

# Philanthropy Day on Cape Cod

## How to Make Your Mid-Level Donor Program a Success Results, Habits, and Components

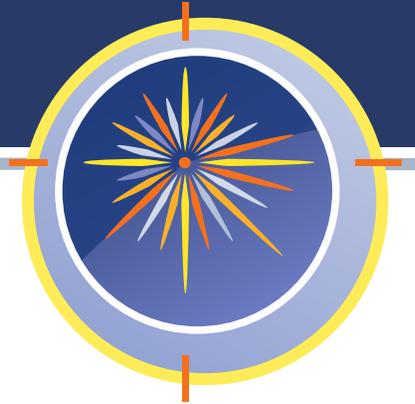
Presenters:

Anne Morrison  
Amy O'Connor

November 19, 2019



# Today's Presenters



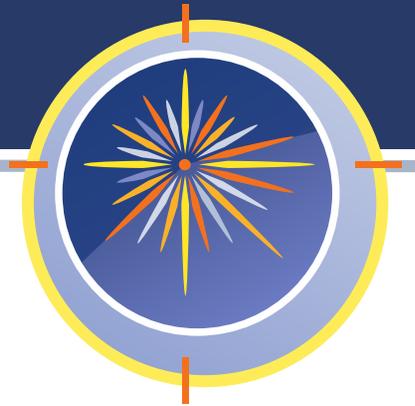
## Amy O'Connor

- Current: Target Analytics, Blackbaud, 5 years
- Previous: DonorBase and CCAH
- Hometown: Newburyport, MA
- Amy joined Target Analytics, a division of Blackbaud, as an Analytics Consultant in 2014 after 11 years in the non-profit industry.
- Currently, Amy works with a wide variety of non-profit organizations utilizing donorCentrics™ products to analyze performance and guide strategy.
- Prior to joining Target, she worked as a Client Analytics Specialist at DonorBase and as the Deputy Director of List Services at Chapman, Cubine, Adams & Hussey (CAAH).

## Anne Morrison

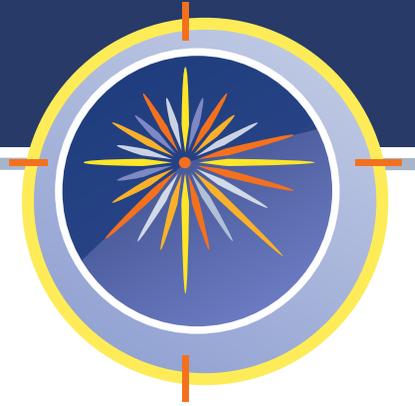
- Current: Independent Consultant, Anne Morrison Consulting
- Previous: Target Analytics, Blackbaud, 15 years
- Hometown: Mashpee, MA
- Anne consults with nonprofits and agencies to improve their reports, dashboards, and analytics. She also provides audit and analysis services.
- Previously, she was Senior Manager, Analytics Consulting, for Target Analytics, a division of Blackbaud. In her role, Anne drove the creation of hundreds of reports, graphs, and dashboard products, and she managed a team of fundraising experts who facilitated collaborative, peer, benchmarking meetings for non-profits.

# Mid-Level Giving



- Mid-Level giving has always occurred even when professional fundraisers did not have a specific program or strategy to create, manage, and fundraise to these donors.
  - Some donors just give more.
- Mid-Level Donors are now increasingly mainstream for small to large organizations. Mid-level Giving programs are an important element of both fundraising strategy and revenue.
  - Every organization needs to create giving opportunities for donors who desire to, and can, give at higher levels than their core, mass marketing donor populations.
  - And some of these donors can give at even higher amounts so they need solid programs for stewarding their donors who have higher financial capacity.
- Mid-Level giving program studies have shown that growth of these programs require staff time – both from leadership and from dedicated program management team member(s).
  - In our work with numerous clients, we observed that when staff time increases, program size increases.

# Sharing Curated Information – Why and from Where?



## What is the source of today's information?

- We facilitated Collaborative Benchmarking Meetings attended by 10-20 organizations in dozens of meetings per year. And, we've facilitated meetings for many years (15 years for Anne and 5 for Amy).
  - In these meetings, we review results and trends that drive conversation amongst participants. The discussions address strategy, management, and program tactics.
- We processed data for 500-600 organizations annually, across numerous sectors. The result of the data processing is a comprehensive, individual-organization report and benchmarking, peer-comparison report. We analyzed the trends in numerous reports each year.
- Studies conducted by various industry providers
- Webinar participation
- Conference attendance
- Mid Level List Serve
- We are not mid-level fundraisers. We are curators of information across organizations, from many consulting agencies, and all sources of education.

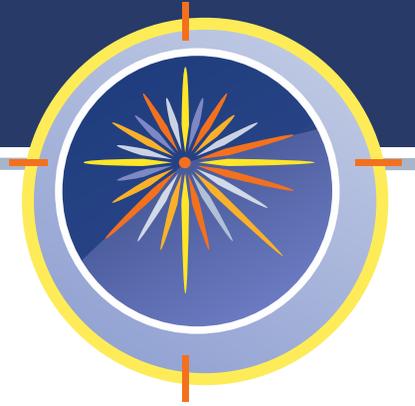
**Today, we will share the most interesting, questioned, and discussed areas of mid-level programs that we have heard.**

# Questions we will address today



- What giving criteria are organizations using to define Mid-Level programs? How does my organization compare with staffing and portfolios sizes?
- The value of data – what do we measure? We will review a case study, benchmarking comparisons, and discuss.
- What cultivation, stewardship, and engagement techniques should my organization consider? What techniques have proven to be successful or unsuccessful for organizations here today?
- What are successful habits for supporting Mid-Level Giving programs?

# Basic Components



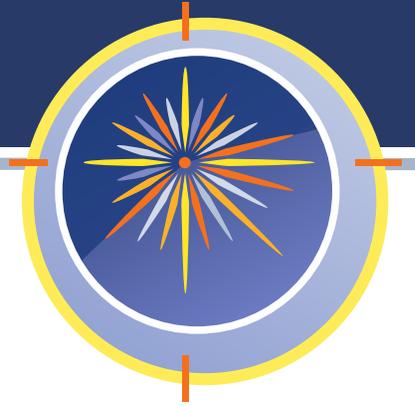
**Giving Criteria – what giving moves donors into or out of the program?**

**Benefits – what benefits do you offer**

- Enticement to give at the mid-level “join”
- Soft or hard or a combination
- Management – delivering on the benefits and turning “off” if a donor moves out of the program

**Branding and Naming Considerations**

# Giving Criteria: Monetary Levels



## Group Result

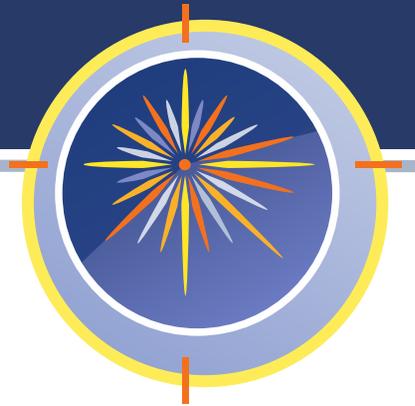
### What We See and Hear:

- Criteria:
  - Cumulative, total annual amount
  - Single-Gift in range
  - Monthly giving
- Amounts:
  - \$1,000-9,999
  - \$1,500 – 10,000
- Tiered Levels:
  - Can be challenging to manage
  - Real benefits
  - Just Internal perhaps

## Mid-Level Study of 20 US Organizations – Sea Change Strategies Study

Organization	Floor of Giving Range	Ceiling of Giving Range
ACLU	\$1,000	\$10,000
American Rivers	\$1,000	\$10,000
Amnesty USA	\$500	\$10,000
Best Friends Animal Society	\$1,000	\$9,999
Environmental Defense Fund	Varies, lowest is \$5,000	\$24,999
Food & Water Watch	\$100	\$9,999
Friends of the Earth	\$250	\$15,000
Human Rights Campaign	\$1,200	\$4,999
Mercy Corps	\$1,000	\$9,999
The Nature Conservancy	Varies, lowest is \$1,000	Highest is \$99,999
Oxfam America	\$1,000	\$9,999
Partners in Health	\$1,000	\$100,000
Planned Parenthood Federation of America	\$1,000	\$24,999
Save the Children	\$1,000	\$10,000
Share Our Strength / No Kid Hungry	\$1,000	\$9,999
Smithsonian Institution	Varies, lowest is \$1,000	\$24,999
Union of Concerned Scientists	\$1,000	\$9,999
The Wilderness Society	\$1,000	\$24,99
World Wildlife Fund	Varies, lowest is \$1,000	Highest is \$24,999

# Benefits and Status



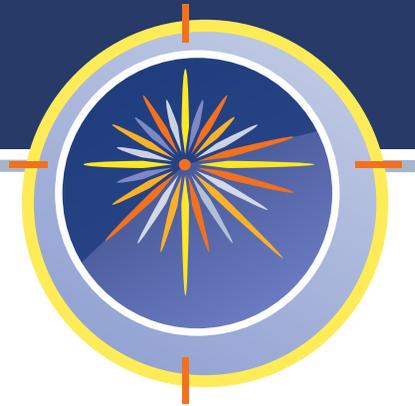
## Benefits and Status

- Keep in front of constituents; reinforces awareness
- Determine definition and whether to extend through the end of a calendar year despite “anniversary date”
- Renewal efforts begin at 13 months but benefits continue through 24 months.

## When is a mid-level donor lapsed?

- No giving by end of subsequent calendar year – so could be considered active up to 23 months depending on when they give in the calendar year.
- No mid-level giving for 36 months.

# Names and Branding

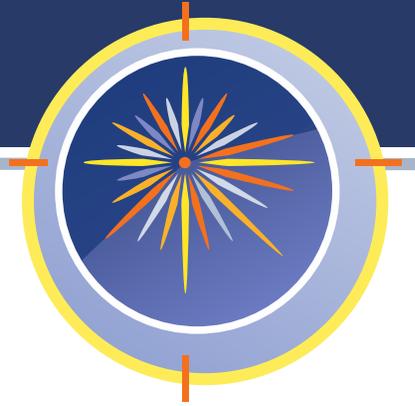


## Group Result

### What We See and Hear:

- Branded, logo
- Names of Programs
  - Leadership Circle
  - XYZ Society
  - Friends of the
  - Guardians

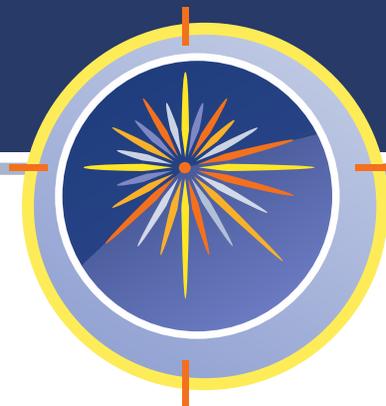
# Names and Branding



## Advice on finding / picking a name from Laura Brouse-Long, Mid-Level Director, at the Smithsonian:

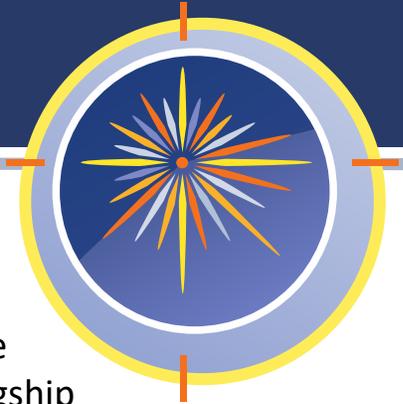
- “You would benefit from just parking yourself in front of your screen and prowling for a few hours through the top destination museums in major cities, and top 10 non-profits, and top 10 universities – and documenting the names of all of their giving circles. It is very enlightening and inspiring! Typically they are named things like Guild, Champions, Benefactors, etc., and names of major donors with significant gifts, presidents who’ve been able to lead expansive and beneficial change for your organization, historic US or international leaders, top curators, top scientists, etc. that have had meaningful and deep relationships with your organization. You want them to be role models for your donors, with impeccable moral compasses, and strong philanthropic ties.”

# Mid-level Marketing Treatment versus Core, Mass Marketing



- What makes Mid-level donors remain in core direct mail stream and some mailings are modified (beyond branding).
  - Example: longer letters for mid-level
  - Example: increased personalization but for some organizations the personalization is limited to sub-populations of mid-level donors such as those who have given at this level an extensive period.
- Localized event invitations
- Memorial or honoraria giving plaques or signage onsite
- Anniversary “of giving” cards
- Customized thank you efforts
- Quarterly cultivation via phone calls and personal emails
- Leveraging technology to make it feel 1:1 but it is 1:many

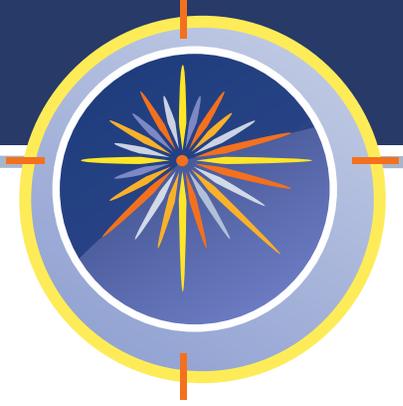
# Data – A Case Study



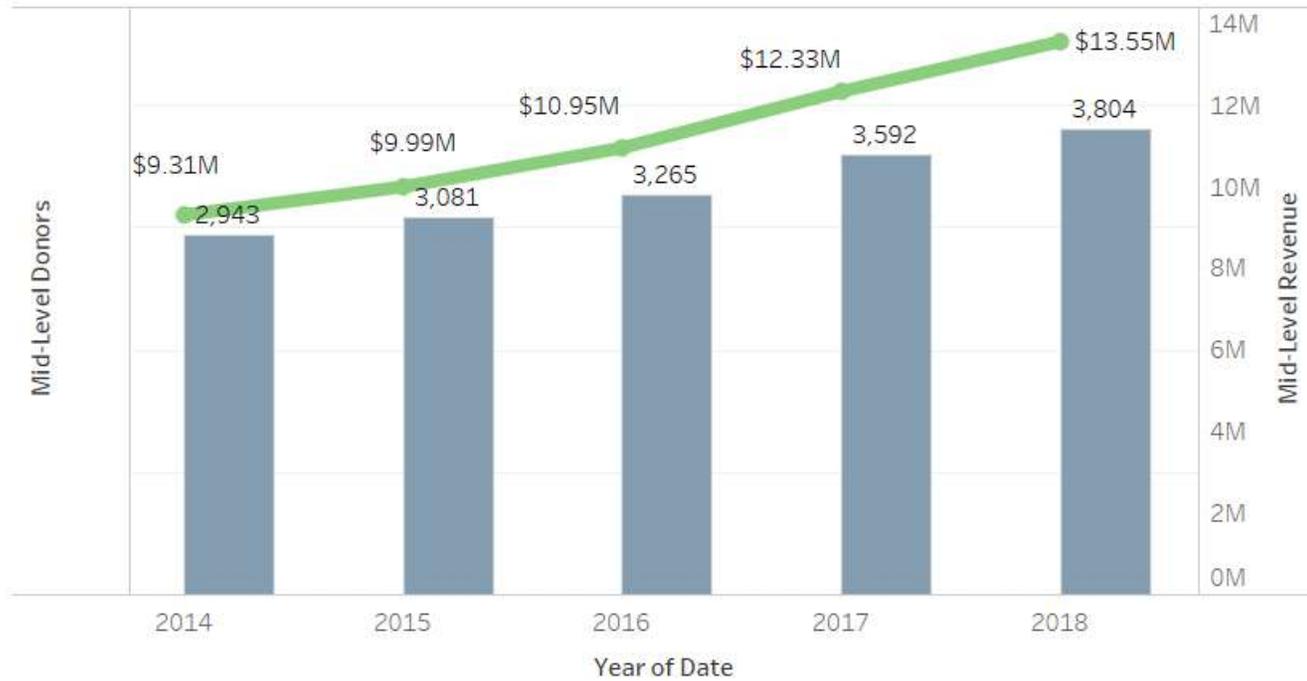
## Mid-Summit East Benchmarking

- A group of 11 Mid-Sized Universities located east of the Mississippi. Generally these participants have a smaller development staff compared to larger counterparts (flagship schools). Giving levels ranged up to \$25k.
- Donor Trends:
  - 5-year change in donors for the composite (all schools included) = **-5%**
  - Composite growth in Mid-Level donors over 5 years = **+29%**
- Revenue Trends:
  - 5-year change in revenue for the composite = **+33%**
  - 5-year change in revenue generated by Mid-Level donors = **+46%** from \$9.31 million in FY14 to \$13.55 million in FY18.
  - All but one school saw growth over the five-year timeframe in Mid-Level donor counts. The one school that did not increase this donor population was the only institution in the group with a 5-year decline in revenue.

# Data – A Case Study



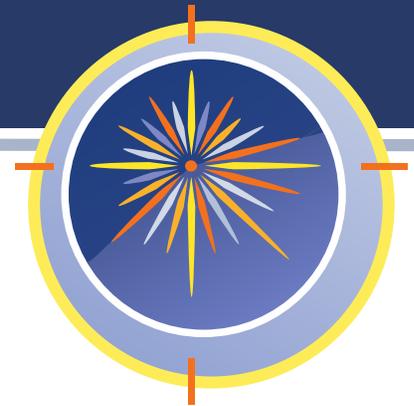
Trends of Mid-Level Donors



	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Mid-Level % of All Donors	25%	27%	28%	31%	32%
Mid-Level % of All Revenue	67%	68%	69%	72%	74%
Revenue per Mid-Level Donor	\$3,162	\$3,244	\$3,353	\$3,432	\$3,562
Mid-Level Giving Retention Rate	78%	80%	78%	83%	80%

Growth in revenue per donor for Mid-Level can be an accelerant to revenue growth. To maintain growth in Mid-Level donors and/or value requires a comprehensive strategy.

# Data – A Case Study

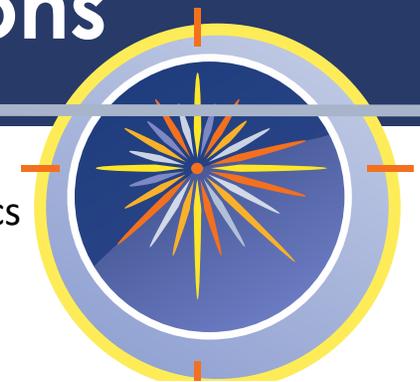


## What did it take to grow?

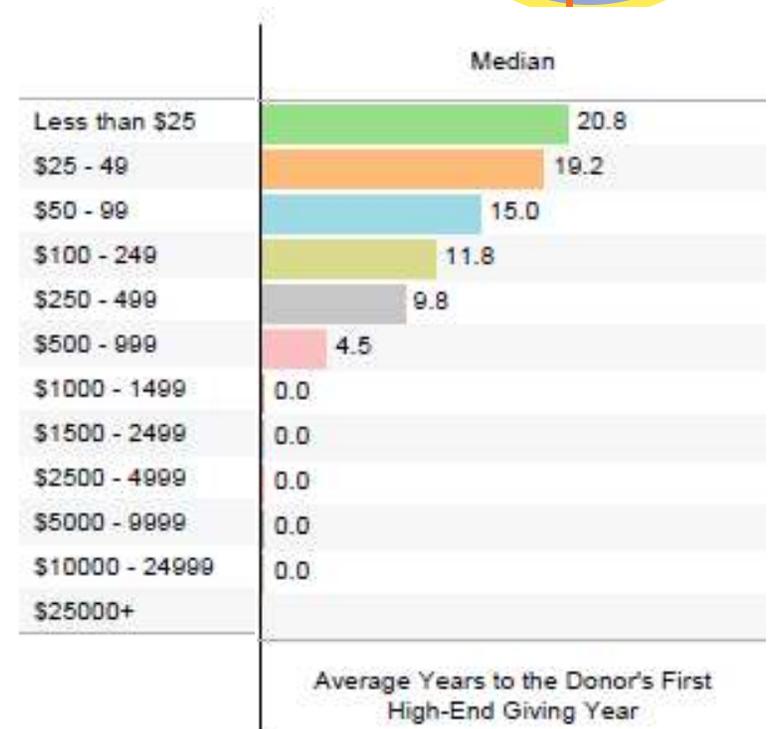
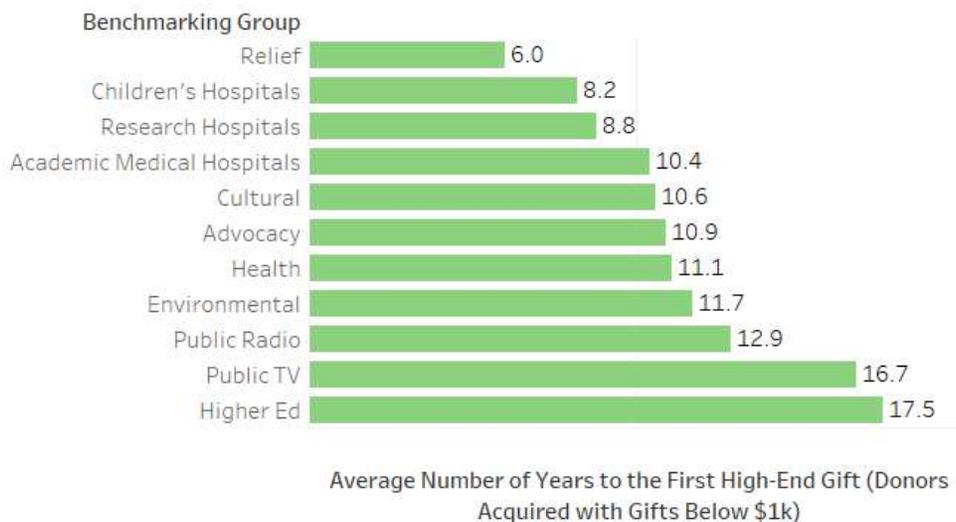
- Additional Data:
  - Total Annual Giving Professional Staff ranged from 1-6 people.
  - A little less than half of the organizations solicited Mid-Level gifts Face-to-Face.
  - Of all Mid-Level donors in FY18, 10% had been acquired directly to Mid-Level Giving in their acquisition year.
  - The highest concentration of donors were acquired with origin gift amounts of less than \$25 and took 15 years to upgrade to Mid-Level giving.
  - Average value of a Mid-Level donor in FY18: \$3,491
  - The average donor retention rate for all donors was 55%, the retention rate for donors giving at Mid-Level was 79.2%.

**You can grow Mid-Level donor populations with a small staff size!**

# Data – Benchmarking Comparisons

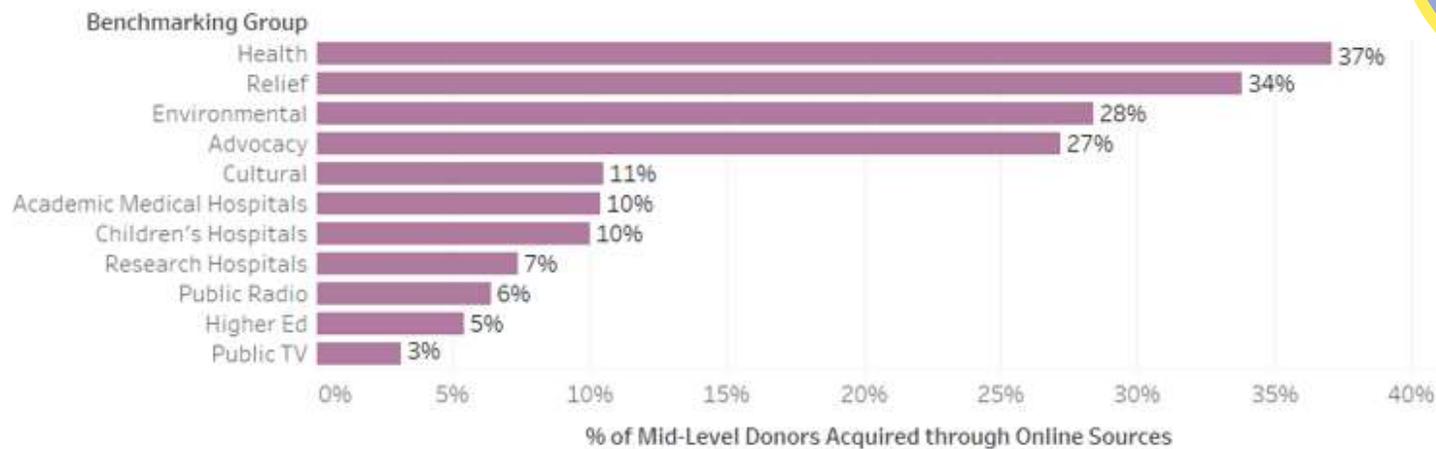
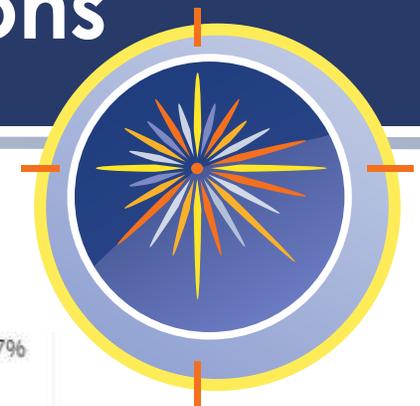


It takes a long time to upgrade donors to Mid-Level giving. Across all donorCentrics Benchmarking Groups, the average amount of time to upgrade a donor to \$1k+ levels was 11.3 years. Relief donors upgrade the fastest an average of 6 years.



Acquisition gift amount is a key variable for upgrade time. With donors acquired with higher origin gift amounts upgrading faster than donors acquired with lower gift amounts.

# Data – Benchmarking Comparisons



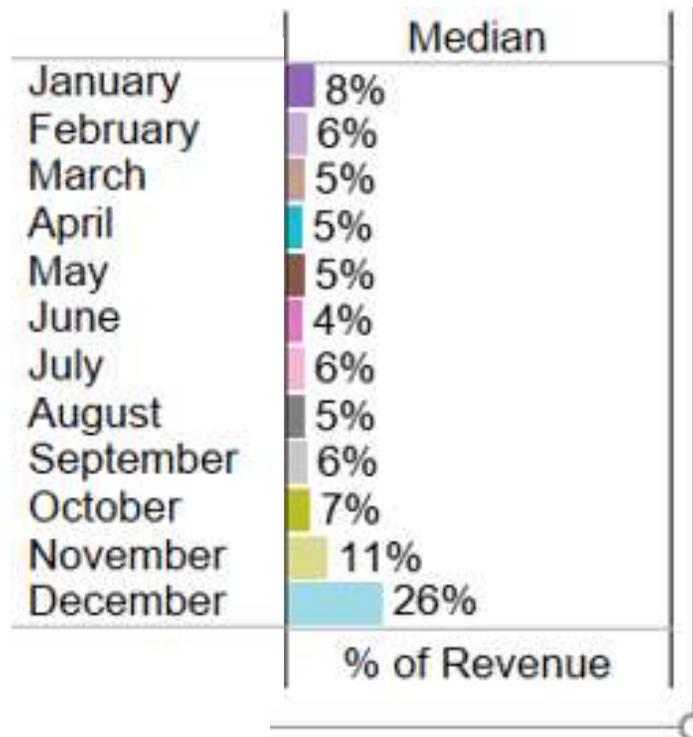
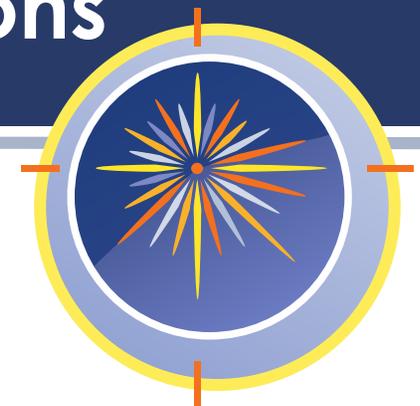
	Median Across Benchmarking Groups
% Donors New	17%
% Donors Reactivated	15%
% Donors 2 Years Consecutive	15%
% Donors 3/4 Years Consecutive	15%
% Donors 5+ Years Consecutive	35%

Medians will not add up to 100%.

Mid-Level Donors come from many places, some markets acquire a high percentage of them via Online Sources.

Note the highest percent of Mid-Level donors gave 5 or more years in a row, indicating good stewardship is key.

# Data – Benchmarking Comparisons



## Major averages this year

S&P 500 Index (.SPX:INDEX)  
USD

Last | 2:57:13 PM EST

**2,499.75** +13.89 (0.56%)

YTD .DJI 23062.4 .IXIC 6584.522



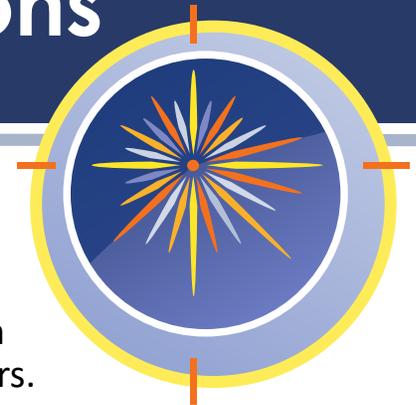
CNBC

Historically, revenue from Mid-Level donors has typically been concentrated in November and December. Some groups saw as much as 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all revenue generated in the last two months of the calendar year. As we saw in 2018, a high concentration of revenue in one month can be risky.

# Data – Benchmarking Comparisons

## Other notable data points

- Mid-Level+ donors typically comprised about 2% of all individual donors. Markets with higher percentages include: Relief, Hospitals, and Higher Ed. The Relief, Health and Hospital sectors also had higher than average composition of new-to-file donors.
- Comparing new to Mid-Level donors, the value of newly acquired Mid-Level donors was consistently higher compared to multi-year donors that were newly upgraded. At the median across groups, the difference was \$553.
- Of retained High-End donors, a median 83% gave at \$1k+ levels the following year. The range was tight across groups, with Health at the lowest percentage of 74% and Research Hospitals at the highest rate of 90%.
- An aspect of benchmarking that is not tracked in the data but discussed, is program attribution, i.e. understanding what Appeal/Upgrade solicitation, engagement strategy or technique is the strongest performer for upgrading. Do you know what yours are?
- What data points are others in the room tracking? What metrics are most important to your organization? What are your measures of success?



# Data – Benchmarking Comparisons

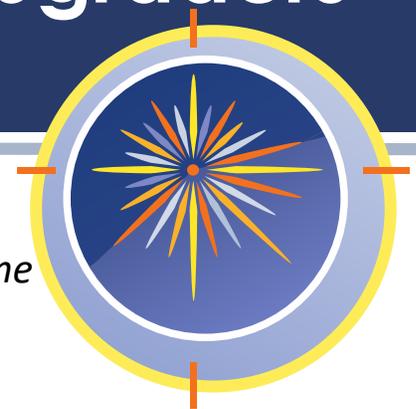


What percentages of Mid-Level Giving donors can you expect to keep the following year?

Sector	Total Annual Retention rate of \$1k+ donors	First-Year Retention Rate of \$1k+ Donors	Retention Rate for Newly Upgraded \$1k Donors	Retention Rate for Multi-Year \$1k+ Donors
Environmental	65%	40%	68%	73%
Advocacy	65%	42%	68%	73%
Relief	67%	42%	72%	76%
Cultural	70%	36%	67%	77%
Health	53%	23%	56%	66%
Higher Ed	80%	50%	75%	86%
Children's Hospitals	59%	29%	53%	69%

Source: donorCentrics™ Collaborative Benchmarking, Target Analytics, a Division of Blackbaud

# Case Study: First –Time Mid-Level Upgraders



## 43 Public Broadcasting TV Stations

- Identified all donors that recently upgraded to Mid-Level Giving *for the first time in their giving history.*

## Here's what we found:

- 41% gave between \$500-\$999 the year before.
- 11% had given less than \$100 in the year before, however, these donors had higher revenue per donor than those that upgraded from higher levels of giving.
- 85% of donors started their giving with the organization with origin gift amounts between \$20-\$250. The \$20-\$49 and \$100-\$249 ranges had equal percentages of donors.
- Upgraded donors had come from **all age ranges**, even as low as under 25, however, the highest concentrations were in donors 65 years and older. These older donors also trended higher in value.
- For donors with known household income, the highest concentration was in donors with \$150,001+, however, nearly every income range had at least 10% of the total donor composition. The one exception: \$75-\$100k with 7.2% of all donors.
- Public Broadcasting stations tend to have high source diversity for their fundraising programs, however, the largest source of giving of these donors was Mail.

# Case Study: First –Time Mid-Level Upgraders



## Takeaways:

- While many of the upgraded donors came from segments that were expected: giving levels close to but still under Mid-Level giving, long-on-file donors, older age groups, higher income levels – many other upgraded donors came from unexpected places.
- Don't assume you know the pipeline. Good candidates for upgrading can come from a variety of segments in your donor file. Some of the upgraded Public Broadcasting donors not only came from unlikely segments but also had higher value than the group when they were upgraded.
- Consider using models or data appends to help guide your strategies for Mid-Level prospecting.

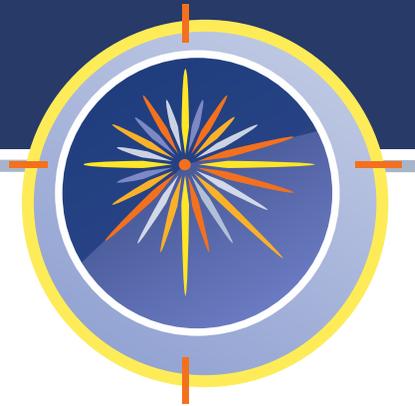
# Key Segments for Prospecting



- In benchmarking meetings and on the Mid-Level listserv, organizations discuss ways to identify donors for upgrading to Mid-Level giving. Targeting strategies include but are not limited to:
  - Finding donors with good giving behavior to your organization
    - Started giving at levels of \$100 or higher
    - Give multiple gifts a year and have for many years (or new donors that give multiple gifts in their first year)
    - Have been on the file a long time
    - Make big jumps in gift amount in a short time
    - Donors currently giving at levels close to Mid-Level
  - Identifying lookalike donors with similar attributes to current Mid/Major Donors (zip codes, for example)
  - External modeling or otherwise scoring your file
  - Engagement indicators such as volunteerism, activism, correspondence, Friends of CEO/Board, etc.

**What else is working for organizations in the room today?**

# Portfolio Size

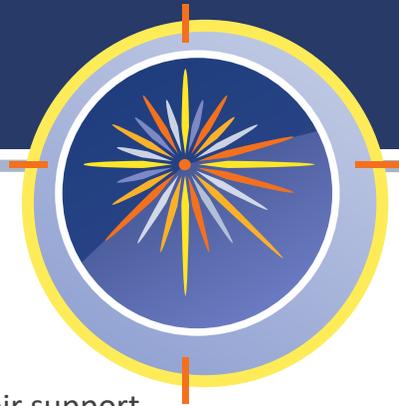


## Group Result

### What We See and Hear:

- Larger than major gift portfolios
- Most are 500-700
- Some are as small as 200-350
- Some are as large as 1500-1700
- Full time gift officers or a part of a role? Have heard can be as little as 10% of a staff member's time.
- Some mid-level frontline fundraiser staff also manage annual cultivation to donors in the pipeline but not giving yet at ML levels.

# Habits of Mid-Level Officers



## Letter of Introduction

- Letterhead with introduction as point of contact for organization. No ask in the package.
- Inform them you will call to follow-up to get to know them better and thank them for their support.
- Business card with photo or letterhead has photo
- Executing in batches to bring the follow-up calls close to the letter mail date.
- “You want to build personal relationships and center your language around how your role is to help them engage with your organization, honoring that they have had an existing relationship, and that you look forward to getting to know folks individually.”

## Organization Story:

- “Most importantly, [that] follow-up is to be sure we’re keeping them informed about their investment in our work per their interests and preferences for communications.”
- “If they don’t have a phone number, we ask them to please consider calling us, or being in touch via email. We don’t get a huge response to the request for a call. And in our phone call follow-ups, it is a low-percentage of folks we can actually connect to, but we tried, and they know it.
- “The ones we do connect with, we’ve seen rewards with more, and sometimes higher gifts, regular renewals, and more personal interaction and engagement.
- “Takes a while sometimes to build from your initial intro letter and follow-up, but after six months on, we start seeing results.”

# Habits of Mid-Level Officers



## Birthday Cards

- Personalized, ideally with a couple sentences hand-written to the donor, and signed by mid-level manager or assigned contact.
- Don't indicate specific birthdate, just use birth month.
- Shown to help continue conversations and get subsequent visits
- Some, but often a limited number, express concerns regarding how you got their personal information.

## Holiday Cards

- Hand-signed and for some perhaps by a group of staff; some just by core officer with a personalized note.

## Organization Story:

- "I signed 650 Holiday cards and wrote a small note in each one asking them if they would share their [health care organization experience story] with me. My handwritten phone number was included. I got close to 100 calls back that opened doors."

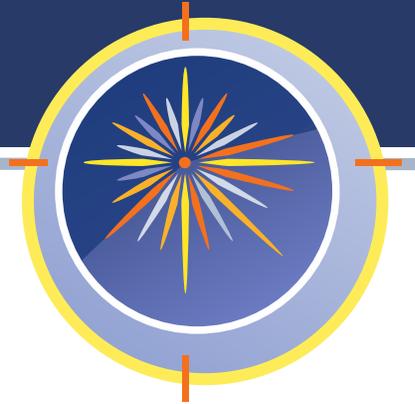
# Habits of Mid-Level Officers: Donor Stewardship



## Organization Story:

- “I have found TREMENDOUS success with stewardship-only emails.
- “When we launched our program, one of our promises/deliverables in our welcome letter stated: *‘We take this seriously, and it allows our donors to know that when we DO specifically ask (3ish times per year) its for good, urgent, and impactful reasons.’*
- “I send two types of stewardship emails:
  - Mass emails to the whole group. These usually include pictures and stories or particularly interesting events or in a place the donors are impacting with their gifts.
  - Personal emails to a segment. These are from my email account, so they appear much more personal. It speaks to a specific segment's interest area. These are the emails I get lots of good replies from.
- “In all these stewardship emails I give them links to learn more, or simply give them the link to the fund I’m talking about. Its not an ask, but it gives them the opportunity to give again if they are so inspired.
- “My emails to mid-level donors have an open rate of or higher. Its amazing what has happened when they have come to trust that I really won't ask them for money every time I talk to them.
- “Meanwhile our mid-level giving has been up between 20-60% each month since we launched!

# Engagement Techniques



## Telephone Town Halls

- Phone calls or webinars; Record and send out link following the event
- Time of day: between 4-7:30 EST, Weekdays, not weekends
- A “state of the organization”, maybe answering a few live questions

## Community Lecture Series, Luncheon Lectures

- Generate and support top-level retention, upgrades, and sometimes newly declared restricted or planned gifts.

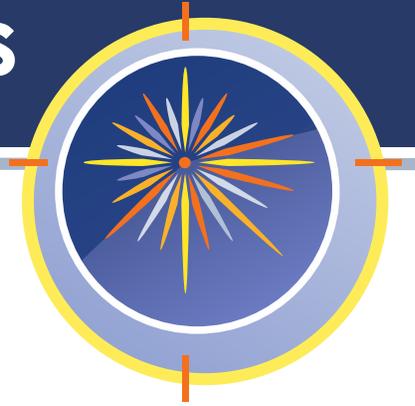
## Modified or Personalized Versions of Annual or President’s Reports and Research Studies

- Organizations report good success and reaction when they send out modified versions for their mid-level donors.
- Include a quick note or sticky note commenting on areas of their interests.

## Volunteer Programs and Advisory Groups

- Focus groups and one-on-one donor interviews revealed they can see “this is how else I can help”. This is ‘experiential, participatory recognition and benefits’, per Penelope Burk. They can roll up their sleeves and get more involved.
- Not always easy to do with limited staff but important to keep discussing ways it may be or become possible.

# Other Techniques and Tactics



## SMS Messages

- Donors are on mobile... using SMS is you being where they are.
- Used to complement campaigns – membership renewal, lapsed efforts, cultivation, year-end, giving day.
- Some organizations have found it a good tool for a more personal engagement with donors.

## One Hour “Head Start” Emails

- Send an email about newsworthy news or something they’d want to know.
- It arrives ahead of broad-based news announcements.

## Discounts

- Inviting new donors into the program at a lower rate
- New Member Event discounts

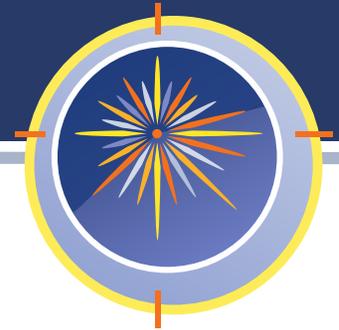
# DAF Donations



## What are DAFs?

- A donor-advised fund (DAF) is a centralized charitable account. It allows charitably inclined individuals, families, and businesses to make tax-deductible charitable donations of cash, publicly-traded stock, and, in some cases, certain illiquid assets, to a public charity.
- DAF Widget
  - Ties into numerous of DAF providers.
  - <https://dafwidget.com>
- DAF Direct Widget
  - Facilitates gifts from Fidelity, Schwab, and BNY Mellon. These are big ones.
  - Pre-populates organization Tax ID, name and address for the donor and the DAF fund.
  - <http://www.dafdirect.org>
- Specific campaigns around DAFs?
  - Some do (email we've heard)! Including incorporating impact stories in donor newsletters focusing on donors who have made significant contributions through their DAFs.

# DAF Trends



According to The 2018 DAF Report by the National Philanthropic Trust:

1. As of 2017 contributions to DAF comprised **10.2% of total individual giving**, up from 4.4% in 2010.
2. The total value of **contributions to DAFs** increased from \$17.24 billion in 2013 to **\$29.23 billion** in 2017.
3. **Charitable assets** in Donor Advised Funds totaled **\$110.01 billion** in 2017, an all-time high and a 27.3% increase over 2016.
4. Most of the growth shown in figure 4 came from smaller donor-advised funds with an average size of less than \$5,000.

Figure 4: Total Number of Donor-Advised Funds

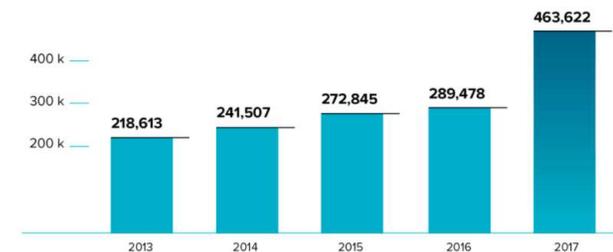
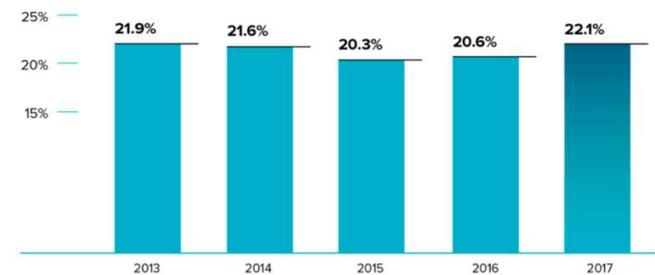
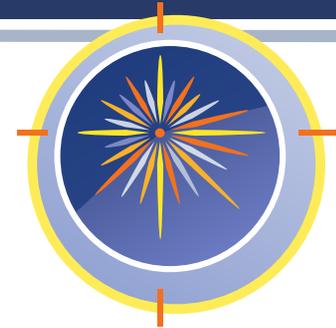


Figure 5: Annual Payout Rate, Total for All Donor-Advised Funds



# DAF Trends



According to The 2018 DAF Report by the National Philanthropic Trust (cont.):

5. Grants made by DAF reached a new high in 2017 of **\$19.08 billion**, up 19.9% from 2016.

## Projections and Results:

- Continued increases in grantmaking and possible increases in payout rates.
- Political and economic anomalies often create a “new normal” for DAF giving, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 may be another such event.
- In 2016, 61.5% of contributions to DAFs were non-cash assets, the majority were publicly traded securities and included stock, real estate, and personal property. “There is an anticipation that donors will increasingly contribute non-cash assets to their donor-advised funds in the coming years.”

# Mid-Level Study of 20 US Organizations a Sea Change Strategies Study



Sea Change Strategies conducted a study of Mid-Level programs at 20 organizations in 2014.

In 2018, they updated the study with the same organizations.

“The basis of this report is a deep dive into the mid-level programs of 20 organizations covering a range of issues... Fundraisers at each organization completed a lengthy questionnaire and sat for a 30-minute interview during which they shared their insights, breakthroughs, and challenges.”

The study reveals key habits and factors that are necessary to establish for mid-level program success.

You can download the full study at their website:

<http://seachangestrategies.com/missing-middle/>

# Mid-Level Study of 20 US Organizations a Sea Change Strategies Study



## Leadership

They found that support from leadership is needed to build and maintain a program.

- In 2014, this was the exception not the norm. At that time, the study revealed that commitment from leadership to these programs was limited or lacking.
- By 2018, there has been a lot of increase in participation and attention from CDO staff. CEO attention is still scarce.

## Silos

“Four years ago the silos that were posing the biggest obstacles to mid-level... were internal within development... leaving many mid-level programs in a no-persons-land with neither group (direct marketing and major gifts) taking complete ownership.”

“In 2018... major gifts and direct marketers are learning to tango.”

The tension between direct response and the lack of coordination and management has eased in these last four years.

# Mid-Level Study of 20 US Organizations a Sea Change Strategies Study



## Staffing

“A common thread uniting successful middle giving programs is adequate staffing.”

In 2014, few organizations had a full-time employee on mid-level donors.

“[Since 2014], more organizations are identifying one or more development staff members with the primary responsibility of growing and stewarding mid-level donors, with encouraging results.”

On average there are three full-time mid-level fundraisers at these participating organizations.

## Patience

There is increasing understanding and inter-organization discussion regarding the length of time it takes to bring a donor up the pipeline to these levels and further upward where possible and appropriate.

“Measuring your results by immediate revenue in the door is not the whole story.”

## Mid-Level Study of 20 US Organizations – Sea Change Strategies Study

Organization	Mid-Level Staff FTEs
ACLU	3
American Rivers	2.5
Amnesty USA	0 designated mid level
Best Friends Animal Society	2
Environmental Defense Fund	2
Food & Water Watch	1.25
Friends of the Earth	1.15
Human Rights Campaign	5
Mercy Corps	1
The Nature Conservancy	@ national level: 3 @ state level: 20-30
Oxfam America	5
Partners in Health	3.5
Planned Parenthood Federation of America	6
Save the Children	3.75
Share Our Strength / No Kid Hungry	1
Smithsonian Institution	3
Union of Concerned Scientists	4
The Wilderness Society	1
World Wildlife Fund	5

Source: Sea Change Strategies, Alia McKee and Mark Rovner “The Missing Middle Part Two 2018. Middle Donors: What’s New? What’s Not? What’s Next?” June 2018.

# Mid-Level Study of 20 US Organizations a Sea Change Strategies Study



## Content and Stewardship

In 2014, they found “the ideal strategy for middle donor content hews closer to major donor than to low-dollar direct mail.

- Cultivation mailings, as opposed to solicitations, predominate.
- Letters and emails are meaty and substantive.
- Premiums are almost non-existent.
- A personal touch is a must.”

Sea Change Strategies indicated in the 2018 report that all of this is still relevant. A near universal trait of mid-level programs is the emphasis on cultivation communications and the de-emphasis on solicitation.

“Fletcher Sams, CARE, summed up the challenge he and many of his counterparts are facing:

- ‘The idea (for me at least) is to try to get as close to a major gifts feel as I possibly can with the smallest amount of budget that I can possibly get by with.’”

By 2018, the organizations created “listening programs”, re-addressing and creating approaches to thanking donors, crafting welcome packages, and impact reporting.

# Mid-Level Study of 20 US Organizations a Sea Change Strategies Study



## Metrics and Measurement

Since 2014, there has been an increase in understanding how to measure these donors and defining measurements of success

Many of the measurements are longer term than typical direct response metrics - retention, life-time value, and velocity (how quickly they upgrade).

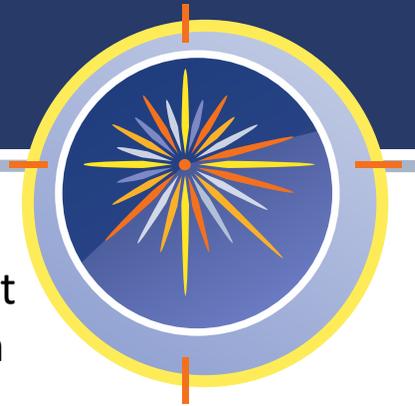
## What's Next

Study participants are focusing on continued evaluation of effective ways to listen to donors.

They want to know what donors want to hear about and what the donors want to tell the organization.

Closing the loop with donors.

# Takeaways



- The best bet for growth in your Mid-Level program is involvement across all aspects of fundraising and across the organization, with attention from Leadership.
- Work together to define metrics of measurement that work best for your organization.
- Stewardship is important and needs to look different from Mass Marketing. These donors want and expect a higher-level of engagement.
- Listen to the donors and close the loop with their interests.
- Don't forget the correlation with retention – keep an eye on programs and metrics that feed into Mid-Level giving programs.
- Tiered programs need different, clear, and valuable benefits for each tier.
- If you haven't invested in Mid-Level already, consider investing – the potential is there across sectors.

# Follow-up:

- **Receive** a copy of the presentation via email:  
write a **1** on your business card
- **Have** a free, half-hour consultation, with Anne, talking about quick ideas and upgrades for your reports or dashboards:  
write a **2** on your business card
- **Reach out** to us via email:  
Anne Morrison: [Annemorrisonconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:Annemorrisonconsulting@gmail.com)  
Amy O'Connor: [Amy.O'Connor@blackbaud.com](mailto:Amy.O'Connor@blackbaud.com)
- **Join** the Mid-Level List Serve by sending an email to:  
[info@seachangestrategies.com](mailto:info@seachangestrategies.com)

**Thank you!**

