The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) is a national organization that was constituted to promote respect for and observance of all fundamental human rights, and to defend, extend, and foster recognition of these rights and liberties. The Association has been a leader in protecting Canadian fundamental freedoms and raises awareness on such issues as censorship, capital punishment and police powers.

REMOVING CONTRAINTS

CCLA, a Toronto-based organization, had used a custom-built Filemaker Pro database for years, but took a hard look at its short-comings in 2010. "There was no way to incorporate people who hadn't ever donated to us", says Dora Chan – referred to as the 'database whiz' by her coworkers, "You couldn't use it to plan events or handle online registration. It lacked the ability to track donor correspondence. Too many common tasks were cumbersome and nothing was automated."

BUYING TIME

CCLA transitioned to Common Ground in March of 2011, just 3 months before holding a major fundraising gala. "We'd held a major gala for the first time in 2009, specifically commemorating the contribution of a director who was retiring. It was a fundraising success, but it was a lot of work to run an event of that size," explains Dora, "and it hadn't been something we thought we had the capacity to repeat annually." However, CCLA's team found that the June 2011 gala went very smoothly. "We'd never captured online registrations before, and that saved a lot of time," says Dora. Many of the 2 dozen $1000+ gifts transacted online in 2011 were associated with the gala, and the team attributes a $30,000 year-over-year increase in support from their Attorney's Circle group to the event's momentum. "Now we're confident we've made the infrastructure investments necessary to hold this event annually," states Dora. "We're tracking our vendor contracts, sponsorships, attendees and levels, and really everything in Common Ground, building up our institutional memory of the event. We'll definitely be using the event cloning capability this year, and not starting from scratch."

Different types of events play an increasingly important role in community engagement as well. Much of the organization's program work involves court cases – which are somewhat of a challenge to make vivid to supporters and their families, friends, and colleagues. So CCLA hosts a major legal affairs conference every fall, and smaller community events – often including panels of expert speakers on various current issues - about every other month. With a typical audience of about 60 people, these events might not be cost-effective without automation. "Sometimes members get in free, and you can pay at the door, but most people pay online, and just show up on the event check-in report in our Common Ground database," says

SUMMARY

Using the strong event management tools to hold a major fundraising gala annually – which they didn't have the capacity for before

Improved donor cultivation yielded $30,000 year-over-year increase in support from allied professionals group

Now streamlining community events with online registration and ticketing

Saving time on direct mail segmentation, data entry and monthly donor service

Growing their email subscriber list, and increasing the number of individuals from whom they receive support

Dora. "We held an event in January and all of the attendees registered online. A number of them were brand new to us, and had seen our event notice on Facebook or Twitter." Because CCLA doesn't have one staff member specifically dedicated to event management (and the 1500 annual attendees served), they rely on their systems to facilitate colleague collaboration, delivering experiences that inform, educate and motivate the public in support of civil liberties.

> "With Common Ground, segmentation is quick and easy. The monthly list is just a simple report I can run. It probable saves a day each month."
>
> *-Dora Chan, Database Manager*

While event management is the topmost area where the team's database investment has had the biggest impact, they also point out other areas where the system they selected helps save significant time. While they've cut back a bit on paper mailings, they continue to mail 4 major campaigns to thousands of supporters each year, plus pull segments for monthly renewals. "With Common Ground, segmentation is quick and easy. The monthly list is just a simple report I can run. It probably saves a day each month," Dora indicates. And they are finding that many people are renewing online, often the same day they receive their renewal notice. "We also save a couple hours a week now," explains Dora, "with online transactions flowing seamlessly into the database, instead of inputting them by hand once a week like we used to."

One of CCLA's most predictable sources of revenue is their monthly sustainer program, where staff has found additional time savings via Common Ground's donor self-service center. "Several donors proactively fix issues -like replacing an old credit card- by themselves each month, just acting on the automated email notifications they've gotten, and this preserves thousands of dollars in annual revenue without requiring staff time to intervene," remarks Dora. "Not all our monthly donors have email addresses, so it doesn't eliminate the emails, letters and phone tag altogether, but every little bit helps!"

SETTING THE STAGE FOR GROWTH

The CCLA team has turned their focus to identifying and reaching more prospective supporters. They've grown their email subscriber list to 5200, including 1200 media contacts. While the majority of their 10,000 contacts don't yet have email addresses listed, "the ability to collect email addresses via the online forms has helped a lot," asserts Dora. "It takes less than half an hour to launch a new online giving or event form." And they are finding, while the average online gift has declined slightly, they are getting online donations from more individuals than before, increasing overall funds raised.

And they are making good use of the full CRM (constituent relationship management) capabilities of Common Ground offline as well. They are now able to track "which major donor prospects have been contacted, when and by whom, how much we asked for, and what the response was," says Dora. "We look more professional when one staff member's phone call is informed by what topic another staff person had an email exchange about. We need to show the outside world that we are communicating internally, but we need to be able to move quickly."

WHAT'S NEXT?

"Ideally we would like to have Common Ground be our go-to for everything," shares Dora, who plans next to migrate their volunteer list into Common Ground. "As it happens, a lot of our volunteers are donors. And we think many of our 3600 Facebook fans and 2200 Twitter followers may convert into volunteer fundraisers for us, too, using the Social Fundraising tools in Common Ground."

The CCLA team is now feeling more productive and effective overall, having put in place a single system that many staff members can utilize. "We also rely on the Common Ground support team for help – the customer support is great!" remarks Dora. The team has found they have been able to adapt to change more quickly, even while their jobs have become easier than before. "We're still growing into Common Ground," says Penelope Chester, Dora's supervisor and Director of Fundraising and Communications, "and Common Ground is still growing into the Canadian market. But in the long run, Common Ground is indeed what we need in order to deliver the results the Canadian people deserve."

ABOUT CONVIO

Convio is a leading provider of on-demand constituent engagement solutions that enable nonprofit organizations to maximize the value of every relationship. With Convio constituent engagement solutions, nonprofits can more effectively raise funds, advocate for change and cultivate relationships with donors, activists, volunteers, event participants, alumni and other constituents. Convio offers two open, cloud-based constituent engagement solutions: Convio Common Ground CRM® for small- and mid-sized nonprofits and Convio Luminate™ for enterprise nonprofits. Headquartered in Austin, Texas with offices across the United States and United Kingdom, Convio serves more than 1,500 nonprofit organizations globally. Convio is listed on the NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol CNVO. For more information visit www.convio.com.

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