

The Donor Development Strategies Story:

In 2012, Donor Development Strategies (DDS) partnered with the Contributor Development Partnership (CDP) to help diversify the portfolio of acquisition tools made available to Public Broadcasting. For years Public Media was successful at acquiring sustainers via Direct Mail or through On-Air Pledge. But more recently, the rise in cord-cutting, the increase in on-demand viewing, and overall changes to content viewing habits have forced Public Broadcasting Stations to confront several fundraising challenges that all nonprofits and advocacy groups face: rising fundraising costs, more competition for donors, shrinking membership, less-effective donor acquisition than in previous years, and uncertainty related to current and future fundraising channels.

In order to overcome these challenges, the CDP and DDS worked together to develop a highly successful door-to-door canvassing program for Public Broadcasting. The goal was to talk to community members at their doorstep in targeted neighborhoods, to help them understand the value of their local Station and where their favorite programs come from, and to sign them up as monthly sustainers via Electronic Funds Transfer. This form of acquisition has proven incredibly effective for Public Broadcasting, with over 22 stations participating in the program since the launch.

The DDS and CDP canvass model is unique. Our field teams work out of the Station and are exclusive to the Station. Each canvasser is trained extensively on everything from the basic skills of professional and courteous conversation, to how to deliver an assumptive ask that leads to the highest sustaining EFT gift possible. Each day, canvassers spend one hour practicing basic and more advanced canvassing skills in the office before heading out to their assigned neighborhood for the evening. Additionally, DDS Canvass Directors spend at least two days each week providing advanced training to their teams in the field. DDS's Field Managers also canvass five days each week while training and motivating their crews to hit their goals. By assigning one Field Manager to each crew of four or five canvassers, we are able to provide the real-time training and feedback that leads to high quality fundraising.

Our pioneering Mobile Canvasser application has allowed Stations to receive specific data points in a completely PCI-compliant environment and through on-demand downloads that are customized to each Station's database needs. By means of an easy monthly data transmission, Stations have also customized door-to-door outreach for active and lapsed donors that are already in their databases.

The benefits of the DDS canvass model for Public Media are robust and diverse. Since inception, DDS has knocked on over 8.7 million doors and held over 3.6 million conversations about the impact and importance of Public Broadcasting services on local communities. The improved visibility, brand awareness, data/survey collection, and local relevance that has stemmed from these personal interactions at the door have helped the Stations better understand how the community views their services and what their donors want to support.

Since the launch, DDS and the CDP have raised over \$25 Million and acquired over 345K members for Public Broadcasting Stations. Over 60% of this revenue has come from sustaining, monthly contributors. In addition, over 56% of the sustaining members contribute via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Canvassing has proven to be a unique competitive acquisition tool that brings in members and sustainers providing fundraising certainty to Stations, all at a cheaper net cost than most other forms of fundraising.

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