



PUBLIC

IN-MEMORY INSIGHT | 14.06.2021

Adapting to the in-memory landscape after the pandemic



LegacyForesight

In-Memory Insight is an ongoing programme to map, measure and research in-memory giving and fundraising. We work closely with a learning circle of leading charities – over eighty of them in the past 10 years – who agree to pool their budgets, experiences and data to help build evidence and insight.

Over the past year an earthquake has rocked the in-memory landscape. The global coronavirus pandemic has shaken our culture and communities to the core. The immediate impact on all aspects of charity fundraising has been huge – perhaps none more so than in-memory. Conventional funerals have been impossible, fundraising events have been cancelled and commemorative gatherings of all kinds not allowed. But at the same time, the deep-seated need to grieve for and honour those who have died – whether from coronavirus or any other cause – has been greater than ever.

In 2020/21 our aim was to assess what the new in-memory landscape might look like, once the immediate crisis was over. Over the course of the project it became painfully clear that there may be no such thing as ‘after coronavirus’, but that we may have to learn to live with it. So many of the ideas we are discussing in this report have longer term implications and are broader than just in-memory fundraising.

Our approach involved several stages of research, including desk research, expert interviews, a survey of member charities, an on-line survey of adults bereaved during the pandemic and depth interviews with some of these adults.

This briefing paper outlines the key implications for the post-pandemic in-memory landscape. We are grateful to our learning circle members for agreeing to share this information more widely.

Six key themes for the post-pandemic landscape

An era of benevolence?

Some commentators believe that the next few years will be similar to the “roaring '20s,” which followed the 1918 pandemic. They foresee an era of spending and indulgence. Time will tell, but it's likely that people will embrace life again with relish, and there will be a feelgood factor pervading this. People may be open to charity giving because they feel benevolent and there will be many social events taking place that could be open to in-memory (or other) donations.

'Back to the future'

But in many ways, remembrance will look very similar to before the pandemic. Everyone we spoke to simply hoped that loved ones can be remembered as before – they wanted the rituals and the people and the warmth back again. There will be an appetite for many to complete the process of saying goodbye – to help towards closure – and that's particularly true where loved ones were lost to coronavirus. Get-togethers – similar to wakes – will be held when restrictions are lifted, and there will be interest in events, keepsakes and other rituals that help grief to settle.

Remembrance options are likely to be 'blended'

That said, technology is here to stay and remembrance options are likely to be a blend of old and new. Online funerals are now firmly on the agenda and we don't think they will go away. They will be an option for those who cannot be there or find travelling difficult, and the pandemic has created a new recognition of the imposition that travel can be. Virtual wakes may also have a role in bringing people together, again where this would be difficult otherwise. Online funerals undoubtedly have the potential to improve alongside the technology and the arrival of new specialist companies such as Tukios in the US.

Human, *personal* contact will be key

Human, personal contact will be key in the post-pandemic landscape. The importance of personal warmth and comfort – so badly missed – is unlikely to be forgotten. This will place a premium on personal interaction, which obviously includes charities' interactions with their supporters. But the point here is that personal won't necessarily mean 'in person'. Technology will have a role in providing contact, but the way it's used will matter. The personal use of digital and social media will be key – which means thinking carefully about tone, content and empathy.

'Localness' will be ever more important

Localness is another theme which has been evolving for some time and will influence the post pandemic landscape. Local communities have come to the fore during the pandemic and are likely to remain there. We believe that many of the new infrastructures and groups will continue to operate, even when the crisis is over. There will be opportunities for local, domestic relief and service delivery charities. There are also implications for how charities organise and present themselves, which may mean giving more prominence and autonomy to local branches. Local assets – such as charity shops – could take on a new importance.

Online payment will be the dominant method

Online payments have been growing for some time, and were accelerated significantly by the pandemic. People have realised how convenient this way of giving can be. Tribute funds have played a vital role in remembrance, but have also provided a place for funeral donations. They

are likely to continue to have a dual role in the future, so the challenge for charities of encouraging supporters to use their funds actively for ongoing giving has come to the fore. Charities may need to be more strategic in the way they 'triage' tribute fund holders in future, to identify those with longer-term giving potential.

More about In-Memory Insight

In-Memory Insight explores the size, shape and scope of in-memory giving in the UK. The programme aims to collect objective evidence and insight on in-memory giving, in order to build the case for investment, inform fundraising strategies and help manage relationships with supporters.

The In-Memory Insight programme is funded by a Learning Circle of leading charities who agree to pool their budgets, experiences and data to help build our collective knowledge. We operate a rolling research programme, with each year building on the one before.

We define in-memory as "any type of charitable giving or fundraising commemorating the life of someone special". A range of in-memory motivated activities are covered in our research, including gifts at funerals, direct in-memory donations both one-off and regular, the setting up of 'Tribute Funds', the purchase of commemorative objects such as benches and trees, participation in fundraising events such as marathons and bike rides, and legacies made in honour of a loved one.

The programme sets out to explore:

- What motivates in-memory donors to give to charity – and how does it make them feel?
- What do in-memory donors need, expect – and experience – from the charities they support?
- How many/much In-memory gifts are being given? Through which channels?
- What is the current status of in-memory fundraising in the UK?
- What can we learn from good practice examples – both here and overseas?

To answer these questions, we use a variety of research techniques including focus groups and depth interviews, omnibus surveys, good practice case studies, the analysis of performance data from Learning Circle members and interactive member workshops.

In-Memory Insight 2021-22

The next programme cycle will focus on the impact of digital technologies on in-memory giving and fundraising. We will explore the many ways in which digital media platforms are being used to donate or fundraise in-memory. This will include tribute funds and other giving platforms, online fundraising, virtual gifts, online funerals, and virtual and hybrid in-memory events. The programme will scope out the digital in-memory landscape. It will also – with the help of charity case studies, consumer research and external experts – explore the role that digital can play in engaging in-memory donors and building supporter journeys, as well as key opportunities for the future.

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