

10 Questions to help you pick a better fundraising platform

Whether you're a charity, fundraiser, donor, event organiser or company looking to help raise money for vital causes, finding the right online fundraising platform can be a challenge.



Source: Supplied

“There’s no one-size-fits-all answer. Many entities and individuals work with more than one platform, but a few well-chosen questions can help you make the right choice,” says Jannie Smith, regional manager of GivenGain in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, a global fundraising platform for charity.

So, what should you look out for in a fundraising platform?

1. Where are your supporters?

A charity’s supporters may be local but consider the friends and family they have all over the world. It’s part of the incredible power of online fundraising - people on opposite sides of the world can fundraise within their networks, creating a multiplier effect for your charity.

To get that benefit, you need a platform that can handle cross-border donations and allows donors to give in their own currency and language.

2. Can they handle the volume you need?

Donations often come in spikes: think of big days of giving like Giving Tuesday or Mandela Day or major events like the Boston Marathon. The latter event has raised more than \$26m and counting in online donations alone this year. If you expect to raise a lot of money through online crowdfunding, you need a platform that can process, distribute, manage and report on large campaigns all at once.



3. What do they offer beyond donations?

Does your platform also offer peer-to-peer fundraising, not just donations? What modern fundraising methods does it support? Think live stream fundraising, which became popular during the pandemic when in-person events were cancelled. It makes great sense – giving charity supporters a way to fundraise directly from their favourite streaming service while engaging with their followers.

All these options matter, but so does your ability to use them well. Go with a platform that doesn't just give you the tools and then let you sink or swim. This can work great for established charities, events or companies with dedicated marketing teams, but smaller ones may find value in the personalised service provided by some fundraising platforms. Look for a platform that will work with you – one that puts you in touch with a real person, not an automated chatbot.

4. Can you count on the platform to last?

We all know the big names in charity crowdfunding, but beware – age and prominence is not everything. Virgin Money Giving is closing after 12 years in operation, leaving many charities, companies, events and fundraisers in need of a new crowdfunding partner.

What you need is a tried and trusted fundraising platform with a permanent constitution such as a non-profit foundation, one that isn't beholden to shareholders' interests. Look for a platform with a strong track record dedicated to charity fundraising, rather than a charitable add-on to a commercial crowdfunding website. Ask what they do with their revenue – are they invested in improving the platform or are earnings passed on to shareholders?



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5. Are they fair and transparent about the costs?

Some fundraising platforms levy a fixed or variable fee on donations or, ask donors to 'tip the platform'. Others might charge money transfer fees. Or they might decide to place premium features behind a paywall.

Figuring out how much most platforms will charge you can be very difficult. In summary, it should be a fair per-donation

fee, and it should be clear. Some platforms even allow donors to cover the fees to keep costs down for charities – a very popular choice that is well supported by donors.

6. Is it secure?

You're asking donors and fundraisers to trust your chosen platform with their payment details, so what security does it offer? Find out what encryption they use, where their servers are based and if they are backed up safely. Does the platform run security penetration tests and, do they have a development team to maintain the platform or is it some white-label software they've customised?

7. What do users say?

Talk to other charity professionals, fundraisers, event organisers and company fundraising experts. What do they like and dislike about the platforms they use? Do they feel safe and valued?

8. Is it easy?

Raising money for charity can take commitment, but the platform should make it easy. Is it quick and simple to donate? Can fundraisers get support from a real person and does the platform help and encourage them to raise the maximum for their cause?

For charities, events and companies, does it add to your workload or make managing fundraisers and donations easy? Do you get an overview of all fundraising activities taking place, with features like a leaderboard, real-time donation figures and detailed analytics?



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9. Can you get guaranteed commitment?

If you're a charity, company or event, you might want to set a minimum fundraising target for fundraisers to take part in a fundraising event. Does the platform support that to cater for the most motivated fundraisers, while ensuring the charity, event or company covers the cost of entry?

10. Can you trust them?

Ultimately it all comes down to trust, and there's nothing better than being able to speak to the people behind the platform, whether by e-mail, over Zoom or on the phone. So, look out for the ones that offer a personal touch.

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