



In-Memory Goes Digital

Public briefing

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Introduction

In-Memory Insight is an ongoing programme to explore the size, shape and scope of in-memory giving in the UK. We collect hard evidence to inform in-memory fundraising strategies and communications, and to convince senior management of the value of in-memory giving. The work is supported by a 'learning circle' of leading charities – over ninety of them in the past eleven years – who agree to pool their budgets, experiences and data to help build evidence and insight.

Each year, In-Memory Insight explores a new topic, building on what's gone before. In 2020 there was a pressing need to understand how to respond to the Coronavirus outbreak (see our briefing paper, *Adapting to the post-pandemic in-memory landscape, June 2021*). As that research highlighted, the pandemic and its outwash accelerated many trends, not least the use of digital technologies in in-memory giving and fundraising. Technology has become embedded in the in-memory universe, with implications for how it touches supporters' lives and how charities develop relationships with their contacts. So this year, we explored the different ways in which digital technologies cut across the digital domain. We called the project *In-Memory Goes Digital*.

Our new research has found that the digital landscape for remembrance and in-memory giving has significantly expanded. Tribute funds and online funeral collections have been joined by a diverse and ever-growing range of digital platforms offering spaces to remember, fundraise for or donate in memory. While the pandemic may have forced this change, the convenience is such that many supporters will not go back. More and more new donation platforms are moving into the in-memory space, including online giant Facebook, which now offers a range of giving tools.

Our research shows that in general this expansion is considered positive for both supporters and charities. However, it does pose a number of challenges for in-memory fundraisers. With such a diverse digital domain it can often be difficult to identify, thank, steward and build relationships with supporters across so many different platforms. Digital transactions are certainly quick and convenient for in-memory supporters to use – however they may also be less engaging – so in future charities may need to develop relationships with digital in-memory donors in different ways.

This briefing report outlines ten headline findings from our research and suggests five important implications for in-memory fundraisers to consider. We are grateful to our learning circle members for agreeing to share this information more widely.

Our research approach

This research focused on a wide range of digital activities, including online in-memory giving, online fundraising, online funerals, virtual and hybrid in-memory events. It assessed the implications for targeting and stewardship, and the opportunities and threats for fundraisers. Our research included:

- **Desk research**, leading to mapping of the in-memory digital landscape
- **Interviews and expert panels** with technology and fundraising specialists
- **Data from fundraising platforms** – a collaboration with Memory Giving, MuchLoved, JustGiving and GivePanel to extract and analyse top-line performance data and trends
- **A quantitative survey** of in-memory donors – with 830 adults who had given in-memory in the past 3 years (whether on or offline), to understand the scale, potential and impact of digital activity
- **In-depth consumer research** – 17 depth interviews with a cross-section of digital in-memory donors to explore their digital in-memory activity, its role, impact and future implications

In-memory goes digital : ten key findings

Digital in-memory is a growing fundraising activity

Many digital platforms that support charitable fundraising are recognising the significance and potential of in-memory fundraising, and now include in-memory products in their offer. For example, GivePanel has launched an in-memory feature to capture data on in-memory fundraisers on Facebook; Enthuse and JustGiving now also have in-memory elements built in.

Funeral collections are now predominantly online

In 2018 our research into the changing roles of funerals found that that online funeral donations were fast becoming the 'new norm'. This trend was undoubtedly accelerated by the pandemic, and is now here to stay. Our analysis suggests that online funds are attracting a larger number of donors than conventional funeral collections, including people who may not have given in the past.

Social media inspires giving

According to GivePanel, (*Facebook Fundraising Benchmark Report, UK and Ireland, GivePanel April 2022*) more than 7 million people in the UK have donated to a good cause through Facebook's birthday fundraisers, virtual challenge events, tribute fundraisers, and via the donate button. And it isn't just Facebook; almost all social media platforms that connect users to each other now offer the potential for fundraising activity, with more and more platforms introducing donate tools. Many of these platforms are now recognising the huge activity taking place in-memory and the potential it can offer them.

Online donations – including in-memory – are now the norm

In our survey of digital in-memory donors, we asked if they felt that this had become the normal way of doing things. A resounding 86% said yes. When asked if digital had as much meaning to them as other methods, a firm majority said that it *did* have the same meaning, largely because it was the sentiment driving the gift – such as showing support for the family or knowing that their gift would be put to good use – that counted, not the method of donation.

Digital activity is part of the broader in-memory portfolio

Digital in-memory activity rarely operates alone, whether fundraising or not. It was rare that an individual had marked a loved one's life solely via digital means. It was also clear that digital was often used to add depth to physical events or activities; a digital support group to complement a challenge event for example. In these cases, one approach was not *better* than the other, but that each had its own strengths.

Digital in-memory activity has many benefits

One widely recognised advantage of digital in in-memory activity is the facility to include more people. For those on the outskirts of a loss, digital offers an opportunity to join in condolences where they may not have previously been aware of the death or felt it 'their place' to contribute. It can also capture fresh stories and memories about the person lost, bringing comfort and connection. When physical remembrance places are not available, digital spaces such as tribute funds can also offer consolation, available to visit whenever and wherever they wish.

Group in-memory fundraising is growing

Groups have always come together to remember loved ones; but digital allows them to convene, share and organise more efficiently and with a far wider reach. These communities of interest – from hobby groups to work colleagues to old schoolfriends – will often remember the loved one in a way that's appropriate to their shared history or interests, without intruding on the family's grief.

Gaming fundraising is now a mainstream and impactful tool

Raising money through gaming isn't new, but as online gaming has become more mainstream, coupled with the rise in live streaming platforms such as Twitch, interest in fundraising through online gaming has grown. Gaming fundraising events are extremely diverse but they always mobilise an already engaged community of people. It is this community element that is so important and means gaming fundraising is increasingly being used to fundraise in-memory if someone within those virtual communities dies.

Digital isn't just about age ...

The digital behaviour (or lack of it) of the person who has died and that of their friends and family is important when considering how best to remember them. But again, stereotypical assumptions are sometimes made about older people's connections, without real investigation. It's important to consider how well older people are represented in the marketing of digital in-memory options.

... Nor is it right for everyone

Our research found that although the majority agreed that – like many things in life – donating to charity has been made easier with technology, some still prefer more traditional methods. Similarly, some consumers made it clear that digital is not a method they would choose to remember a loved one because they would not wish to display their loved one's story or their family's grief for all to see.

Five implications for in-memory fundraisers

Ensure your own online in-memory offer is compelling

Our research shows that charities are very much uppermost in people's minds when thinking about in-memory – it's the charity that generally comes first. So if your online in-memory offer is compelling and easy to find and navigate, it will attract donors at the very beginning of their in-memory journey.

Have a clear platform strategy

The expansion of the digital in-memory space can create considerable extra work and administrative complexities for small, often overstretched in-memory teams. In-memory teams may need to make a conscious decision about the platforms they wish to be registered with or signpost supporters to, while keeping a watching brief on others to see if they warrant a closer relationship in the future.

Support communities of interest and group in-memory giving

A key finding of the project is that in memory digital practices are expanding from more traditional services for close family and friends, focused around their immediate needs and the funeral, to services enabling many and diverse communities of interest who want the freedom to raise money in their loved one's name *exactly as they see fit*. This is a growing opportunity for in-memory fundraisers.

Help to promote tribute funds more widely

It appears that tribute funds are not as widely known as they could be, and if they were better understood, there would be greater demand for them. When introduced to the concept many consumers said what a good idea they were and how they might have set one up, had they known about them.

Capitalise on digital information

Our past research has shown how a swift and empathetic response to the first in-memory donation can have a significant impact on further support. But good stewardship requires good information. Digital platforms can provide fundraisers with valuable intelligence on your supporters and their motivations, giving you the chance to confidently acknowledge and engage them in communications.

More about In-Memory Insight

In-Memory Insight explores the size, shape and scope of in-memory giving in the UK. The programme aims to collect objective evidence and insight on in-memory giving, to build the case for investment, inform fundraising strategies and help manage relationships with supporters.

The In-Memory Insight is a consortium programme run by Legacy Foresight, Europe's foremost analysts of the legacy and in-memory sectors. Legacy Foresight is part of Legacy Futures. The work is funded by a Learning Circle of leading British charities who agree to pool their budgets, experiences and data to help build our collective knowledge. We operate a rolling research programme, with each year building on the one before.

We define in-memory as "any type of charitable giving or fundraising commemorating the life of someone special". A range of in-memory motivated activities are covered in our research, including gifts at funerals, direct in-memory donations both one-off and regular, the setting up of 'Tribute Funds', the purchase of commemorative objects such as benches and trees, participation in fundraising events such as marathons and bike rides, and legacies made in honour of a loved one.

The programme sets out to explore:

- What motivates in-memory donors to give to charity – and how does it make them feel?
- What do in-memory donors need, expect – and experience – from the charities they support?
- How many/much In-memory gifts are being given? Through which channels?
- What is the current status of In-memory fundraising in the UK?
- What can we learn from good practice examples – both here and overseas?

To answer these questions, we use a variety of research techniques including focus groups and depth interviews, omnibus surveys, good practice case studies, the analysis of performance data from Learning Circle members and interactive member workshops.

In-Memory Insight 2022-23 - 'Remembering together': the role of groups and communities in in-memory fundraising

Our new research will ask: what makes group fundraisers different from other forms of private in-memory giving? What can charities do to help them achieve their goals? And how can we steward and communicate with them more effectively? The research will be of value to in-memory teams, as well as their colleagues in community, events and corporate fundraising.

For more information contact Caroline Waters: c.waters@legacyforesight.co.uk



In-Memory Online Content Review

If you are keen to develop or improve your own digital in-memory tools, the In-Memory consultancy team at Legacy Voice provide comprehensive online content reviews. They go into the detail of what 'compelling' actually means in the digital context for your charity and provide practical and actionable outcomes.

For more information contact Sharon Comfort: sharon@legacyvoice.co.uk