

Improving Fundraising Performance

Today fundraisers have access to more data than ever before. Yet the explosion of data has not always helped key staff make sense of it all, understand the stories hidden within, and then use the data to make better and faster decisions.

CHALLENGE

Reporting tools, data warehouses, and executive dashboards are all established “business intelligence” technologies that many looked to as the answer to keep up with the rapid growth in information needed to excel. However, even with these solutions, fundraisers continue to be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information, the speed at which it changes, and the varying degrees of quality and relevance. They are not alone. TDWI, a respected education and research institute in the data analysis industry, reported that 74% of institutions have similar challenges.

The good news is that new data discovery and analysis tools built on in-memory data management, interactive data visualizations, and predictive modeling technologies are allowing fundraisers to perform “speed of thought” analysis across all of their data systems quickly and easily. The benefits have been substantial: finding more donors, targeting marketing and appeals for higher yields at less cost, and better managing staff and processes for improved performance.

SOLUTION

The College of William and Mary is using data-driven techniques to achieve impressive results. Data discovery dashboards by **ADVIZOR Solutions** enable management to review, monitor, and analyze performance across the team. Information is made available to gift officers in regular team meetings. The data highlights best practices, and is used in “coaching” sessions to improve team members' performance.

This initiative started shortly after the arrival of Sean Pieri, William and Mary's Vice President for Development. While the team had just ended a very successful campaign, as Pieri looked forward he was concerned about achieving continued success and maintaining or even growing the campaign results in a challenging economy. He knew that the development team needed to work smarter on a limited budget. And being able to see critical information consistently and in “living color” was essential to future success.



RESULTS

In 2008 Pieri implemented a **Staff Performance Management** dashboard by ADVIZOR. Now in its third year of use, William and Mary has seen strong improvement in a number of key areas. Specifically, fundraising visits are up 32%, with 28% more individuals visited. Even more importantly 154% more gift proposals were presented in the second year of the program. And proposal values are up 95% with a record number of seven-figure gifts received. Data is being entered in the system in a more timely fashion, communication has improved, and changes have been made to new staff training. Virtually every aspect of performance is up because the team can now see and understand where they stand and what they need to work on in order to improve.

While the art of fundraising remains important, increased economic pressures and competition for scarce donor dollars have created a growing need to generate more revenue from existing--or even fewer--resources. This has made optimizing performance ever more critical. Development leaders like William and Mary's Pieri are rising to the challenge by leveraging new data discovery and analysis tools to identify best practices, manage operations against set metrics, and take action based on data-driven insights.

Staff performance management is just one area in which fundraisers are realizing strong positive results through the use of data discovery and analysis tools. These techniques are also having major impact in areas such as prospect identification, annual giving appeal targeting, volunteer management, campaign analytics, alumni and member event management, and development officer pool management.