

Ten Key Takeaways

- 1 Integrate digital media and technology into every aspect of your organization:** As our lives and those of our supporters go online, no organization will be exempt from the shift. All communications, program operations, and fundraising should include a digital focus.
- 2 Leaders must embrace digital:** The most important “digital director” is the organization’s leader. For organizations to embrace digital media and technology effectively, they must have commitment and focus from the top, including leaders who take a deep interest in digital, constantly challenging teams to do better.
- 3 Design online programs based on offline behaviors:** Human behavior is human behavior, whether you are working online or off. People—and their needs, desires, and motivations—are the starting point for any successful program. When building an online program, think of things that have worked well for you offline, and seek ways to apply them online.
- 4 Empower supporters to take the next step:** The ability to “like” a Facebook post or sign a petition is an important first step, but you need to make it easy for people to take the next step. Find ways to incentivize and empower your existing supporters to reach into their networks and get the message out to a second circle of activists that can grow your community. Think about online and offline engagement as a ladder, and ask supporters to start with small steps that grow into bigger actions.
- 5 Listen and respond to your fans:** Have a conversation with your supporters. Keep track of what they respond to and what is shared widely. Speed also is essential. Conversation, particularly on Twitter, moves fast; any delay is a lost opportunity to enter the conversation.
- 6 If you want online activism – ask for it:** When you want supporters to take action, be extremely clear and upfront. Emails should not bury a call-to-action, and neither should websites. The best way consistently to get people to share something on social media is to ask them to share it.
- 7 Test everything:** Your community is unique; what works for one community will not necessarily work in another. Low-cost testing tools exist that allow you to create simple tests—for email, online advertising, and beyond. Be sure to only vary one thing at a time when you test, run each test long enough to get valid data, and re-test periodically. Finally, take the time to understand what success means for your organization, and define quantifiable metrics that connect your program to your end goal.
- 8 Let technology people solve technology challenges:** Leadership often takes half-baked solutions to technology team members, rather than including them from the beginning. Organizations should start looking for solutions with big teams that include a broad set of perspectives, and then pare down to a more nimble execution team—not the other way around.
- 9 Always think mobile:** Around 40 percent of the Obama campaign’s website traffic came from mobile and tablet devices. Optimize your website and online content for mobile devices. The best way to do this is to embrace the principles of responsive design.
- 10 Use resources wisely and avoid shiny objects:** Every organization is resource-constrained, so use your resources to their greatest impact. Do not embrace technologies just because they are new and shiny. It is important to embrace new ideas, but you must do so intentionally and with purpose.