

What do your donors look like?

Consider a prospect you've cultivated, who's now become a major donor. You took the time to learn about her family, job and hobbies. You gained insight into what inspires her to give, and what could lead her to make an even more meaningful, long-term connection with your work.

Getting to know your donors makes a difference. Perhaps you've even tried to utilize the "seven donor types" when considering your wider donor base. These types, as initially defined by Russ Alan Prince and Karen Maru File in "The Seven Faces of Philanthropy" are:

Altruist: Gives because it is the right thing to do.

Communitarian: Gives to help a community they're a part of.

Devout: Gives due to a strong belief in a group deeply tied to their identity.

Dynast: Gives as a family tradition, or to continue their family's legacy.

Investor: Gives because of the tax benefits or other tangible return on investment.

Repayer: Gives out of gratitude for something they've benefited from.

Socialite: Gives to be noticed and applauded.

Can all of your donors be neatly categorized under one of these types? Probably not. A more realistic and productive way to understand, group and connect with your donor base is through the creation of personalized donor archetypes.


Meet Maxine.* She considers herself a good person, who gives because it's the right thing to do, so she's a clear-cut Altruist. Or is she?



Maxine is 31. She rents an apartment with her boyfriend. She works for a tech startup as a communications manager. Her job is part of her identity: She often shares photos of company events on Facebook and Instagram. Maxine recently broke the six-figure income mark, and treated herself to a trip to Thailand. She has the capacity to give \$1,500 to your organization annually.

To Maxine, philanthropy is a social experience. She loves color runs and charity bar crawls. She wants to see the human impact of her giving. She is truly touched by personal stories of people helped by her donation. Maxine cares about what she sees in the news, and wants your organization to acknowledge its role in the changing social and political landscape.

She secretly loves swag she can show off (she wants others to know what she donates to). She gives social media shout-outs to causes she supports. Maxine appreciates a short, thoughtful thank you card, but doesn't demand one. Emails work well, but not calls. A long-form thank you letter will get thrown away.



Does Maxine truly fit the Altruist type? As you dig deeper, you see she also has Socialite leanings, with a dash of Communitarian.

In fact, Maxine's not a real person. She's an amalgamated personality — a donor archetype that's used to capture the characteristics of a specific cross-section of a donor base, or of an organization's best donor prospects.

Most nonprofits can segment their donors into at least four donor archetypes. (Profiles will vary from one organization to the next.) And creating such archetypes helps you connect with your donors more directly and profoundly.

As you formulate your outreach and stewardship strategies, you can ask yourself, “What would Maxine think of this?” “Would this inspire Maxine to give?” In short, the creation of donor archetypes like Maxine can help you personalize your constituent relations, for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

**Maxine is a donor archetype, not a real person. Her social media profile is fictitious, and serves only to illustrate a composite of a sample database segment.*

To learn how Thurlow/Associates can help your organization develop detailed, customized donor archetypes, contact us for a no-cost consultation. You can reach us at (310) 675-6497 or at hello@thurlowassociates.com.