American Kidney Fund Giving Site

User Experience Audit & Recommendations

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October 2014

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Introduction

This brief provides a user experience audit covering the "giving" portion of the American Kidney Fund's primary website (kidneyfund.org). Specifically, the audit provides a narrative analysis of the site's donation opportunities, donation forms, and associated giving pages in order to clarify the current state of the website in terms of user flow, visual design, and content architecture. The brief then provides specific recommendations, including examples of website features used by other nonprofit organizations which follow a number of best practices from visual design to donation opportunity layout to donation form functionality.

Goals & Objectives

The overarching objective behind any redesign of the giving / donation portion of the American Kidney Fund website is, of course, to increase online donations. Substantially improved donation conversion rates can be achieved via successful implementation of design changes that meet the following goals:

Goal #1: Enhance user experience by clarifying donation opportunities and simplifying navigation pathways to donation form(s)

Goal #2: Reduce potential donation form abandonment by simplifying form design, providing visual feedback on form submission process, providing clear opportunities for gift upgrades and enhancements, and designing forms to be mobile responsive

Goal #3: Improve thank-you page and autoresponder content by giving donors "next step" calls to action and encouraging those donors who opt out of future communications to opt back in via conditionalized content

Current Website Analysis

Overview

An established principle in user experience design states that user paths to "right fit" content (whether that content is "informational" in a programmatic sense or is a donation appeal or form) should be as short as possible. In other words, the fewer actions it takes for a user to reach the content or resource being sought, the better. This principle plays out in terms of conversion rates (successful donation form submissions or newsletter signups, for example), with fewer required actions generally leading to higher conversion rates, and vice-versa.

Further, when users are presented with a conversion opportunity – for example, filling out and submitting a donation form – another user experience principle states that the simpler, clearer (and, often, the shorter) a form is, the better conversion rates it will generate. In other words, longer, more complicated forms that lack visual cues to entice users to move through the process of form completion will see greater rates of abandonment.

The analysis provided here is selective: it does not provide an audit of the entirety of kidneyfund.org. Rather, five specific elements of the website that are *most closely* tied to the user experience around AKF's fundraising efforts are highlighted. That said, if improvements are pursued in a number of these areas, the user experience across the site as a whole, including crucial informational and programmatic areas, will also improve.

The current AKF website presents users with donation opportunities which require greater clarity, visibility, and simplification in order to improve potential conversion rates. Users are provided with two primary paths to donate: **1)** via a "Give Now" menu item which resides in the site's main navigation **2)** via a "Give Online – Fight Kidney Disease" button / banner in the right-hand column. If the "Give Now" menu item is selected, users are delivered to **3)** the "Give Now" landing page, which in turn requires users to select from a wide array of options in order to arrive at a donation form. If the "Give Online" button / banner is selected, users are delivered to **4)** the One-Time Gift donation form.

Further, kidneyfund.org is not *currently* designed in a: **5)** mobile-responsive manner. It is understood that AKF is in the process of having the website redesigned, and it is assumed that the site will be designed to be mobile-responsive. This will be a critical move: according to a 2013 PewResearch Internet Project report*, 60% of mobile users (smartphone and tablet), use mobile devices to access the web. Of that 6 in 10 users, 34% stated that they access the web *mostly* using mobile devices, and "…African-Americans and Hispanics are more likely to do so than Whites." Further, mobile traffic to kidneyfund.org in September, 2014 was 41.1% of the site's total traffic – an increase of 32% from the same period in 2013. This trend suggests that converting kidneyfund.org to be mobile-friendly via the implementation of responsive design best practices is crucial in meeting the needs (both programmatic and fundraising) of an increasingly-mobile constituency. The mobile-specific recommendations here, therefore, focus on design elements intended to centralize donation opportunities in the site's user experience features.

Point-By-Point Analysis

1) *"Give Now" Menu Item*: While the inclusion of a donation-oriented link in the website's main navigation is a positive move, the link's current location – "buried" as it is among a series of visually-similar options – makes it difficult for users to see. Further, because kidneyfund.org does not use drop-down menus and users are required to make gift-type selections on the "Give Now" landing page, an opportunity is lost to provide users with an immediate means of narrowing gift options.

2) *"Give Online – Fight Kidney Disease" Button / Banner*: As it resides in the site's right-hand column and is accompanied by a series of other image links of similar size, color, and visual hierarchy, the "Give Online" button is in danger of falling victim to "banner blindness" (the usability principle under which web users often consciously or unconsciously ignore advertisements and other banner-like content) and therefore not being clicked. Further, the primary imagery used in the button – that of a computer mouse – is somewhat dated in an age of mobile web access.

3) *"Give Now" Page*: The main landing page for the website's giving section requires users to examine a large number of competing choices prior to reaching a donation form or strong call to action (see Appendix for a link-by-link breakdown):

   Main Content Column
   - Of the seven links provided in the main content column, two link directly to a donation form
   - Of the five remaining links, three link to landing / information pages (which are defined here by their links to donation forms) and two deliver users to information pages providing instruction and resources
   - The three landing / information pages accessed via the "Give Now" page (Memorial Gifts, Honor Gifts, and Car Program) themselves link to six different donation forms, largely dependent on user preference for the mode of contact regarding gift notifications

   Left-Hand Column
   - Of the fifteen links provided in the left-hand column, one provides a direct link to a donation form
   - Three links lead to landing / information pages (which in turn provide links to six donation forms)
   - Twelve links lead to information pages providing instruction and resources.

   Right-Hand Column
   - Of the three donation-specific links provided in the right-hand column one links to a donation form

* - "2013 Cell Phone Activities." September 19, 2013. PewResearch Internet Project: http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/09/19/cell-phone-activities-2013/

- One link leads to a fundraising microsite
- One link leads to a landing / information page.

4) *The One-Time Gift Donation Form*: With the exception of some topic-specific variations (notification fields for Memorial and Honor Gifts, etc.) all the donation forms on kidneyfund.org follow the same basic layout and format. Because of this, the analysis and recommendations provided here are applicable across all donation forms on the site.

- An informational paragraph at the top of the form describes briefly what AKF programs are supported by donations and, in some cases, explains how notifications for Memorial and Honor Gifts will be handled.
- A donation array (radio buttons) is provided, and the remainder of the form consists of donor contact information and credit card details.
- The top of the form contains a graphic denoting that form submission is a two-step process: Gift & Payment Information → Review Gift (on Memorial and Honor Gift donation forms, this is a three-step process, with a second form page being added to collect honoree and notification information).
- Buttons at the bottom of the form allow the form to be submitted or canceled (to note: the position of these buttons, with "Submit" on the left and "Cancel" on the right, could easily lead to users mistakenly cancelling their submission after having completed the form).
- The complete site header, including the entirety of the site's main navigation, is present on the donation form page.

5) *The kidneyfund.org Mobile Experience*: As noted above, kidneyfund.org – including its donation forms – is not designed in a mobile-responsive manner. While the American Kidney Fund blog links to a responsive donation form, the forms accessed from the main website are not mobile-friendly. When the site and its forms are accessed on a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) the site simply scales (shrinks) to fit the size of the device screen. This requires the user to zoom around in order to see content and take actions. This user experience is, clearly, far less than optimal.
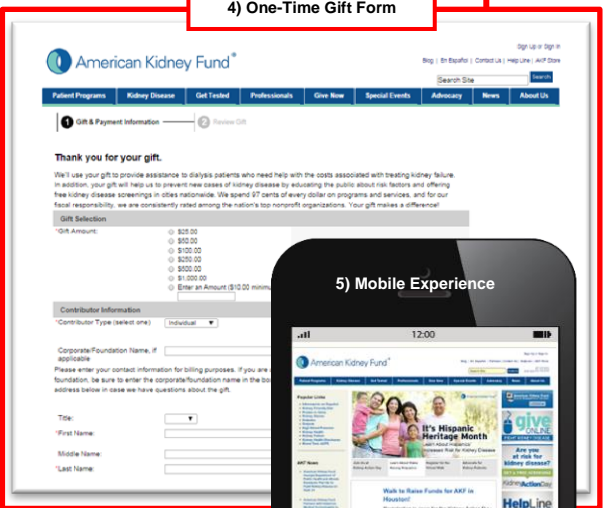
1) "Give Now" Menu Item
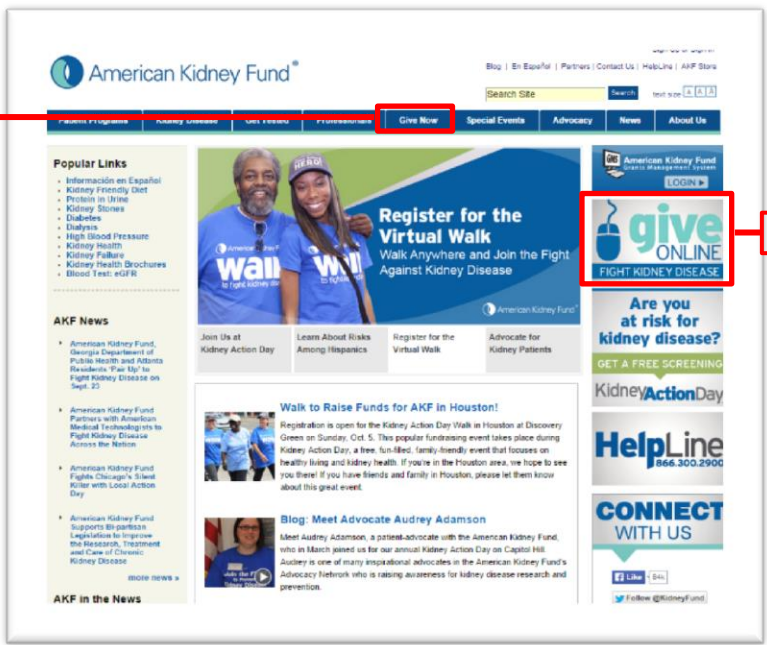
2) "Give Online" Button

3) "Give Now" Page
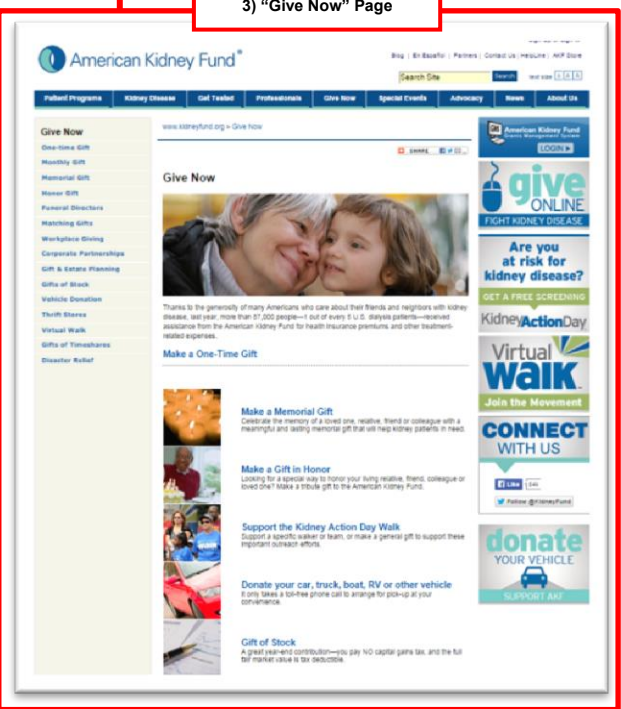
4) One-Time Gift Form

5) Mobile Experience

**The primary "giving" features of the American Kidney Fund website.**

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: *Modify the design and position of the "Give Now" main navigation menu item.*

These modifications should, at a most basic level, include a color shift for the menu item and a repositioning of the menu item such that it stands apart from the rest of the site's main navigation. Ideally, further options might also be pursued, including the addition of a drop-down menu to the item, having the link lead directly to a donation form, or the addition of "sub-links" adjacent to the item in order to provide direct access to different donation forms.

Examples of these design approaches are seen in a number of nonprofit organizations' websites. For example:

- The Easter Seals website demonstrates a twofold approach:
  - A "Donate" button resides in the site header and is distinct in color and position from the rest of the site's main navigation. This button leads directly to a donation form allowing for multiple giving options (one-time gift vs. monthly recurring)
  - A drop-down menu is tied to a "Ways To Give" main navigation menu item and allows users to select from an array of donation and involvement options, from P2P fundraising to workplace giving to legacy / planned giving programs
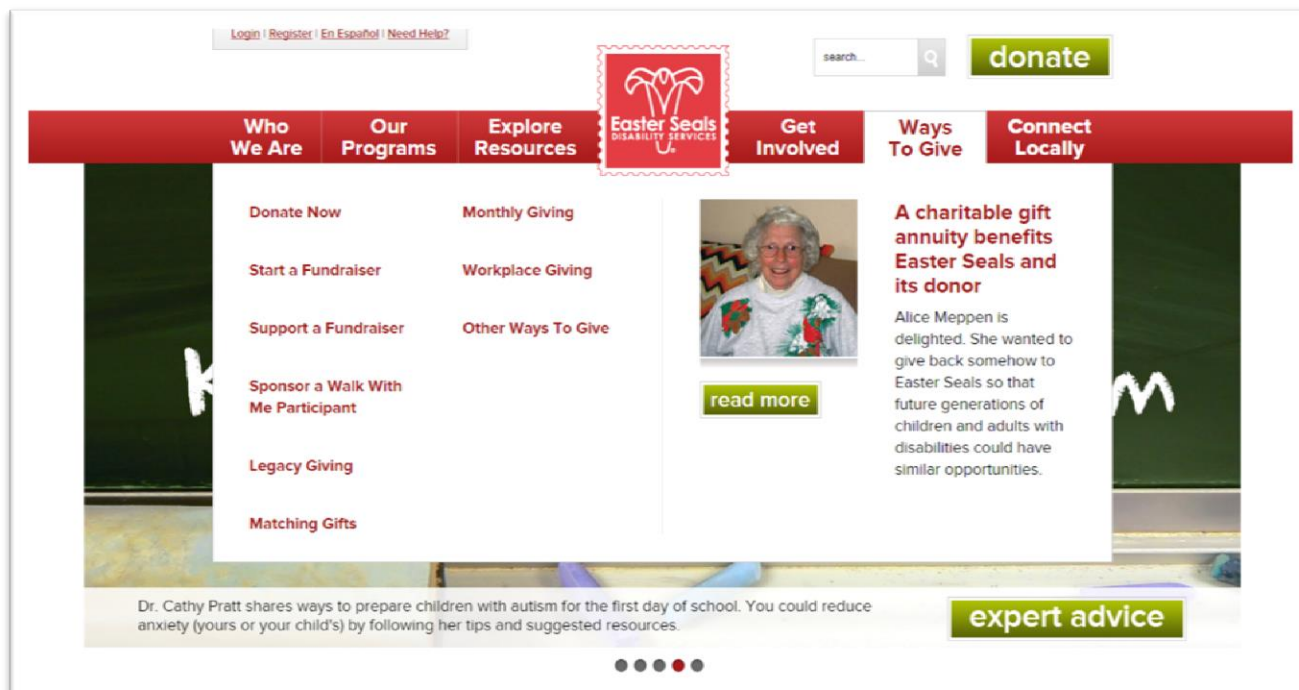
The "Ways To Give" drop-down menu as seen on easterseals.com.

- The American Diabetes Association website also uses a twofold approach, but in a modified manner:
  - A drop-down menu provides a broad array of options from fundraising events to one-time gifts and planned giving programs

o Importantly, though, the site's "Donate Now!" button (located in the site header separate from the main navigation) is displayed alongside a series of sub-options for different types of gifts (one-time, monthly, memorial, and honor gifts)
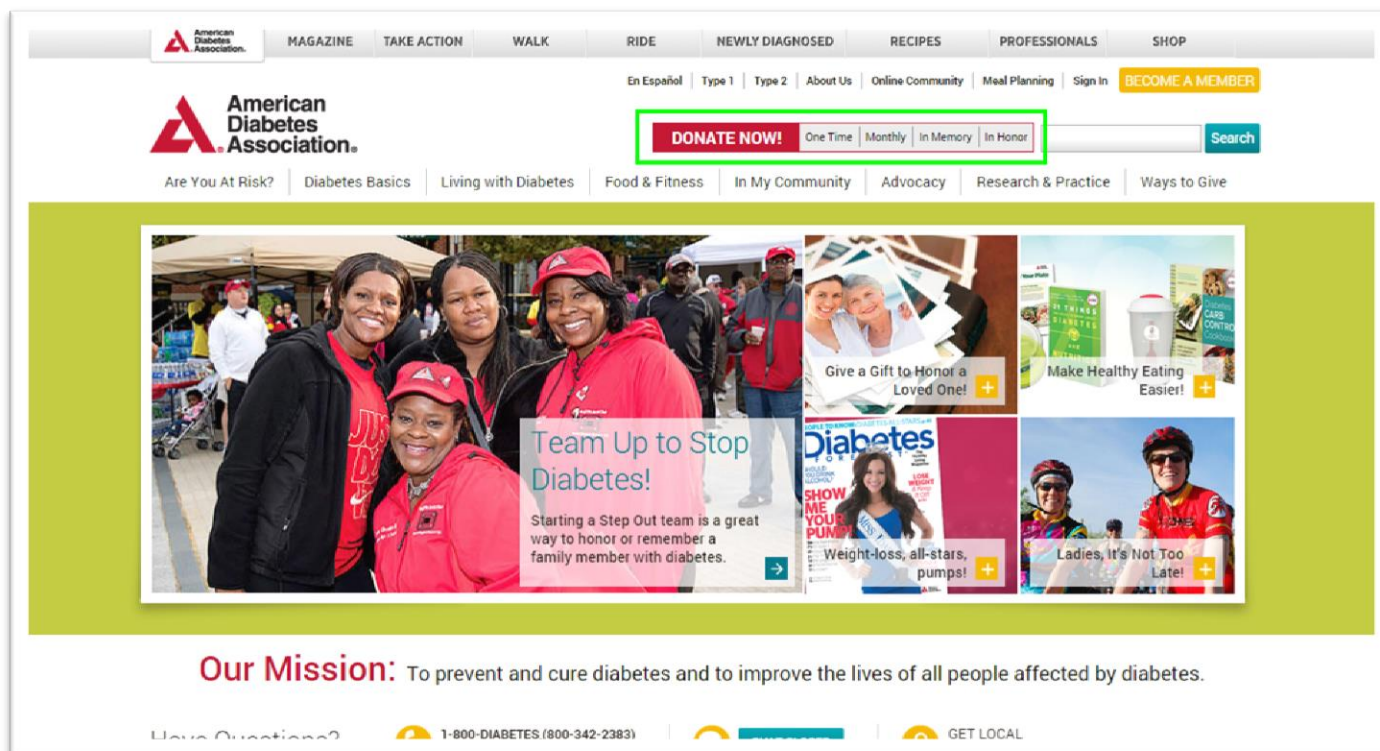
The "Donate Now" button, with gift type options, on diabetes.org (highlighted here in green).

In both cases, donation opportunities are presented in a manner that is visually distinct from the rest of the content on the site (via button position and color). If users take action on any of those appeals, they are delivered directly to the appropriate donation form(s). Further, if users are in search of giving and support opportunities that go beyond simple one-time, monthly, or tribute giving, both sites allow for easily-digestible access to further information on appropriate programs and activities.

Recommendation #2: *Remove the "Give Online" Button / Banner.*

If the recommendations above are implemented, the "Give Online" button in the current iteration of kidneyfund.org will become redundant and can be removed.

Recommendation #3: *Simplify the "Give Now" page in terms of both content (the number of options given) and in terms of design and layout.*

Whether a drop-down menu or a simplified landing page (or both) is created, the array of donation and giving choices provided need to be reduced in number and/or organized in a manner that is informed by their relative importance to AKF. Further, re-naming the menu item to something like "Ways To Give" or "Giving

Options" will clarify that the link will lead to further information and options, rather than directly to a donation form.

Either option (the drop-down menu and simplified landing page) should be heavily informed by an emphasis on clear visual design. The LIVESTRONG Foundation website's "Donate" landing page provides a strong example of this in which white space and typography are used to create a clear series of general messages ("DONATE" – which is associated with a personal constituent story) that combine with specific donation appeals that are placed in a clear hierarchy.
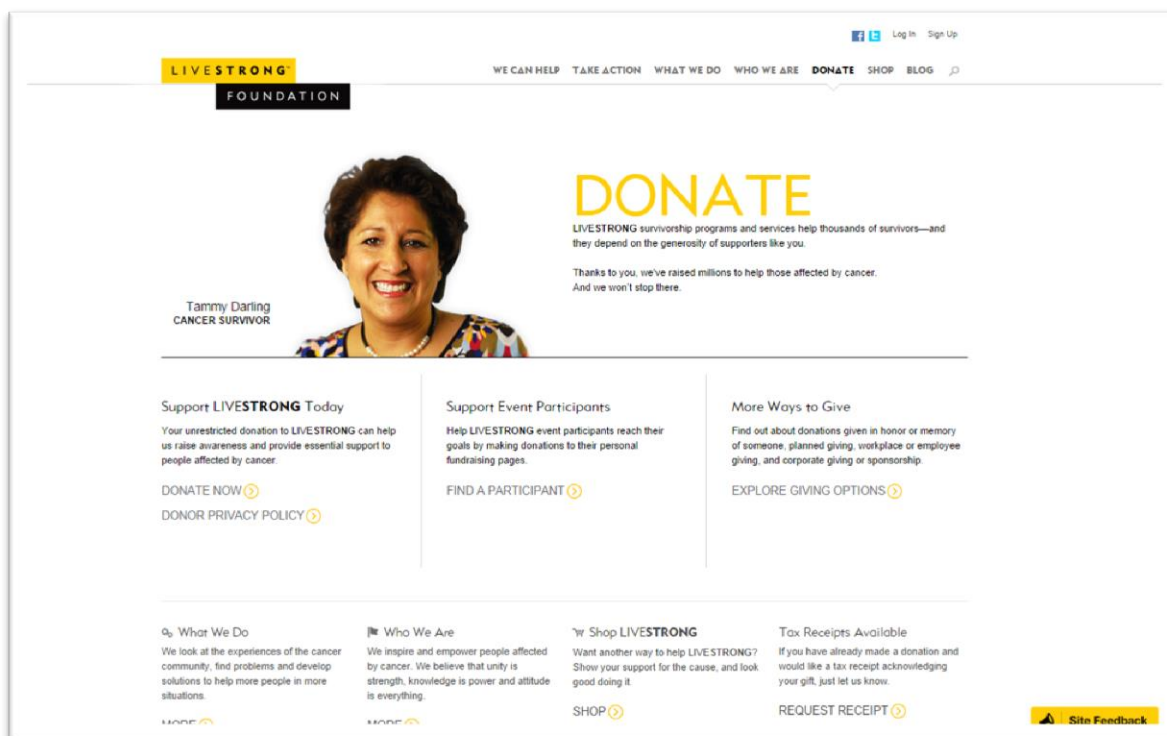
The initial donation landing page as seen on livestrong.org.

Regardless of the specific design and layout direction chosen for kidneyfund.org, the number of donation options on the "Give Now" landing page should be reduced and hierarchically organized to align with AKF's most successful, popular, and organizationally needed donation options. One-time giving, monthly giving, and Kidney Action Day walks should be highlighted, potentially along with virtual walk activities. If possible, the donation form-oriented recommendations shared below should be followed in order to fold Memorial and Honor gifts into a single form, thereby rendering those two options unnecessary on the "Give Now" landing page. Finally, in a similar manner to the approach seen on the LIVESTRONG site, all the other options displayed on the landing page (vehicle donation, planned/estate giving, stock transfers, etc.) should be rolled into a separate, secondary landing page that is made accessible via a "More Ways to Give" (or similar) link.

Following these recommendations will allow AKF to create a "Give Now" landing page that is easier for users to navigate and that provides more frictionless opportunities to deliver users to crucial donation forms.

Recommendation #4*: redesign donation forms to 1) provide a simplified donation process, 2) provide clear visual cues to users describing the number and order of steps to be taken in donating, and 3) to combine functionality from several forms into a single giving location.*

As noted above, all of the donation forms seen on kidneyfund.org use the same basic layout and functionality and, with the previously-noted exception of the donation form linked from the Kidney Today blog, none are mobile-responsive. Differences from form to form are largely oriented around different types of gifts (one time gifts vs. monthly giving vs. tribute gifts, for example). In all cases, however, users are presented with a long list of items to complete: an ask string (allowing the user to select the amount of the gift), donor information, tribute notification information (on tribute gift forms), email interests, and payment information. While all of these fields are more or less crucial, design decisions could be applied to all forms on the site by which crucial fields are broken out into a step-by-step user flow that is more easily understood and that is more likely to encourage form completion.

An example of this is seen in the main donation form used on the LIVESTRONG Foundation's website (www.livestrong.org/donation/). When a user chooses to access the form, the first item seen is a clearly-designed ask string or gift array. Abandoning classic radio buttons as a user input device, the livestrong.org ask string is simple, graphically attractive, and allows the user to make an initial decision about their financial commitment prior to seeing any entry fields for personal or payment information. By splitting those activities apart – the financial commitment from the gathering of personal information – a more psychologically frictionless experience is provided.

As well, the ask string portion of the LIVESTRONG form allows users to select whether or not their gift is to be made in honor or memory of someone. When that box is selected, users are delivered to the same form as when the box is not selected. The only difference is whether or not the dynamic portion of the form that contains tribute gift information fields is opened or not when the form loads. Notably, even if a user does not initially select the "in honor or memory" option, the tribute gift portion of the form is still available and opened by simply checking a box. By placing the tribute gift option early in the form transaction (on the gift array), it is made clear to users that they are in the correct place and can proceed.

The ask string used on livestrong.org. This is the first page encountered upon user selection of "Donate" and "Donate Now" links on several locations around the website. If the user selects the "…in honor or memory…" box just below the gift array, the following donation form responds with the appropriate section being opened.

The donation form itself, as mentioned, contains a dynamically-displayed section allowing users to enter tribute gift and tribute notification information. Beyond that, the form layout is visually balanced and easy to read. Credit card information (one of the likeliest moments for donation abandonment) is placed at the top of the form, which "gets it out of the way" and allows the user to proceed with less sensitive information (name) toward the bottom of the form. The form contains a "Make this a monthly gift" option at the very end in the form of a simple checkbox, thereby making it very easy for a donor to opt in to sustained giving. Finally, the form's "submit" button is easy to see and visually easy to differentiate from the rest of the form and, importantly, from the "Reset Fields" button next to it.

Note also that, when users visit either the gift array page or the donation form on livestrong.org, the majority or all of the site's main navigation is removed from the page. This design strategy tends to keep users from being distracted by competing navigation choices and, while also somewhat limiting users' ability to easily return to previous pages if they mistakenly stumble into the donation sequence, it can lead to increased donation conversions.

The primary livestrong.org one-time donation form, with the "In Honor or Memory Of" section closed (left) and open (right). Note that, while some other field groupings are also rearranged on this form upon user selection of the "…in Honor or Memory of…" checkbox on the previous gift array page, this is the same donation form.

If American Kidney Fund's website used a form that contained dynamically-displayed fields such as those used by LIVESTRONG, the current number of forms seen on kidneyfund.org could likely be reduced to one or two. Further, if the forms on kidneyfund.org were designed in a manner that is visually attractive, easy to digest, and that leverages the order of fields in such a manner that users are "drawn through" the form, it is likely that donation conversions could be raised substantially.

As well, the "Thank You" page and autoresponder seen by users when a donation is made should be leveraged in order to accomplish several goals. In the "Thank You" page, users could be given a "next step" call to action (or several). Options for this could include a "Tell Your Friends" feature allowing donors to spread the word about their donation to AKF via social media channels as well as an appeal to donors to learn more about AKF's advocacy activities. This page provides confirmation of the donor's gift as well as allowing AKF to thank them for their gift, but it also provides an important opportunity for AKF to potentially generate new donors via the user's social networks and to engage the user immediately with the organization.

The autoresponder that a donor receives via email can be leveraged in a similar manner. Social share and engagement messaging can be added to the content of the email in order to reiterate AKF's mission and to generate wider donor interest. The autoresponder is also a good opportunity to "recapture" donors who opted out of receiving email communication from AKF. An "opt-in" appeal can be made in the autoresponder via conditionalized content.

Recommendation #5: *Redesign kidneyfund.org to be mobile-friendly.*

As noted above, kidneyfund.org is currently not a mobile-friendly website – when viewed on a smartphone or tablet, the site simply scales to fit the screen. It is understood that AKF plans to redesign the site with mobile responsiveness in mind, which is a crucial and laudable goal. In terms of specific recommendations for that implementation, it is important that donation opportunities are clearly presented and visible immediately when a user accesses the site (see below for clear examples of how other organizations have handled this). Further, it is recommended that AKF not wait for the full website to be redesigned before making all of the site's donation forms responsive. If it is possible to use the "Kidney Today" donation form as a template for the others reached from kidneyfund.org, it may make such a process easier.

Examples of well-designed responsive sites used by other nonprofit organizations include The American Diabetes Association and Easter Seals.
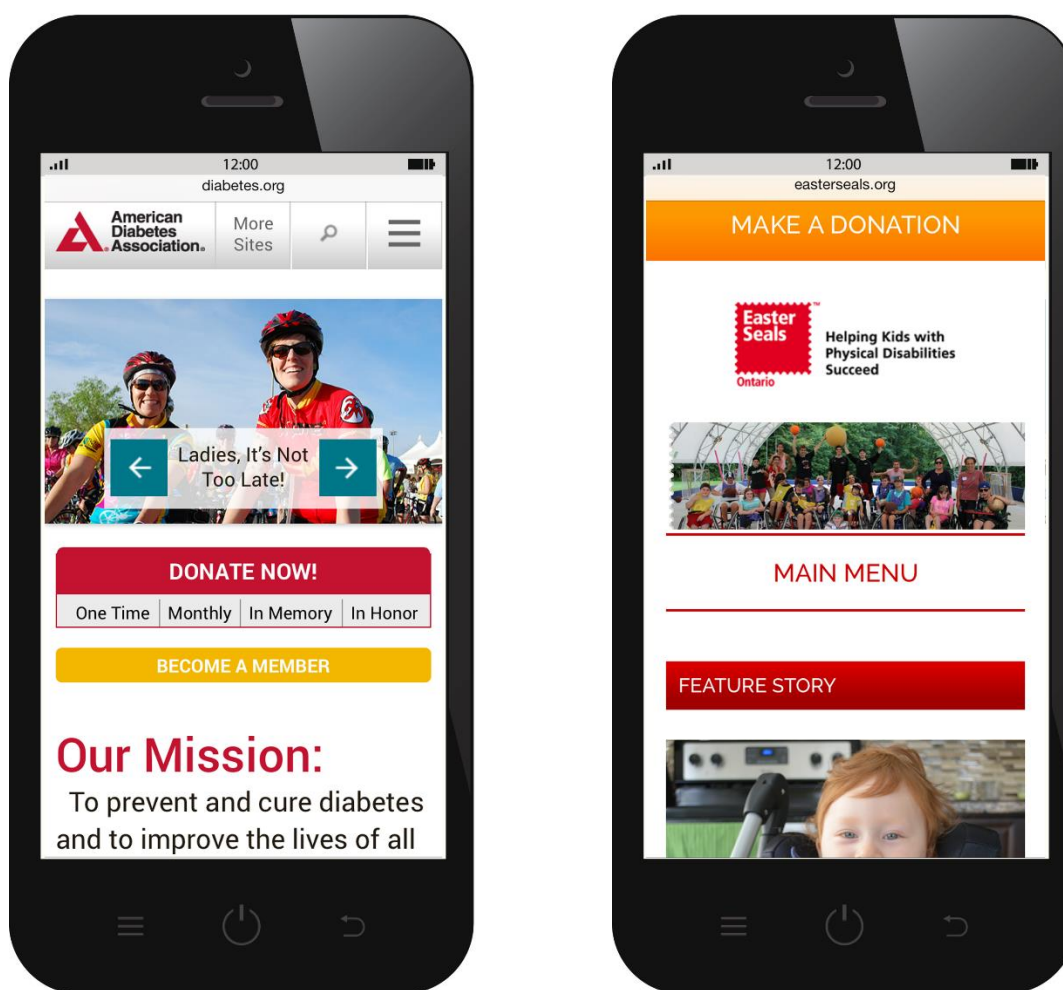
The mobile (responsive) websites for the American Diabetes Association (left) and Easter Seals (right).

In the American Diabetes Association's responsive site, a clear donation opportunity is provided just below the site's introductory content (the image banner). In a similar manner to the site's desktop layout, the donation button is joined by an array of possible gift types (One Time, Monthly, and so on). Selecting any of these delivers the user to the appropriate donation form. The site's mobile header layout provides menu and search

options that are easily navigable and that follow mobile design best practices in terms of iconography and item design. Finally, the organization's mission appears in such a manner that it begins just "above the fold" (it is seen without the user needing to scroll). This layout provides the user with the hinted knowledge that there is more programmatic information to be had on the mobile home page.

The Easter Seals mobile layout follows similar best practices: a clear donation opportunity is provided at the very top of the page and is followed by navigation and programmatic information that is easy to read and use. The site's programmatic information is made personal via the use of attractive imagery and, in a manner similar to that seen on diabetes.org, the content appears just above the fold in a manner that lets the user know that there is more available simply by scrolling down the page.

American Kidney Fund's website should ideally be designed in a responsive manner that follows these best practices in a similar way. Doing so will make the site accessible to users not only in terms of providing program and mission information, but also in terms of providing easily accessed donation opportunities.

Appendix

"Give Now" Page Content Breakdown

Main Column Content
- "Make a One-Time Gift" – links to One-Time Gift donation form
- "Make a Memorial Gift" – links to "Memorial Gifts" landing / information page, which in turn links to three variations on Memorial Gifts donation forms depending on the user's preference for gift notifications (email vs. postal mail notification)
- "Make a Gift In Honor" – links to "Honor Gifts" landing/ information page, which in turn links to two variations on Honor Gifts donation forms depending on the user's preference for gift notifications
- "Support The Kidney Day Action Walk" – links to 2014 Kidney Action Day – Metro Washington DC donation form
- "Donate your car, truck, boat, RV or other vehicle" – links to "Car Program" landing / information page, which in turn links to Vehicle Donation Form
- "Gift of Stock" – links to "Gifts of Stock" information page
- "Gift & Estate Planning" – links to "Gift and Estate Planning" information page

Left Column Links

- "One-Time Gift" – links to One-Time Gift donation form
- "Monthly Gift" – links to "Giving Monthly" information page, which in turn links to Monthly Gift donation form
- "Memorial Gift" – links to "Memorial Gifts" landing / information page, which in turn links to three variations on Memorial Gifts donation forms depending on the user's preference for gift notifications (email vs. postal mail notification)
- "Honor Gift" – links to "Honor Gifts" landing / information page, which in turn links to two variations on Honor Gifts donation forms depending on the user's preference for gift notifications
- "Funeral Directors" – links to "Funeral Directors" information page, which in turn allows funeral directors to order Memorial Gift envelopes (order form is broken)
- "Matching Gifts" – links to "Employer Matching Gifts" information page, which provides search functionality allowing users to learn whether their employers offer matching gifts through AKF
- "Workplace Giving" – links to Workplace Giving information page
- "Corporate Partnerships" – links to Corporate Partnerships information page
- "Gift & Estate Planning" – links to "Gift and Estate Planning" information page
- "Gifts of Stock"- links to "Gifts of Stock" information page
- "Vehicle Donation" – links to "Car Program" landing / information page, which in turn links to Vehicle Donation Form
- "Thrift Stores" – links to "Thrift Stores" information page
- "Virtual Walk" – links to AKF Virtual Walk microsite
- "Gifts of Timeshares" – links to "Gifts of Timeshares" information page
- "Disaster Relief" – links to "Disaster Relief" information page, which in turn links to Disaster Relief donation form

Right Column Links (donation specific)

- "Give Online / Fight Kidney Disease" – image link to One-Time gift donation form
- "Virtual Walk / Join the Movement" – image link to Virtual Walk microsite

- "Donate Your Vehicle / Support AKF" – image link to "Car Program" landing / information page, which in turn links to Vehicle Donation Form

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