

Beyond the On Air Drive

Conference presentation recap and 90 day action plan

The central idea

Christian radio already has the audience relationship. Sustainable growth comes from converting more anonymous listeners into known participants, then building relationships that retain and deepen their support.

Key takeaways

- The pledge drive remains useful, but it cannot carry acquisition, cultivation, retention and renewal for the entire year.
- Protect the listener experience during appeals through strong content, programming continuity, a lower pressure tone and an accessible monthly offer.
- Move listeners from **Anonymous** to **Known** by capturing usable contact information, permission, channel preference and a clear next step.
- Use on-air fundraising to open the relationship. Continue it through welcome, stewardship, segmentation and appropriate invitations.
- Define success through donor growth and relationship health as well as revenue.
- Aim to finish each year with at least 1 percent more active donors than the station had at the start.

The leadership question

- Did we meet the real net revenue need and strengthen the donor base for next year?

Why the model needs to change

- On air campaigns often create audience loss and/or fatigue, produce weaker response, less predictable revenue, and pressure to add more appeal days/hours.
- Longer or more intense campaigns may close a temporary gap without expanding the donor base.
- Fundraising changes the listening experience. Surveyed avoidance is widespread, although measured ratings effects vary by station and event.
- The greater the departure from normal programming, the greater the risk of tune out and donor fatigue.

What pledge drives still do well

- Create urgency around a clear need.
- Build shared momentum.
- Produce concentrated revenue.

The strategic shift

- Treat the fundraising event as one tactic inside a donor development system.
- Use the daily broadcast relationship as the starting advantage. Future donors already listen and often already share the mission.
- Invite more people to participate at an accessible level instead of relying on the same small group for ever larger gifts.
- Build a broader monthly support base to reduce revenue concentration and create future upgrade, major gift and legacy opportunities.

A known listener has four attributes

- **Identified:** name and usable contact information.
- **Permission:** affirmative consent to continue contact.
- **Preference:** the communication channel the listener chooses.
- **Next step:** a planned welcome or follow up action.

The year round donor ecosystem

Pillar 1 - Evolved on air fundraising

- Lead with stories that show changed lives and ministry impact.
- Keep the appeal recognisably connected to the station's normal sound and purpose.
- Use less pressure and more celebration.
- Offer an easy monthly entry point and test price points against conversion, retention, lifetime value and acquisition cost.
- Thank quickly and begin follow up within 48 hours.

Pillar 2 - Year round donor nurture

- Days 1 to 30: thank personally, deliver a welcome sequence, share one strong ministry story and invite monthly support when appropriate.
- Months 2 to 6: provide regular updates, prayer content, listener stories and occasional gentle invitations.
- Months 7 to 12: recognise anniversaries, offer relevant upgrades, invite event participation and identify major donor signals.
- Ongoing: create opportunities for referrals, volunteering, legacy conversations and peer encouragement.

Pillar 3 - Useful segmentation

- Start with segments that change the message or next action: first time donors, monthly partners, mid level partners and lapsed donors.
- Use giving behaviour, relationship stage, engagement and ministry interest as practical signals.
- Match each segment with a clear objective such as second gift, retention, deeper involvement or reactivation.

Pillar 4 - Lifetime value growth

- Create a clear path from first gift to second gift, monthly partnership and deeper engagement.
- Invite the next right step based on the donor's history and relationship.
- Track reactivation, upgrades, major giving and legacy interest without rushing the relationship.

Messaging and engagement

- **Name the work:** connect generosity to changed lives and the station's ministry.
- **Invite belonging:** show donors how they participate in the mission.
- **Make it tangible:** use specific stories and outcomes.
- **Celebrate faithfulness:** recognise the donor's existing role before making another invitation.

Off air connection

- Let listeners choose among app, SMS, email, website, social media, events and personal contact.
- Give value more often than asking for money. Use a 3 to 1 value to invitation (give/ask) cadence as a starting discipline, not a rigid rule.
- Treat net donor growth as an organisation wide priority: programming creates value and invites, digital makes connection easy, development welcomes and retains, and leadership owns the scorecard.

How success should be measured

- **Net donor growth:** new and reactivated donors minus lapsed donors. Annual aim: at least 1 percent of the opening active donor file.
- **Retention:** the share of donors who remain active or give again.
- **Second gift conversion:** the share of first time donors who give a second time.
- **Monthly giving:** the share of donors and revenue that recurs.
- **Gift frequency:** whether donors participate more consistently.
- **Lifetime value:** the net contribution generated across the relationship.
- **Acquisition cost:** whether long term donor value justifies the investment.
- **Campaign efficiency:** net revenue per pitch hour, supported by audience and response indicators.

Revenue reports what happened. These measures show whether the donor system is becoming healthier.

The first 90 days

Use one accountable owner, one initial campaign or donor journey, and one shared scorecard.

Timing	Focus	Actions
Days 1 to 30	Foundation	• Name the executive sponsor and pilot owner. • Define the active donor file and baseline. • Map the current listener and donor journey. • Draft the welcome sequence and agree the campaign stop rule.
Days 31 to 60	Build	• Strengthen the monthly giving pathway. • Create one strong listener story package. • Choose the first useful donor segments. • Prepare the off air follow up and scorecard.
Days 61 to 90	Activate	• Launch one segmented nurture campaign. • Review the most recent drive and its efficiency. • Monitor revenue, donor movement, retention and audience signals weekly. • Decide what to keep, stop, improve or scale.

Weekly operating rhythm

- Monday: update the scorecard and review donor movement, revenue, campaign efficiency and audience indicators.
- Midweek: remove one donor experience or operating obstacle revealed by the data.
- Friday: record the decision, owner and due date for the next test or adjustment.

Day 90 decision

- Keep, stop, improve or scale each element based on net donor movement, retention, lifetime value, campaign efficiency and audience impact.
- The pilot succeeds when it meets the agreed net revenue need and improves the trajectory toward annual net 1 percent donor growth.