

Alley Theatre Reinvents Its Outreach to Help Recovery

ALLEYTHEATRE

70%

Open Rate for their Hurricane
Harvey Relief Campaign

Features Used

- Branded Assets
- Merge Fields
- Metrics

The Challenge: Raise awareness of the destruction as quickly as possible

When Tineke started working as the Director of Annual Giving three years ago, she was a team of one. “If you look at overall national giving numbers, about 70% of all charitable contributions come from individuals. So even though it was very much our growth market, we didn’t have that much focus on individual giving.”

Alley Theatre’s original giving strategy involved sending a couple of letters on a monthly basis, one follow up email and then, as Tineke puts it, “just kind of hope that people would give again.” The theater made personal phone calls to donors, but Tineke sought to broaden their outreach to share more of the interesting and exciting stories about the theater itself. In order to tell these stories, video was going to have to play a more prominent role in their outreach.

“For-profit organizations will say “Welcome to 2018” at this realization, but for a theater and other non-profits and maybe also for universities, we don’t always have the resources so we have to be creative. ThankView has been for us one of those creative ways to stand out and do something different than other organizations.”

Due to the damage caused by the hurricane, the team was forced to work off site without access to their usual forms of outreach. Because Alley Theatre had added video outreach to its multi-channel approach, it had already been using ThankView before Hurricane Harvey hit. “At the time we were so grateful for

having these online tools already incorporated and already readily available because the first couple of days we didn't have access to our servers. We had one online donor service and ThankView.”

ThankView Solution: Raise Awareness with Compelling Video



Resident Company Actor Melissa Pritchett showing the construction site in the Neuhaus Theatre

Alley Theatre was not expecting donations in the days following the hurricane. Their first goal was to raise awareness: “Especially after Hurricane Harvey, it was crucial to show the destruction and the seriousness of the situation. Images speak more than 1,000 words.”

ThankView was the primary method of outreach after the hurricane because it was one of the few tools still accessible off-site. Additionally, Alley Theatre knew that ThankView’s average open rates were about double the open rate of their normal emails, leading to more recipient’s eyes on their message.

The videos they sent immediately following Hurricane Harvey featured scenes of the destruction. Months later, they sent out a ThankView with one of the company’s actresses surveying the damage and the repairs already made. And for their Year Anniversary Update campaign, they sent out a longer, more edited video to show how far the theatre had come in just a year’s time.

For Tineke, the most memorable campaign video taken by a drone flying throughout their theatre which generated 59 Facebook shares through their ThankView sends alone. Even if you’re not ready to operate a drone, you can still make amazing videos with the phone in your pocket! Sam Ferrigno, Alley Theatre’s Individual Giving Associate has successfully filmed great videos using an iPhone and a \$20 microphone bought from Amazon.

The Results: Shockingly Fast Community Driven Giving

“We ended up raising \$365,000 for the Theater Recovery Fund and \$170,000 for our staff fund. ThankView definitely played an important part. We noticed people sharing ThankViews saying things like ‘Look at what happened!’ and ‘This theater this is incredible.’ So it helped us tremendously.”

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Here are some examples of the responses received from their Hurricane Harvey update ThankView campaign:

- “A great story, beautifully told!”
- “Enjoyed this video. Have posted to Facebook. Good luck with the new season.”
- “Loved this video! Great to see all that happens behind the scenes!”
- “Thanks for the clever, informative view of the Alley! I love the Alley!”
- “Very impressive. I’m proud to be a volunteer usher! Houston is lucky to have such great theater. Thank you.”

Tineke is now joined by 5 other Individual Giving staff members. Since embracing video more prominently in their outreach, Ferrigno’s goals have shifted to creating more content, filming and editing videos and photos for their donor outreach.

“The way that we are approaching individual giving has completely changed in the past couple years. When you start using ThankView and exploring the opportunities, it creates a ripple effect into becoming a more inventive, data-driven shop. It’s exciting, and makes our jobs a lot more fun!”