



Recovering from Disaster

The events of September 11th have left a profound mark on the nonprofit community. By the nature of their missions, some nonprofits have raised millions of dollars to help those directly affected by the tragedy. Many other charities have struggled to raise funds in the months that followed, with contributors choosing to focus their charitable giving toward the victims of September 11th. However, there was one nonprofit whose mission and geographic location led it to experience firsthand the immeasurable loss and challenges that came out of these tragic events.

The Mission

Futures and Options for Kids is a philanthropic organization whose mission is to raise funds for children in the areas of health, education & welfare. It gets its unique name from the fact that its donors work in the Futures and Options markets. Tragically, many of the volunteers, board members and donors of Futures and Options for Kids worked at the World Trade Center complex in New York City. In fact, the charity itself was located at Four World Trade, a smaller building in the complex that was completely destroyed.

Theresa Silk, the executive director of Futures and Options for Kids, was en route to her office when the bus driver was told to turn around. "When I got home and saw

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— Theresa Silk
Executive Director

what had happened, I knew how devastating this was going to be." Of course, Theresa's first concern was with the tragic loss of so many friends and associates. "We lost an energetic new board member who was attending a conference on the 92nd floor of one of the towers. The loss was overwhelming. In addition, our volunteers and contributors were deeply affected by the impact the events had on the surrounding financial community."

Unfortunately, it was just the beginning for Theresa and her organization. "Our office was completely destroyed, including all our computers, files and records. We had been using DonorPerfect (PC-based) since the mid-1990s, and we were very good at making backups. Regrettably, our most recent backup disks were sitting next to the computer."

Starting Over

Theresa was down, but not out. "As soon as the chaos subsided, I made three important business calls – to our bank, our board members, and SofterWare. I spoke with my DonorPerfect account manager and made clear our situation. He was terrific! He explained how I could get up and running again, and also suggested that, in light of our current circumstances, we might want to consider migrating to SofterWare's Web-based DonorPerfect Online product."

"I was intrigued right away for three reasons. First, during the days right after 9/11, all the communications in New York were down or completely overwhelmed with traffic, except for the Internet, which held up incredibly well. People were using e-mail as their primary means of communication. Since DonorPerfect Online is provided over the Internet, I can get access to my critical data from



anywhere in the world, at anytime. Second, I really liked that the service provides automatic backup of data in multiple secure locations. Since I didn't really have a disaster recovery plan before, I now understood how critical these two factors were to help get us back on our feet after the unthinkable happens." Although these events were unprecedented, many nonprofits have experienced a loss of property or computer failure, and can relate to Theresa's recovery challenges. "Lastly, since we lost our entire infrastructure, I was concerned about setting up, and paying for, an IT network. With DonorPerfect Online, it's not necessary. All I need is a computer and an Internet connection, and SofterWare takes care of the rest."

An Easy Transition

Transitioning to DonorPerfect Online was much easier than Theresa expected. "Although our most recent data was lost, SofterWare was able to easily convert an older backup into DonorPerfect Online. And, DonorPerfect Online was really easy to learn. I had phone training just to get comfortable with all the features. After that, I was able to get new volunteers started in just one morning."

Virtual Offices

After Theresa successfully switched over to DonorPerfect Online, she soon learned of some of its other benefits. Since Futures and Options for Kids had to cancel their big dinner dance (scheduled for October, 2001 at the Windows on the World restaurant atop one

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of the towers), they were without a major source of funds. "We were determined to provide grants for children in the Spring, just like we do every year, so we planned a special dinner in February, 2002. Since we had used the Special Events feature to successfully coordinate past dinner-dances,

DonorPerfect support showed us how to use the same functionality, as well as other features we frequently used such as Grant Tracking and Volunteer Management, in DonorPerfect Online. Planning this event from three different locations really showed me how great DonorPerfect Online is. I was given temporary space at the Disaster Recovery Center in Queens, a board member donated space at a temporary location in downtown Manhattan, and I worked at home. Using DonorPerfect Online, I was able to coordinate this dinner, and perform all my other fundraising activities, at any of these locations. I didn't need to carry papers or files with me to each location; it was all online. The dinner was a complete success."

Thanks to the efforts of Theresa Silk, the board of directors and many committed volunteers in the financial industry, Futures and Options for Kids has survived to continue its mission. "The tremendous goodwill we received has enabled us to raise the money necessary to continue writing grants on behalf of children in need. And thanks to DonorPerfect Online, we are back on our feet much quicker than I thought. It has really been an answer to our prayers, and the perfect match to our situation."



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