Opening the conference, Pauline Broomhead CBE, CEO of the FSI, welcomed the audience to our 10th Fundraising Conference.

For those who were unable to attend and as memory jogger for those who were there, here is a summary of the sessions and some of the speakers’ top tips.

The Fundraising Conference’s sponsor, the National Cyber Security Centre, shared their insights into how to stay safe online. They highlighted how small charities are particularly vulnerable to online attacks as they rarely have a dedicated staff member to advise them on online security.

They suggested the best way to stay safe online was to have strong passwords, a good anti-virus and to consult their ‘Cyber Security Small Charity Guide’ (https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/cyber-security-small-charity-guide-pdf-download; http://www.thefsi.org/general-resources/cyber/).
Amber Shotton from The FSI gave her insights into fundraising strategy as a fundamental building block for all small charities. Her top tips included:

- Competitor analysis is important when putting together a fundraising strategy, but so is self-reflection - what is your organisation doing well?
- Set clear and explicit targets to reduce fear of the unknown and to make it easier to measure results.
- Have the confidence to make sure Trustees and senior staff understand what is realistic.
- Use regular progress reports to stay on track and stay motivated.

Developing your Fundraising Strategy

We were joined by a panel from the small charity sector with extensive knowledge of innovative stewardship. Dana Segal (Management Centre) led the panel of guests including Sam Butler (Tibet Relief Fund), Tracey West (WordForest), Sandie Mattioli (Cockpit Arts) and Lucy Newton (Arts Emergency) who shared their knowledge on how best to use stewardship to build relationships. Some of their key advice was:

- Make sure to ask why people are supporting your charity, and personalise your stewardship to address these reasons.
- Keep your stewardship manageable and steward a few well rather than stewarding many poorly.
- Encourage your supporters to become advocates and spread the word about your organisation: make them proud to support you.
- Use video, which speaks much louder than words.
Making it easy to say yes! Do’s and Don’ts of Trust Fundraising

We were joined by David Burgess from Apollo Fundraising who spoke about taking a realistic approach to trust fundraising. His top tips included:

• Grant Managers cannot read your whole application! Keep it short and only say what you need to say; top and tail with your key points.
• Keep it easy to read: cut down on attachments and background noise. Using short sentences and simple language will make life easier for whoever’s reading your application.
• Remember whoever’s reading your application doesn’t have the same specific knowledge as you - keep specialist vocab and excessive detail to a minimum, and avoid the curse of knowledge.
• Grant managers are people, not robots - the proposals that stand out are the ones that connect to them on a human level.

Understanding UK Giving Behaviour: insights for small charities

Susan Pinkney from the Charities Aid Foundation gave her insight into current trends in UK giving, taken from CAF’s UK Giving report.

Her top tips included:

• Overall giving is declining, which could have disproportionate impact on smaller charities. But it’s not all doom and gloom!
• T&Fs and legacy fundraising are on the rise, helping to offset the overall decline
• And people saying they couldn’t name a small charity is lower in 2019 than 2018 from 35% to 28%! Stay positive small charities!
We were joined by a panel from the corporate sector with first-hand knowledge of forging long lasting and lucrative corporate partnerships. Lindsay Harrod (The FSI) headed up the panel of guests including Eve Joseph (Microsoft), Holly Christie (SOS Children’s Villages), Chris Edwards (Travers Smith) and Nina Stott (Aviva). Their top tips included:

• Larger companies like to work with agile small charities that can ‘bend & flex’ in short timeframes. To connect, start with LinkedIn.
• There is pressure on big organisations to meet social responsibility aims - this is a ‘lever’ that can be pulled.
• Volunteering through companies is good for staff morale and retention - there are many partnership opportunities beyond funding
• Corporates want to look good through CSR. Be careful with your charity’s brand associations, but helping bolster a bad brand image can be a good corporate ‘in’.

We were joined by Rachel Smith from GlobalGiving who discussed how small charities can capitalise on the current trend in digital giving. Her top tips included:

• Make your fundraising mobile compatible, especially for the most common ‘user journey’ on your site.
• Be sure to utilise ‘crowd power’ - crowdfunding can raise a lot with a focussed goal and focussed ask
• Use free tools available to utilise data analytics, compare fundraising efforts and test.
Closing our conference this year was our keynote speaker Jhumar Johnson, the Director of Development at the Open University. Jhumar gave us the benefit of her experience on the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships in fundraising.

Jhumar’s top tips included:
• There are finite number of major donors. Be sure to always respond to potential donors within 48 hours to avoid missing out on this limited funding stream.
• Remember the power of personalisation. When you respond, research that donor and know them inside and out.
• One of the most valuable things you can do for your organisation is take some time out, think of who you know, and map them, galvanise your networks.

The FSI
The FSI works to provide free and heavily subsidised support services to small and local charities and community groups, across the UK. Our mission is to build and share knowledge, to elevate the voice of small charities with policy makers and the public, to build leadership in small charities and to support small charities to raise vital funds to meet the needs of their beneficiaries.

Thank you to our sponsors, supporters and exhibitors. Thank you for attending the conference and we look forward to seeing you all again at a training or event in the very near future.