

## Colorado Symphony

### Increases Individual Giving and Brings Donors Back into their Seats with Music



the colorado symphony

When Tracy Tajbl took on her new role as Vice President of Development at the Colorado Symphony, she knew the Development Department needed a re-design. Tajbl only had nine months to improve and reach their fundraising goals for the year. “In looking at the previous year’s fundraising goals I knew we needed to refocus and increase individual giving. The Board of Trustees was suffering from donor fatigue and we were at risk of losing quality board members. I noticed right off the bat that we weren’t retaining donors. I knew we’d have to work hard to change the processes by engaging our donor base directly with the symphony,” says Tajbl. She determined that a public campaign would be the most efficient way to achieve this goal.

### Collaboration

To begin the launch of their campaign they worked in conjunction with Colorado Public Radio, the local NPR station. They kicked off the beginning of their campaign with a three day on-air fundraising drive. “The campaign launch with Colorado Public Radio proved to be a great springboard for publicizing our individual giving campaign. It generated interest and donations from many lapsed donors and increased their engagement with the symphony. As we received donations over the air, members of our individual giving team used FindWealth Online to look up new donors and strike while the iron was hot by connecting with them through invitations to special cultivation events.”

Under Tajbl’s leadership their methodology worked well. They decided to focus their time and energy on an area that would return immediate results with the limited resources and time they had available. Over a nine month period they increased their active donor pool by 101%. Their public goal was to raise \$1.2 million from individuals, but they set an internal goal to raise \$1.5 million. The ultimate outcome was \$2.1 million total dollars raised, a significant increase over both the public and internal goals set.

*“I believe the magical formula for arts organizations is peer to peer solicitation; you’ve got to connect with the community and your donors by providing them with social activities to engage and connect them with others who are interested in the Arts.”*

Tracy Tajbl, Vice President of Development,  
Colorado Symphony

### Strategy

- Historically, the Colorado Symphony has underperformed in individual giving resulting in an overreliance on board gifts at end of year.
- Broaden the pool of donors by focusing on untapped potential from lapsed donors, current subscribers and ticket buyers.
- Implement high-impact donor cultivation and stewardship events to ensure donor retention and position the symphony as a top philanthropic priority.
  - Create donor cultivation and recognition programs that will connect contributors to the Symphony and musicians to build loyalty

Tajbl explains, “I had previously used WealthEngine at the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra at Strathmore. I knew the first step to reaching our goals in such a short timeframe would be to conduct a wealth screening of our database. We sent a total of 5,000 records comprised of our long-term subscribers and multi-single ticket buyers to be screened.”

## Results

Screening subscribers and multi-single ticket buyers has yielded some of the best prospects based on their affinity and relationship with the symphony. “Our screening identified our first tier of 358 major gift prospects which we broke down into individual portfolios for the CEO, our two individual giving team members and me. The second tier of our screen-ing identified prospects who are either not currently donors or who are giving very modest gifts to the Symphony, but who have the capacity and purchased tickets in the past. We decided to create a sense of community at the Symphony for these individuals to reengage them and jumpstart the cultivation process.” In order to create a community, they evaluated their donor benefits program and redesigned it to create more educational events like lectures around the Arts and music, cocktail receptions, and invitations to rehearsals. The overall conceit was this group comprised of arts and music lovers would appreciate more opportunities to engage on an exclusive level with members of the symphony. In the past, the Symphony had never raised more than \$1.2 million in a year from its individual donors. By conducting a wealth screening and implementing new strategies in 2010 they realized a 103% increase in total individual giving over 2009. Based on this drastic increase in a short period of time and confidence in new development strategies, the Symphony increased its individual giving goal to \$2.3 million. “Our early results show that purchasing WealthEngine as a prospect research tool has been the best money we’ve spent all year. My CEO and key board members know WealthEngine by name and now have an idea of the methodologies used,” says Tajbl.



The chart below shows the Symphony’s total individual giving levels over the last five years and the drastic increases in giving as a result of their 2009 wealth screening. By implementing new practices, the Symphony has grown their donor base by 101% in one year.

Fiscal Year	Total Individual Giving	Total Donors
2010	\$2,194,866 +103%	5,927 +101%
2009	\$1,081,655 -13%	2,957 -13%
2008	\$1,232,446 +8%	3,102 +8%
2007	\$1,141,629 +6%	2,704 -22%
2006	\$1,073,297	3,454