A GIVORA FIELD GUIDE · FIRST EDITION

The Harvest Method

Community fundraising that compounds — how local charities grow a supporter base they own, and fund the work all year instead of once a year.

Plant → Grow → Harvest → Replant

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THE PROBLEM

The once-a-year scramble.

Somewhere near you, this week, a small team fed forty families, kept a young person in school, or sat with someone through the worst night of their life. Almost nobody heard about it.

Not because the work isn't remarkable — because the people doing it are the least resourced to tell anyone. The communications budget is the first thing cut and the last thing funded, and usually it's a volunteer's job on top of another job. The organisations with the best stories in your suburb have the least capacity to tell them.

That gap isn't neutral. **Funding follows attention.** Donors give to causes they've seen. Sponsors back organisations their customers recognise. Volunteers show up to places they've heard of. When nobody hears the story, a charity falls back onto the two most fragile income sources there are: grant cycles it doesn't control, and a once-a-year scramble — the gala, the appeal, the raffle that has to cover the shortfall.

> **Attention isn't vanity. In fundraising, attention is the raw material of everything else.**

Most advice at this point says "do more marketing," which is useless to a leader with no marketing team, no budget line, and no time. This guide says something different: the problem isn't effort or talent. It's *sequence*. Fundraising has an order of operations, and almost everyone runs it backwards.

What follows is the whole method. It fits on a page, it runs on a quarterly cycle, and every part of it has one job: to make each campaign easier and cheaper than the one before it.

THE THESIS

Most charities try to harvest a field they *never planted.*

They run an appeal once or twice a year to an audience they haven't spoken to in between — then conclude that fundraising is hard.

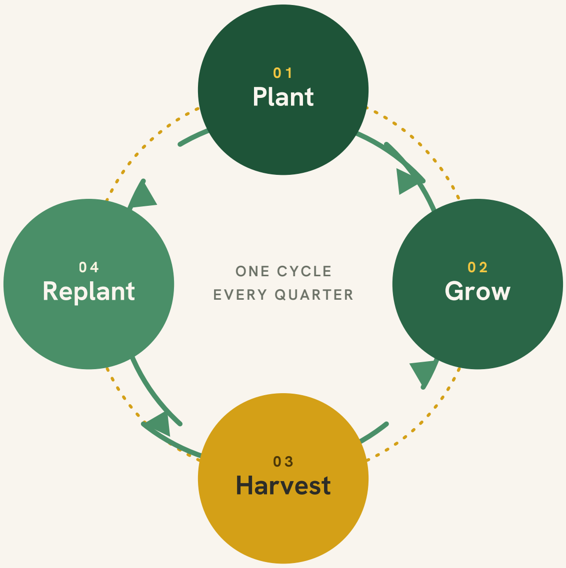
It isn't hard. It's out of sequence. Fundraising is *agricultural, not extractive*: there is a season for building an audience, a season for capturing it, a season for the ask, and a season for reinvesting the yield. The seasons have an order, and skipping straight to the profitable one is why the harvest keeps disappointing.

The campaign — the raffle, the auction, the appeal — is the visible part. **It was never the product.** The product is the audience the campaign launches into, and the audience is built in the quiet months when nothing is being asked for.

The Harvest Method puts the four seasons back in order and runs them as one cycle, every quarter.

THE METHOD AT A GLANCE

Four beats. One quarter. Every quarter.



One language rule, always: you harvest a quarter — never people.

BEAT	THE CLAIM	IN PRACTICE
Plant	Build the audience before you need it	Story content weekly, asked-for-nothing
Grow	Convert attention into something you own	Email/SMS opt-ins, nurtured between asks
Harvest	One peak per quarter, run to warm ground	Raffle, auction or appeal — always rotated
Replant	The yield funds the next season	A share reinvested; buyers become monthly givers

A YEAR ON THE METHOD

QTR	THE PEAK	WHY THEN
Q1	**Hero-prize raffle**	Grows the list fast at the start of the cycle
Q2	**EOFY appeal**	The biggest giving moment of the Australian year
Q3	**Community auction**	Local items and experiences, donated by partners
Q4	**Christmas raffle or matched appeal**	The season carrying about a third of annual giving

Underneath all four: story content, every week, without pause — the whole reason the peaks work.

01 Plant

BUILD THE AUDIENCE BEFORE YOU NEED IT

Three to five short story posts a week, published whether or not anything is being asked for. Not announcements. Not event notices. Not thank-yous to sponsors. *Stories* — one specific human thing your organisation did.

Why this comes first: attention is the raw input to everything downstream, and it takes months to accumulate. Every organisation that finds fundraising expensive is buying attention at campaign time — at the worst possible price, from strangers. Planting is how you stop paying that price.

FIELD RULES

1. **One human, one moment.** A story is one person and what changed for them — never a summary of a program, never "we helped 500 people." One complete story beats five hundred statistics; add the big numbers *after* the face.
2. **Pass the stranger test.** The first three seconds must land for someone who has never heard of you. Never open on a logo, a building, or a mission statement — open on tension, a face, or a question.
3. **Batch, don't dribble.** One filming day a month, cut into fifteen-plus short assets, beats trying to produce something new four times a week. Cadence survives busy months only if it's manufactured in advance.
4. **Real beats polished.** A phone-shot video of volunteers laughing outperforms the cinematic promo. Audiences now read high polish as advertising and rawness as truth. The story is the quality bar, not the camera.
5. **Write to one neighbour.** Name one real local supporter and address every story to them. Content written for "the community" is written for no one.

> THE FAILURE THIS BEAT PREVENTS
>
> **Bare-ground harvesting.** Appeal season arrives, ads are bought cold, results are mediocre — the highest possible cost per dollar raised, every single time.

THE NUMBERS TO WATCH

Cadence held (weeks published ÷ weeks in the quarter) · share of output that is story vs announcement · new followers per thousand views — attention that never converts to a follow is being rented, not banked.

02 Grow

CONVERT ATTENTION INTO SOMETHING YOU OWN

Turn the audience into an owned asset: email and SMS opt-ins, supporters who said yes to hearing from you. Then talk to them *between* campaigns — which is precisely when almost nobody does.

Why it matters: a follower is rented from a platform that can change its algorithm tomorrow. An email address is owned. The difference between the two shows up as cost per dollar raised in the next beat — and cost per dollar raised is the number your board evaluates everything on.

RENTED
Followers on a platform

The platform decides who sees you — and keeps the audience if you leave.

OWNED
Your email & SMS list

Reach them tomorrow, for the cost of pressing send.

The most common failure in the entire method lives here: good stories with no capture attached — the content works, the attention arrives, and it evaporates into the platform.

FIELD RULES

1. **Every story carries a gate.** Each piece of content gives one reason and one way to opt in — a draw entry, a behind-the-scenes list, a local update. No gate, no growth.
2. **Talk between asks.** Email the list when you want nothing from them. The list that only hears fundraising appeals learns to stop opening them.
3. **Count the list, not the likes.** Likes don't pay salaries. The metrics that matter are opt-ins, replies, volunteers, and — later — donations. Report list growth to the board the way you'd report revenue, because that is what it becomes.
4. **Apply the Ownership Tests.** For any channel, ask: *Who keeps the supporter? What happens when we stop paying? Does round two cost less than round one?* If the answers are "not us," "it vanishes," and "no" — you're renting.

> THE FAILURE THIS BEAT PREVENTS
>
> **The unfenced field.** Good content, a growing following, no capture mechanism — so the attention belongs to the platform, and campaign day still starts from cold.

THE NUMBERS TO WATCH

List size relative to reach · opt-ins per campaign window · open and reply rates between appeals · owned list vs rented following, tracked side by side.

03 Harvest

ONE PEAK PER QUARTER, RUN TO WARM GROUND

One significant campaign each quarter — and a different mechanism each time: a hero-prize raffle, a community auction, an EOFY appeal, a Christmas or matched appeal. Each one launches into an audience that has been hearing from you for months.

Why rotation matters: the same ask, repeated, fatigues the donors who see it *and* the local businesses whose goodwill funds the prizes. Rotation gives four peaks a year without four identical asks.

FIELD RULES

1. **The cause outshines the prize.** Raffles fail when the prize becomes the story. Introduce one person the campaign helps, connect every ticket to real impact, and mention the prize last.
2. **The run-up is the campaign.** Trust cannot be built in the week of the ask. Three weeks of stories before launch is what makes the ask feel like a continuation of a conversation instead of an ambush.
3. **Warm first, cold last.** Launch to the owned list and warm followers before spending a dollar on cold reach. Cold advertising is the tax you pay on planting you skipped.
4. **Make the ask specific.** "We need 40 tickets sold by Friday to fund the school-holiday program" raises money; "please support us" raises sympathy.

THE GROUND RULES — BEFORE ANY GAME OF CHANCE

- The charity is **always the fundraising operator of record** and the beneficiary — no exceptions, no workarounds.
- **Design the prize from the audience, never the other way round.** Regulators cap prize value relative to proceeds — in Queensland, gross must be at least five times the prize — so a prize your audience can't repay is a licensing problem, not a marketing one.
- **Licensing thresholds exist; know yours before the campaign, not during.** The licence follows the ambition.
- Partner money is **sponsorship, never "donation"** — and raffle tickets are never tax-deductible. Say so plainly; donors respect it.

General information, not legal advice — confirm current requirements with your state regulator (in Queensland, the OLGR). The full campaign-level playbook comes with the scorecard report at givora.com.au.

THE FAILURE THIS BEAT PREVENTS

The one-crop year. The same raffle, once a year, forever — donor and sponsor fatigue, and a ceiling that never lifts.

THE NUMBERS TO WATCH

Cost per dollar raised — the sector norm is 20–35 cents, and it is the number boards actually evaluate on · share of revenue from warm vs cold audiences · cost per new supporter acquired.

04 Replant

THE YIELD FUNDS THE NEXT SEASON

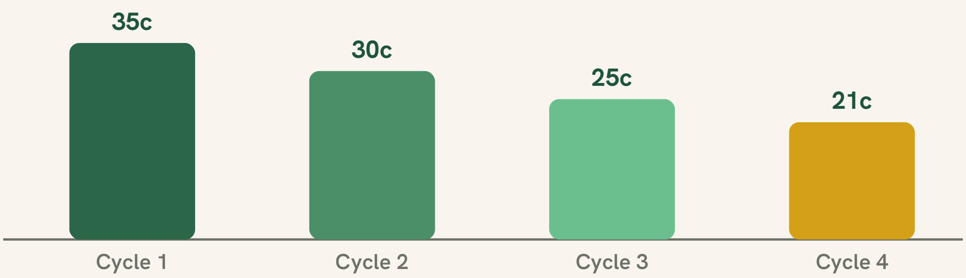
The campaign ends. What happens in the next fortnight decides whether you built an asset or ran a transaction. Replanting is two movements — one with the money, one with the people.

The money: a defined share of proceeds goes back into audience growth *before* the program-allocation debate begins. It feels wrong the first time — every instinct says every dollar to the mission. But spend the entire yield and next quarter starts on the same cold ground, at the same cold prices.

The people: a raffle buyer who is never contacted again wasn't a supporter — they were a transaction. Campaign participants are invited up the ladder: thanked fast, shown what their money did, and offered the next step, monthly giving.

FIELD RULES

1. **Split the yield first.** Decide the reinvestment share before the campaign runs, and hold it. A rule made in advance survives the budget meeting; a preference doesn't.
2. **Show them what they did.** Report back on camera about ninety days after the draw: this is the meal, the bed, the program your tickets funded. The report-back is the single highest-trust asset the method produces — and it is the first advertisement of the next campaign.
3. **Invite the next step.** The fortnight after giving is the moment of highest engagement anyone will ever have with you. That is when the monthly-giving invitation belongs — framed as less than a coffee, tied to something specific.
4. **Prove the compound.** Round two must cost less than round one. That single comparison is the only proof the cycle exists — measure it, and report it louder than the gross.



Cost per dollar raised across four cycles, run properly — illustrative of the shape, not a promised result.

> THE FAILURE THIS BEAT PREVENTS
>
> **No replant.** Every dollar raised goes straight to program, buyers are never contacted again — and the next campaign starts exactly where the last one did.

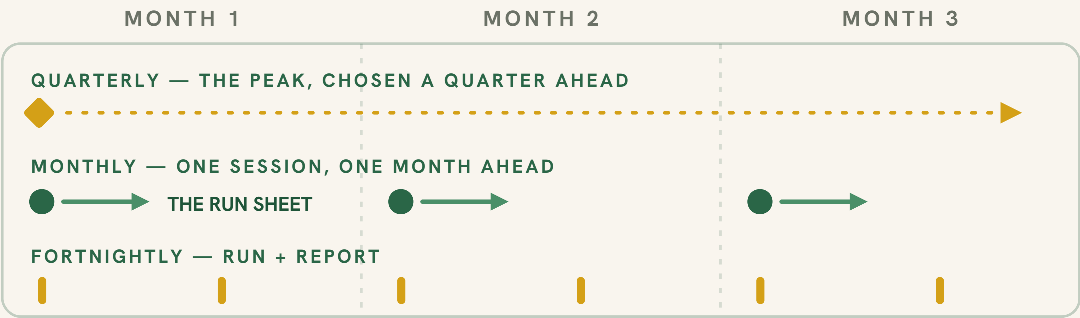
THE NUMBERS TO WATCH

Monthly givers added per campaign · participant retention into the next quarter · round-over-round cost per dollar raised — the compounding claim, in one line.

THE OPERATING CADENCE

Plan a quarter ahead. Learn every fortnight.

The method doesn't run on inspiration — it runs on rhythm. Three nested loops carry it, and each one exists to buy time for the loop below it.



One quarter on the method — the peak chosen a quarter out, content planned a month out, learnings folded in every fortnight.

THE THREE LOOPS

1. **Quarterly — choose the peak early.** One planning session each quarter, held a full quarter ahead: which Harvest runs next, and with whom. Deciding early buys the two things campaigns die without — partner lead time, so prizes and sponsors are locked in while goodwill is warm instead of begged for in campaign week, and campaign content built alongside the story engine rather than instead of it.
2. **Monthly — one session, one month ahead.** Its output is **the Run Sheet**: the month's videos, topics and scripts, ready to film. Anchor every month with one long-form interview — the sit-down where the latest stories surface — then chunk it into the month's short pieces and weave those through the set campaign videos for the quarter's fundraiser. The Run Sheet is what turns a filming day into a checklist instead of a scramble.
3. **Fortnightly — run and report.** Every two weeks: what went out, what it did, what changes next. A fortnight is long enough for content to actually run, and short enough that a learning still matters when it arrives. The numbers-to-watch on each beat page are exactly what this report is made of.

> THE FAILURE THIS RHYTHM PREVENTS
>
> **Planning in campaign week.** Prizes begged for cold, scripts written the night before, learnings never captured — every beat of the method present, and every one of them late.

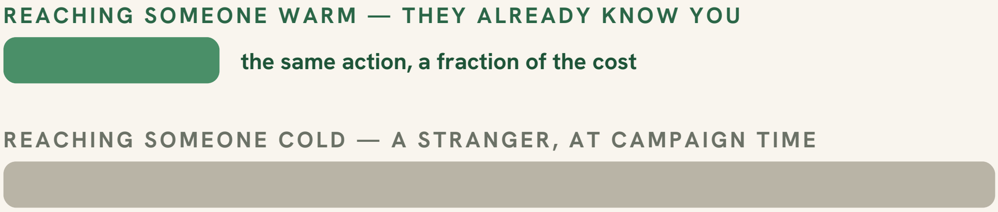
The cadence serves the same end the whole method serves: **brand and trust, built with the audience on a schedule they can feel.** Consistency isn't a virtue here — it's the mechanism.

THE FUEL

Ads are fertiliser, not seed.

Paid reach has a place in every beat — as a multiplier of planting that is already happening, never a substitute for it. Fertiliser makes a planted field yield more. Poured on bare ground, it just runs off.

The instinct to distrust advertising is half right. Ads bought cold in campaign week are the most expensive dollars in fundraising — that is bare-ground harvesting with a receipt. But the same platform money, spent all year amplifying story content to a tight local radius, is the cheapest audience-building available to a small charity. **The difference was never the channel. It's the sequence.**



Illustrative: the relative cost of earning the same action from someone who knows you versus a stranger.

FIELD RULES

1. **Amplify stories, not asks.** Most of the budget boosts Plant content to locals; a small share boosts campaign content — aimed at the people the stories already reached.
2. **Fence the paid traffic too.** Install the retargeting pixel before spending a dollar, and retarget people who watched, followed or opted in before paying to meet strangers. An audience you can retarget is halfway to owned.
3. **Steady beats binge.** A modest budget running every month outperforms the same total spent in campaign week — the platform rewards consistency, and so does the audience.
4. **Count it inside cost per dollar raised.** Ad spend isn't a separate, scary line — it's part of the one number the board evaluates. Reported that way, a falling trend is the proof it's working; the spend stays in the charity's name and under its control either way.

THE NUMBERS TO WATCH

Share of budget on story vs ask · retargeting audience size · cost per warm action vs cold · blended cost per dollar raised, trending down cycle over cycle.

THE THREAD THROUGH ALL FOUR BEATS

The Supporter Ladder.

Every piece of content the method produces makes exactly one ask — one rung, never two, never skipping. Supporters climb at their own pace; the method's job is to make each next rung obvious and easy.

Follow — **Asked by story content (Plant).** The only ask a story ever makes. No donation buttons on stories — the story's job is attention and trust, nothing else.

Opt in — **Asked by capture content (Grow).** Join the list, enter the draw, get the updates. The moment attention becomes an asset.

Ticket — **Asked by campaign content (Harvest).** The quarterly peak: buy the ticket, bid in the auction, give to the appeal. Asked warmly, of people who already know you.

Monthly giver — **Asked after the draw (Replant).** The most durable revenue a charity can have — invited at the moment of highest engagement, never demanded.

> **Skipping rungs is why fundraising feels pushy — to the asker and the asked. One rung per ask, and nobody has to be pushed.**

The ladder is also the honest way to read your own numbers: how many followers became list members this quarter? How many list members became buyers? How many buyers became monthly givers? Wherever the ladder narrows sharply, that's the beat that needs the work.

DIAGNOSIS

Where the cycle breaks.

Four beats means four ways to fail — and in practice, one of the four is always the constraint. Fix the weakest beat and the other three start paying; polish a strong beat and nothing changes.

THE FAILURE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHAT IT COSTS
Bare-ground harvesting	Appeal season arrives, ads bought cold, results mediocre	The highest possible cost per dollar raised, every time
The unfenced field	Good content, growing following, no capture	The attention accrues to the platform, not the charity
The one-crop year	The same raffle, once a year, forever	Donor and sponsor fatigue; a ceiling that never lifts
No replant	Every dollar to program; buyers never contacted again	Next campaign starts exactly where the last one did

THE FOUR STAGES OF MATURITY

0–40	**Bare ground**	You are harvesting a field you haven't planted. Start with Plant — nothing else will work until you do.
41–60	**One good season**	You can run a campaign. You can't yet run a *cycle* — each campaign starts from scratch.
61–80	**Cycle forming**	The beats exist but sit out of balance. One of them is capping the other three.
81–100	**Full rotation**	You are compounding. The work now is efficiency and yield, not structure.

Score yourself honestly against the four beats — or take the Harvest Method Scorecard at **givora.com.au**: sixteen questions, under four minutes, and a report naming your weakest beat and what it's costing you.

THE STANDARDS

What to demand of anyone who runs this for you.

You can run the Harvest Method in-house, hire help, or use platforms. Whichever you choose, these standards are part of the method — a provider who won't meet them is selling you a different product, whatever they call it.

- ✓ **You remain the fundraising operator of record.** The licences, the draw, the legal standing — yours. Anyone offering to "handle all that" under their own registration is taking your fundraise, not serving it.
- ✓ **The supporter list is yours, permanently.** Every opt-in, every donor record, exportable and owned by the charity from day one. A provider who keeps the list has made *you* the product.
- ✓ **Fixed fees, never a percentage.** A cut of funds raised misaligns everyone — it rewards big gross over cheap growth, and it quietly taxes your best quarters. Pay for the work, keep the yield.
- ✓ **Every dollar reported, both directions.** What was raised, what was spent, and cost per dollar raised — in writing, every campaign, without being asked.
- ✓ **Round two must cost less than round one.** Ask any provider to commit to the comparison in advance. If nothing compounds, you're renting reach — and the treadmill speeds up every year.

> **Pooled platforms and percentage deals can absolutely raise money. But run them through the Ownership Tests and they fail all three — which means the money came with a treadmill attached.**

These standards aren't commercial fine print. They're the Grow and Replant beats stated as contract terms — because a method built on *owning the audience* collapses the moment someone else owns it for you.

WHY WE PUBLISH THE WHOLE METHOD

Take it. Run it.

This guide holds nothing back — the beats, the field rules, the failure modes, the numbers. That's deliberate.

Knowing the method was never the constraint. The constraint is running it every week — shooting when the quarter gets busy, holding the cadence through winter, keeping the list warm when there's a board paper due. Some charities will run it themselves brilliantly with nothing more than this document — an outcome that genuinely serves the mission this was written for: local charities, heard and funded.

And some leaders will read it, agree with every page, and know their team cannot carry a fifth job. For them, Givora runs the Harvest Method as a managed service — the storytelling, the campaigns, the compliance and the reporting — for a fixed monthly fee that meets every standard on the previous page. If that's you, start with the scorecard at **givora.com.au**, or write to **hello@givora.com.au**.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Burkett is the founder of Givora and a systems thinker with a decade leading technology delivery for government and enterprise. He has also been a foster carer — living inside the systems meant to protect vulnerable children, and learning the conviction this method is built on: *systems fail people not from lack of care, but from lack of design.* He lives in Wynnum, on Brisbane's bayside, with his family.

— Dave

THE METHOD IN TEN LINES

Plant before you ask.

One human, one moment, one ask.

Own the list; rent the reach when it suits you.

Talk between the asks.

One peak a quarter, rotated.

The cause outshines the prize.

Report back on camera.

Plan a quarter ahead; learn every fortnight.

Replant a share before you spend the rest.

Round two must cost less than round one.

This guide is general information, not legal, financial or fundraising advice. Charitable gaming in Queensland is regulated under the Charitable and Non-Profit Gaming Act 1999 (Qld); confirm current requirements with the OLGR before running any game of chance. The storytelling craft here stands on the shoulders of the modern creator playbook, including the work of Sam Gaudet.

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