



## **Giving is All About Identity... So, Find Your Tribe**

By Futurus Group, Inc.

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Let's start this conversation with a quick mental exercise. Picture yourself in one of the following situations:

- You've just met someone from your hometown even though you are 2,000 miles away.
- You walk into a stadium to be greeted by the happy roar of fellow fans wearing your team's colors.
- You overhear a stranger raving about a book you've loved since you were a teenager.

How might you describe your feelings in these scenarios? Is your reaction a warm sense of happiness? Perhaps an instant level of trust towards the other people in these hypotheticals? This is natural. As *Psychology Today* [explains](#), humans are social beings, and in each scenario above, we've just located fellow members of our tribe.

Of course, someone might get defensive when mentioning tribes. The traditional definition of tribes is, after all, heavy on ethnic, religious, and culture similarities, while most philanthropic organizations and our culture in general take pride in multiculturalism.

But that's not the type of tribe our company, [Futurus Group](#), emphasizes. Our definition comes from bestselling author Seth Godin. Godin's book, [Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us](#) explains today's tribes are different than the clans of our ancestors. He defines a tribe as: "a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea. For millions of years, human beings have been part of one tribe or another. A group needs only two things to be a tribe: a shared interest and a way to communicate."

For the purposes of a non-profit organization, the tribe is comprised of those who resonate with a mission and are willing to put their time and money towards its success. In our work, we have found it's critical for organizations like charities, hospitals, and universities to identify characteristics that raise individuals from being just members of a community to members of a *tribe*.

Here's how to understand the distinction. Every university knows there is a big difference between a person who merely graduated from the school and an alumnus who actively supports the university mission with gifts and personal involvement, such as mentoring students or being an active member of the alumni association. Armed with this knowledge, how might your group locate potential tribe members? Our approach is to create a [Gratitude Score algorithm](#) employing hundreds of variables to define what drives members of a community to feel cohesion with a group's mission.

Returning to Seth Godin, he considers working on behalf of the tribe so important he suggests [leaders focus on tribe management](#). But he's talking about for-profit companies for the most part. Does his advice apply to the non-profit world as well?

The answer is a resounding yes! It turns out finding and creating tighter bonds with your organization's tribe is the number one key to success. After all, only [56% of American households](#) make charitable donations in a given year. Therefore, non-profits must learn to better connect with those who are not only philanthropic by nature but also resonate deeply with its values.

Of course, those bound by a common religion are typically more aligned. And once upon a time, the church was a great driver of philanthropic gifts to charities of all types, but church affiliation has been dropping by about 7% a year. Based on this decline as well as the breakdown of overall social cohesion, it's now up to individuals themselves, along with non-profits, to find innovative ways to bridge the alignment gap.

Even so, no organization has a secret formula to make their tribe larger. But what some organizations are learning, especially our clients, is that by first identifying the types of positive experiences most impacting members' sense of gratitude and group cohesion, it *is* possible to foster a greater sense of community — the ultimate goal of every tribe.

If and when this occurs, each individual tends to feel greater gratitude and a stronger sense of community. As a result, giving becomes woven into the fabric of their identity. At this stage, making a charitable contribution goes from being an obligation to becoming a core part of how they define themselves.

Ultimately, the social connection between individual, organization, and mission is at the core of the tribe concept. Some organizations build tribes around a place, like a college campus, or a hospital. If your organization doesn't have a physical presence to center the tribe, then it must become more people focused. After all, this identity is what will compel your constituents to support your organization to greater success, leading to an increase in philanthropic support.

Do you want to learn how to identify and foster stronger bonds with your tribe? We would love to partner with you. Visit [Futurus Group](#) or contact us at [info@futurusgroup.com](mailto:info@futurusgroup.com) to shift the paradigm by focusing on donors most devoted to your values.