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Whoever said it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive clearly coined the phrase before the advent of the budget airlines. Small seats, long lines and pat downs have taken the glamor out of air travel. But is the journey that you ask your donors to follow a pleasurable experience that makes them feel special — or is it like jetting cross country on multiple budget airlines, with seemingly endless waits in characterless airports?

Most journeys, especially those that involve geographical distance, are intentional. The travelers are willing participants, with an idea of where they want to go and roughly how to get there. They also have resources like maps and the GPS to help. Some journeys, of course, don't go as planned. In the movie "[Planes, Trains and Automobiles](#)," [Steve Martin](#) and [John Candy](#) try to make it home for the holidays, but the journey keeps going wrong. They know where they want to go, but they just can't get there.

Other journeys start without a conscious decision about the origins or, even, the destination. For example, I had no idea that I was embarking on a lifelong obsession the first time I heard a [Beach Boys record](#). But one thing led to another, and before long, I had spent a small fortune on the band — treating each new record and live show as an opportunity to deepen my relationship and investment in the Beach Boys.

What about thinking about your donors this way? On one hand, some donors may simply make one-off gifts, with no thought of a longer-term commitment. Yet others may have researched your organization and its values, and made a conscious decision to make the first of what might be a series of multiple, larger contributions. The fundraiser's job is to identify those who want to go further and guide them through the next steps that they could take.

These journeys are complex and often need to be tailored to the individual. There are many starting points and various routes to the destination — but you need to be able to describe the next move with the destination in mind.

One place to start is to map the journeys your donors have historically taken. I recently took this approach with a charity, basing my method on a few years' of faithfully recorded gift and activity history. It was revealing, both to see what people went on to do after that first engagement (in most cases it was nothing) and what kind of initial engagement was more likely to lead to a long and healthy donor relationship thereafter

(an open-ended recurring gift, in their case).

So having reflected on the good, the bad and the ugly, we were able to think about the journeys we wanted to encourage the donors to take — and what activities we would have to undertake to show them how to continue building a deeper relationship with the charity. It also helped us recognize that some donors — in this case, it tended to be the donors who simply topped up an online purchase with a few dollars — just aren't in it for the long term.

The bottom line is this experience shone a light on the past and gave us the raw materials to come up with a “moves management” strategy for the future. The donors can now look forward to a journey that is tailored to the way they like to travel.

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