporters and 75% of lapsed. **Table 1** presents the income of each category of supporter, it is interesting to note that over a quarter of the active sample claim incomes in excess of £40K a year, a factor presumably

Table 1. Income profile of respondents

Income band	Active (%)	Lapsed (%)
Up to £5000	4.3	4.9
£5000-£9999	7.7	10.4
£10 000-£14 999	12.9	17.0
£15 000-£19 999	10.9	8.8
£20 000-£24 999	11.9	13.2
£25 000-£29 999	10.4	12.6
£30 000-£39 999	16.4	11.0
£40 000 or more	25.7	22.0

reflecting the choice of neighbourhoods targeted by the agencies that specialise in this form of recruitment. However, there appear to be no significant differences in income between those that are active supporters and those that have lapsed. It is also interesting to note that when the amounts given each month to the organisation participating in this study are overlaid on this income profile, no significant differences in giving could be found between those on low and those on high incomes. All income categories give statistically indistinguishable monthly gifts.

The employment status of both groups is depicted in **Table 2** and again there were no significant differences found between the two groups in respect of this dimension. The majority of respondents in both samples are in either full or part-time employment. Just under 20% of the active givers are retired and this lowers slightly to just over 13% of lapsed givers (although this difference is not statistically significant).

Of more interest was the difference in age between the two groups. Active supporters were found to have a mean age of 48.1 years,

Table 2. Employment status

	Active (%)	Lapsed (%)
Employed full-time	44.8	42.2
Employed part-time	23.5	24.6
Housewife/husband	10.0	17.1
Student	1.8	3.0
Retired	19.9	13.1

while lapsed supporters have a mean age of 43.1 years. This 5-year difference in age between the two groups was found to be highly significant ($F=20.461$, Significance level 0.000). As one would expect, given this difference, lapsed supporters were significantly more likely to have children living at home, 54.6–41.6%, respectively ($\chi^2=11.908$, Significance level 0.01). Perhaps this indicates that it is more appropriate to target those older households without children at living at home.

Turning to respondent's educational achievements there was no discernable difference between the two groups in respect of their level of education. Both active and lapsed groups left school at a mean age of 18 years, indicating that education appears to have no impact on whether donors lapse.

It is interesting to note that whilst both groups give to charity each year the amounts donated are significantly different. Active supporters gave a mean amount of £239.78 and lapsed supporters a mean of £151.01. This difference is also highly significant ($F=6.099$, Significance level 0.014). This perhaps suggests that agencies should target those households that already donate generously to other charities.

Perceptions of door-to-door recruitment

Data were then gathered in respect of donor satisfaction with the recruitment process using

a scale developed by Sargeant and Jay (2004a). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of attitudinal statements, measured on seven point scales where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. The mean scores for each group are reported in **Table 3** where significant differences between the two groups are also highlighted.

The results indicate that all respondents were generally satisfied with the recruitment process. The recruiter was perceived as enthusiastic, polite and knowledgeable. However, a number of small but statistically significant differences did emerge between the responses of the two groups. Lapsed supporters were less likely to rate the fundraiser they spoke to as professional, polite and able to answer questions. They also felt less strongly that they learned a lot from the fundraiser about the work of the charity and that the fundraiser provided them with the details they needed about what would happen next.

Respondents were then asked to indicate why they had agreed to talk to the fundraiser. The results reported in **Table 4** indicate that name recognition and being interested in the work of the charity were the key factors. Past experience of signing up on the doorstep was less of an issue. **Table 4** also indicates that lapsed supporters were significantly less interested in the work of the charity when they signed up to give.

Table 3. Perceptions of the recruitment process

Statement	Active	Lapsed
The fundraiser was professional	5.68	5.46*
The fundraiser was enthusiastic about the cause	5.95	5.79
The fundraiser knew a lot about X (the charity)	5.74	5.57
The fundraiser was polite to me throughout	6.33	6.06**
The fundraiser was able to answer my questions	5.95	5.67*
I learned a lot from their description of the charity's work	4.82	4.56*
The fundraiser provided me with details of the communications I would receive from the charity	5.68	5.41*

*Significant difference at the 0.05 level.

**Significant difference at the 0.01 level.

Table 4. Reasons for agreeing to talk to the fundraiser

Reason	Active (%)	Lapsed (%)
I recognised the name of the charity	57.5	58.9
I was interested in the work of the charity	60.8	45.7**
I had previously signed up to support other charities in this way	14.9	12.3

**Significant difference at the 0.01 level.

Satisfaction with the recruitment process

Given the importance placed on satisfaction as a significant factor in the reason for repurchase intent in the literature review, respondents were also asked to indicate their overall satisfaction with the recruitment process. A 7 point Likert scale was employed to measure recruitment process satisfaction, using a scale developed by Sargeant and Jay (2004a). Our results are reported in **Table 5** and it appears that both groups of supporter are broadly happy with the process and were not unhappy about being approached at home. There were no significant differences in this between the two groups suggesting that the recruitment method and process was not a reason for some supporters to withdraw their support.

Satisfaction with ongoing relationship

The next section of the survey again focused on respondent satisfaction and asked participants about their experience of what happened after they signed up. In the first instance participants were asked how frequently they liked to hear from charities they supported.

The majority of active supporters indicated that a quarterly or twice-yearly communication would be most appropriate for their needs. There was no discernible pattern in the preferences of lapsed givers (as reported in **Table 6**).

Respondents were then asked about the information they were most interested in receiving from charities. The results indicate a very similar pattern of interest between the two groups. **Table 7** contains the detail of this analysis. There were no significant differences between the two groups with the majority of all respondents preferring that the communication received focuses on the work that the charity undertakes and how their money has been used in the past. Unsurprisingly only around 10% of all supporters preferred to receive no communication at all.

Respondents were next asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements designed to measure their satisfaction with the quality of the ongoing service provided by the charity. **Table 8** shows that the responses are generally positive across all the statements, but lapsed supporters are significantly less positive about every aspect of the charity's communications.

Table 5. Satisfaction with the recruitment process

Statement	Active mean	Lapsed mean
I was satisfied with the way the process was conducted	5.82	5.33
I felt I had an adequate understanding of how the process worked	5.76	5.35
I was adequately informed of what would happen next	5.91	5.49
I was unhappy at being approached at home	2.72	3.18

Table 6. Preferred communication frequency

Frequency	Active (%)	Lapsed (%)
Never	2.1	2.8
Once a year	16.9	20.7
Twice a year	30.5	29.1
Every 3 months	41.6	35.2
Monthly	8.8	12.2

Given that these supporters have lapsed this result is intuitive and supported by the extant research alluded to earlier.

Donor value

The issue of donor value was investigated by asking individuals to focus on the dimensions of the fundraising product and to identify where a charity might exceed, or fall short of expectations. In **Table 9** we therefore deduct expectations scores from the performance scores for each item. A positive gap on any dimension would indicate an area where the

charity delivers superior value by exceeding expectations. By contrast a negative gap would indicate a dimension where the charity falls short of expectations and where value fails to be added.

The results indicate a number of highly significant differences in attitude between active and lapsed supporters. Active supporters feel that the charity they give to performs better than expected against all but one dimension, namely leaving the supporter to decide how much to donate. Lapsed supporters, by contrast, feel the charity they supported fell short of their expectations in terms of responding quickly, asking for appropriate sums, leaving it to them how much to donate, being polite in communications, providing feedback on how donations have been used and not asking for support too often.

Trust

Trust was operationalised as the extent to which the organisation could be trusted to

Table 7. Communication content preferences

Communication	Active (%)	Lapsed (%)
The work the charity undertakes	78.7	74.0
How my money has been used in the past	62.0	70.3
Additional projects the organisation needs funding for	27.1	30.1
Other ways I could give support	15.2	17.4
Acknowledgements or thanks for my support	33.4	32.4
None—I don't need to hear from them	8.3	10.5

Table 8. Perceptions of ongoing quality of service

Statement	Active mean	Lapsed mean
I look forward to receiving communications from X	5.20	4.55**
I enjoy the content of this charity's communications	5.32	4.85**
The frequency of their communications is about right	5.47	4.80**
The content of their communications is about right	5.51	5.11**
The quality of their communications is about right	5.58	5.25**
I have adequate choice in what I am sent	4.62	4.23**
X keep me informed about how my money is being used	5.27	4.67**

**Significant difference at the 0.01 level.

Table 9. Gap scores

Gap	Active mean	Lapsed mean
Thanking me for my support	1.07	0.68**
Responding quickly when I contact them	0.31	-0.14**
Demonstrating they care about me	1.09	0.66**
Asking for appropriate sums	0.37	-0.08**
Leaving it to me how much to donate	-0.32	-0.77**
Being polite in all their communications	0.02	-0.22**
Informing me about how money is spent	0.04	-0.21*
Not asking me for support too often	0.02	-0.38**
Making me feel important	1.33	1.08

*Significant difference at the 0.05 level.

**Significant difference at the 0.01 level.

behave in a variety of different ways (Sargeant and Lee, 2004). The results of this analysis are reported in **Table 10**. The organisations in the study appear highly trusted by their active supporters, which is unsurprising given their continued support. Lapsed supporters also indicate high levels of trust, but it is interesting to note that in each case their level of trust is significantly lower. Given these differences, levels of trust might well help to explain a percentage of attrition.

Pressure

Finally, respondents were asked a series of questions about the extent to which they felt pressured into offering their support. The four items employed were derived from previous studies of donor retention (Sargeant and Jay, 2004c) and embraced four distinctive forms of pressure that might have been in evidence.

Despite this we found all items to be highly correlated and to perform well as a scale, achieving a high Cronbach alpha (see below). Our results are reported in **Table 11** and indicate that in each case lapsed donors were significantly more likely to have felt pressured to give.

Logistic regression

Returning to the original questions posed in this research a binomial logistic regression was then completed on our data using the stepwise procedure available on SPSS 11. This procedure was selected as it allows one to employ a subset of correlated variables without losing a significant portion of the explanatory power of the data, thus minimising the impacts of multi-collinearity in the regression and result analysis (Gunst and Mason, 1980). The dependent variable was the binary variable 'active/

Table 10. Trust

Statement	Active mean	Lapsed mean
To always act in the best interest of the cause	6.29	6.05**
To conduct their operations ethically	6.27	6.05**
To use donated funds appropriately	6.26	6.04**
Not to exploit donors	6.19	5.83**
To use fundraising techniques that are appropriate and sensitive	6.16	5.76**

**Significant difference at the 0.01 level.

Table 11. Pressure

Statement	Active mean	Lapsed mean
I felt pressured by the fundraiser to offer my support	2.26	2.97**
The fundraiser was friendly and unthreatening	5.97	5.65*
I would have felt guilty had I not talked to the fundraiser	2.65	3.54**
I was under no pressure of time	5.37	4.81*

*Significant difference at the 0.05 level.

**Significant difference at the 0.01 level.

lapsed'. The independent variables were: satisfaction with the recruitment process, satisfaction with ongoing communications quality, trust, pressure and value. Scores were calculated for each individual on each of these dimensions, employing the scales alluded to earlier. In the case of value the aggregate gap across all the dimensions listed above was input into the analysis. For satisfaction and trust, existing scales were employed (Sargeant and Lee, 2004), with alpha scores of 0.7 or above being reported. In the case of 'pressure' the four items from Table 11 are employed as a scale. An alpha of 0.85 was obtained.

Table 12 contains the detail of our analysis. It shows the variables that discriminated most powerfully were ongoing satisfaction, donor value and pressure. Loyalty appears to be driven by the quality of the service provided by the fundraising function, donor value and the perception that little pressure was applied at the point of recruitment. Donor trust and perceptions of the quality of the recruitment

Table 12. Logistic regression

Construct ^a	B	Exp(B)	Significance
Ongoing satisfaction	0.280	1.330	0.001
Value	0.176	1.219	0.001
Pressure	-0.214	0.912	0.002
-2LL statistic ^b	192.433		
Nagelkerke pseudo R ²	0.354		
Hit Ratio	77.3%		

^aAll interval scaled independent variables were standardised for parameter estimation.

^bTests the hypothesis that the model provides a good fit.

process were not found to be significant factors.

Overall the model performs well in discriminating between the two categories of supporter, although it is worth expressing the caveat that the same data that were classified were also used to estimate the model, providing a potentially upward bias in the model's hit rate.

Lapsed supporters

To conclude, lapsed supporters were asked some further questions to probe why they had terminated their support. Our results are shown in **Table 13**.

When asked explicitly why they had terminated their support for the charity the main reasons stated for lapse are financial pressures stemming from changes in work or personal circumstances. Thus while factors such as satisfaction and value are certainly an issue, a high proportion of lapsed donors appear to do so as a result of external pressures rather than being prompted by any action of the charity.

Conclusions

This research has identified a number of key issues that appear to influence donor attrition. When questioned explicitly the majority of door-to-door recruits responding to our study told us they were prompted to stop their regular gift because of financial pressures arising from a change in work or personal circumstances. The demographic data

Table 13. Reasons for termination of support

Reason	%
There were too many demands on me financially	39.2
I can no longer afford to offer my support — my personal circumstances have changed	32.4
I can no longer afford to offer my support — my work circumstances have changed	31.4
I switched support to a charity that works in a different field	14.2
My personal priorities have changed	12.7
I am still supporting them by other means	11.3
I was not aware my donation had stopped	6.9
I found X's communications inappropriate	4.4
The quality of service provided by X was poor	4.4
The charity asked for inappropriate sums	3.4
The charity did not tell me how my money was used	3.4
There was a mistake at my bank	2.9
There was a mistake when I changed bank	2.9
I switched my support to a charity that does similar work	2.9
The charity did not take account of my wishes	1.5
The charity does not seem to need my support	1.0
I disagreed with a X (the charity) action or policy	0.5

supports this by indicating that lapsed donors are significantly younger than active givers, give less to charity each year and are more likely to have children living at home. Lapsed supporters appear to be at a slightly less stable and affluent life stage than is the case with the active file. Perhaps this indicates that agencies should consider wider demographic variables when they target their door-to-door solicitations. From a charity perspective, care should also be taken to engage agencies with a strong record of ethical and professional fundraising practice. While this may seem a rather obvious point, the number of lapsed donors claiming to experience pressure should be a matter for some concern, particularly when the exertion of pressure is ultimately self-defeating. We find this to be the case as individuals placed under pressure are significantly more likely to lapse. Agencies should be encouraged to identify only those individuals with a genuine interest in the cause and to consider (as a number of agencies now do) adopting a two-stage recruitment process, where householders are visited once to distribute information and a second time to secure (if appropriate) a regular donation.

When we examine the results across the whole survey significant differences are found

in the views of active and lapsed supporters. Feelings of 'pressure' aside, lapsed donors are more likely than active supporters to have ended the recruitment process with less of an understanding of what would happen next, and were less likely to have had a genuine interest in the cause. This research also indicated that lapsed recruits were more likely to feel that they began the conversation with the fundraiser because they 'had no choice', and more likely to have been short of time when they were approached at home to sign up. Viewed in aggregate it is interesting to note that perceptions of the quality of the recruitment process do not seem to drive subsequent loyalty. Lapsed supporters appear equally happy with the overall process, it is only the perceived quality of subsequent communications that seems to influence retention.

Indeed responses from the lapsed group show them to be significantly less positive about many facets of the subsequent communications they received from the charity and this was further highlighted in the results of the logistic regression. It is tempting to view this difference between active and lapsed supporters as stemming from the views the individual held at the start of the process. Those who go on to lapse are less likely to have

started out with a real interest in the cause. They are therefore less likely to engage with subsequent communications or to become more deeply involved in the issues the charity is addressing. It is possible that charities could address this matter through the development of a tailored 'welcome cycle' that would recognise the lower levels of understanding that many members of this segment might have of the cause and why, as a consequence, it would merit support. Individuals would then be entered into the standard development cycle only after they have had been educated in this way.

The literature also indicated that the concept of customer value may be of use in this research. Value was operationalised here as the extent to which expectations were met or exceeded. While active supporters feel that the charity has delivered a service broadly in line with expectations, lapsed supporters felt that the charity fell short in most areas. Thus in seeking to build loyalty charities could pay greater attention to service quality issues, seek to offer more choice to this segment in terms of communication frequency and donation amounts and may want to offer e-mail as a media alternative to the mail. They might also conduct further research into those issues likely to be of greatest interest to this specific segment (i.e. door-to-door) and focus on these dimensions in their ongoing communications. Given the broad demographic spread on many charity databases, it is possible that a 'one size fits all' approach to communication may be sub-optimal. Younger donors (who are more likely to lapse) may have rather different needs, interests and expectations, from older segments on the database.

The desirability of a tailored approach is also highlighted by the fact that we could detect no differences in the pattern of giving between those on low and those on high incomes. Given that these groups are likely to have rather different capacities for supporting good causes, agencies should be encouraged to consider offering appropriately tailored solicitations given the likely income bracket of the neighbourhood targeted. Indeed, the charities

themselves may wish to investigate ways in which this segment of supporter may thereafter be approached to upgrade their giving as part of an ongoing development strategy.

In summary, we find that many of the retention variables highlighted in the literature appear to have relevance to this context. Satisfaction with ongoing communication and donor value were certainly reflected in our findings. We do not, however, find any evidence that trust and satisfaction with the recruitment process are related to subsequent retention. Indeed our results suggest that a change in financial circumstances or a desire to support a different charity may have rather more of a role to play.

It is important to end by stressing that this is the first study of retention in the context of door-to-door fundraising and further work will be necessary to replicate these findings and perhaps to explore the role of commitment, both to the charity and the cause. Our results suggest that commitment may influence retention but we did not explicitly examine this construct. It would also be instructive to re-examine the role of trust, possibly as an antecedent of commitment since it may be related to retention albeit mediated, or partially mediated, by commitment.

Biographical notes

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