

 **Sustaining Success with EFT Donations**

Submitted by: Debbie Hamlett, Assistant G.M. – Development & Marketing

dhamlett@**net**Nebraska.org | (402) 470-6380

**90% Retention Rate**

In FY2018, NET retained 76% of new FY17 donors who started their memberships as sustainers while we only retained 46% of new FY17 single-gift donors.

This new sustainer retention rate is great, but **what if we could increase it even further?** What if we could retain 90% of these new sustainers? How can this be done? For NET, the answer has been a concerted effort across multiple platforms to acquire and convert sustainers to give directly from their bank accounts via EFT (electronic funds transfer). **New FY17 sustainers giving via credit card retained at 64.9% while new EFT sustainers retained at 90.1%.**

**Acquisition: Easy for you. Best for NET!**

The most efficient way for us to add to our number of EFT sustainers has been to acquire them that way. To do that, we’ve made adjustments to our donation page so that the default method of payment is by EFT, and we let prospective donors know that it’s the best way to give with the tagline: **Easy for you. Best for NET!**

The chart to the right shows the recent success that we’ve had in acquiring these donors. The increase in EFT donors starting in FY16 corresponds to when NET began allowing EFT donations through our donation platform. The further jump in FY17 is when NET placed added emphasis to EFT donations on our donation page, during on-air pledge drives, and in direct mail pieces.

**Conversion: Maximize your donation**

**Direct Mail**

|  |
| --- |
| **EFT Conversion Mailings** |
|  | **Sent** | **Conversion Rate** | **Average EFT Gift** | **Total Net Revenue** |
| **Sept 2017** | 2,783  | 1.26% | $200.57 | $5,714.70 |
| **Oct 2018** | 3,184  | 1.10% | $207.77 | $6,449.00 |

For the last two years, we’ve sent direct mail pieces to all of our monthly credit card sustainers. Each mailing has been sent to approximately 3,000 members, and each has yielded a conversion rate of greater than 1% and a total response rate (including single gifts) of nearly 1.5%. Each of these mailings has generated net revenue while also helping ensure that more of our sustainer file will be safe from the volatility of credit card declines and expirations.

**Postcards**

In addition to more formal direct mail pieces, we’ve also experimented with sending postcards (left) to our monthly credit card sustainers. The purpose of this postcard is to inform donors that NET pays a significant amount each year in credit card fees. The front of the postcard gives an actual dollar amount that we pay in credit card fees, the back of the postcard gives the percentage that we are charged for each card transaction (approximately 2.5%).

These postcards direct credit card sustainers to call us or visit [www.netNebraska.org/EFT](http://www.netNebraska.org/EFT) where they can make the switch to be an EFT sustainer. This is the only payment option that we have available on this donation page.

**Emails and letters**

Lastly and most significantly, NET has made efforts to recapture donors who have issues with their credit cards. Most of these donors are credit card sustainers. Each month since July 2016, we’ve sent an email to these donors letting them know that we could not charge their credit cards, we also follow up with a letter. We note that this issue could be avoided by EFT donations. Since July 2016, we’ve recorded:

**1072 total donations 40% converted to EFT donors**

**Make the Switch
The majority (54.5%) of our 6,986 active sustainers now give to NET via EFT.**

As we’ve witnessed, EFT sustainers are valuable because they retain at a higher rate than credit card sustainers who may be subject to changing numbers and expiration dates. Additionally, credit card sustainers cost most because of the credit card fees that they incur. To combat this, NET has taken a multi-pronged approach acquire EFT sustainers and convert credit card sustainers to give via EFT and seen a significant and consistent increase in both sustainers and EFT donors.