Giving What We Can Plan
July 2015 - June 2016

Team

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Introduction

Giving What We Can aims to be the community of effective givers. We inspire people to donate significantly and as effectively as possible. Forming a community allows us to share information on how and where to give, help us stick to our commitment and stand together to change the culture around giving. Our primary metric for impact is number of members. We aim to have 2000 members by the end of June 2016.

We plan to create a rough but explicit model of the steps people go through in the process of becoming Giving What We Can members, which we can test and improve.

Over this year a large part of our focus is going to be on improving our understanding of the journeys people take, and how we can improve them. Alison will be continuing to gather information from new members as they join, both through tracking responses to joining form questions like how they first heard about Giving What We Can, and through talking to members of the community via Skype. Sam's main focus over the coming months will be learning more about the various parts of the pathway to membership and how we can improve it, via month-long experiments, starting by rebuilding the

front-end of the website to make it more testable. Jon is focusing on ascertaining whether chapters seem to be a good method for attracting new members, by first testing how successful we can be at setting up new chapters, and then whether we add value in supporting them and increasing their impact. It's important that while we do this we continue consolidating, both by Hauke improving our charity recommendations and overall research, and by supporting our current members.

The Pathway To Membership

Our [Pathway Model](#) makes explicit our underlying assumptions about how people move from being unaware of Giving What We Can to taking the Giving What We Can pledge, and offers suggestions of factors that influence whether they will advance through any of the intermediate steps.

The pathway starts with people first hearing about effective giving and Giving What We Can, and culminates in people being long-term, active members. It encompasses people wanting to learn more, starting to get involved, and becoming increasingly committed to action. Precisely what actions count as part of which steps is vague - for example, should being a Try Giver count as 'regular contact' or 'substantial commitment'? The precise details, however, are less important than the overall structure.

It is likely that it will be higher value to put in work at some points of the pathway than others. One reason for this is the relative crowdedness of the different parts. At the moment, we are not planning to spend as much time on increasing the number of people who are aware of effective giving and Giving What We Can as we are on later parts of the pathway. There are currently a number of people focusing on media attention for effective altruism and the relevant organisations, through books, mass media and conferences. The biggest contribution we think we can make here is by encouraging and supporting in-person meet-up groups. Supporting people at later stages of involvement seems more likely to be our comparative advantage, as it often requires long-term follow-up and time-consuming outreach to individual people, which volunteers are less likely to be in a good position to do.

Here are the steps we approximately expect people to go through on the path to becoming members, and how we think we can best approach each step. For each step, there are particular metrics we intend to track. Note that these are in order to give us a fuller picture of the pathway, rather than things we're trying to optimise for.

A) Making people aware of Giving What We Can and effective giving
($\Longrightarrow$ *first touch*)

Main metrics:

- Number of new visitors to the website
- Number of new chapters

First touch outreach is crucial, but it seems at the moment to be a fairly crowded space, given the publications and media attention around Singer and Will. We will still be doing some of these things, but less than we would if it were less crowded. A big place we think we would be valuable here is around building and supporting in-person groups. As well as the importance of people hearing in general about effective giving, we would like people to become aware of Giving What We Can, to make sure people become aware of the community and research, as well as the idea of effective giving.

Main activities:

- **Increasing our number of chapters**. This will be by talking to members about starting chapters and by 'chapter seeding': writing to academics and student group leaders at universities, to see if they are interested in writing to their mailing lists about starting a Giving What We Can or Effective Altruism chapter. This method seems to have been fairly successful so far. Our aim is to reach out to around 500 universities by the end of September, with the expectation of getting 50 chapters from that.
- **Supporting chapters to reach out to new people**. For example, by supporting them to put on regular events, and to have a table at their fresher's fair (for student chapters).
- **Mass media**. We will focus more on the kinds of mediums that allow us to go into some depth (this seems to have worked well for us in the past). We'll continue putting pieces in the [Huffington Post](), responding to pieces like those in the [Boston Review](), and hope to do some guest blogging.
- **Advertising and SEO.** We will continue working to improve our adwords use and SEO.
- **Outreach by members.** About two fifths of our members report their first hearing about GWWC from friends (although some cited multiple sources), indicating this is a very promising way to reach people. We would therefore like to learn more about how people do this, what makes people hesitant and how to get over that. Our members should be our strongest advocates, so we would like to learn more about the extent to which members tell their friends about GWWC, and how we could support them to do so more.
- **Conferences / large events.** Although we have in the past found that pushing to speak at general conferences has been a large time commitment compared to the impact it has, the planned Effective Altruism Global X conferences are likely to have a much more receptive audience than typical conferences. We will therefore very likely speak at them, and make sure they have any materials from us which would be useful. We may also do other speaking engagements, but we won't work hard to find opportunities.

Important learning:

- Learn more about where our traffic comes from, particularly people who go on to actually join.
- Working out to what extent we were able to set up new chapters, and how they endured (how the chapter seeding went, and how many of those chapters are still going strong at the end of a term).
- Continue getting better data when people join about how they first heard about GWWC (both by via the joining forms and discussions with new members).

B) Generating interest in hearing more
(*first touch* $\Longrightarrow$ *read/hear more*)

Main metrics:

- Number of newsletter signups
- Number of facebook page likes
- Number of returning visitors to the website

The biggest factors in getting people to respond to first touches by wanting to come to an event, read the website etc. are likely to be how interesting the first touches were, and how obvious it was what the next step should be.

Main activities:

- **Striking the right tone.** Content like guest blogs need to have a tone that people can relate to, as well as find engaging. They should be friendly, and indicate that we are the kind of people readers would like to talk to and can ask questions of.
- **Interesting research.** We will do research which interests people and is relevant to their decisions. This will be the basis for our guest blogging etc., as well as talks we give.
- **Calls to action**. After events, on articles etc we will try to make sure we always have calls to action - whether to visit the website, follow us on social media or sign up to the newsletter.
- **Support chapters.** We plan to help chapters increase attendance at events by things like providing good posters for them to use, facilitating coordination among them on working out which speakers were popular and are willing to speak, and on which Fresher's fair pitches work well. We will consider the possibility of providing funding for refreshments or speaker costs.
- **Social Media.** We will ensure that our Facebook page and Twitter feed are active and interesting, in order that people want to follow them.

- **Appealing website.** Our website needs to look professional and engaging in order that people will want to read it.
- **Advertising My Giving.** Anybody can set up a My Giving dashboard and record their income and donations. We should make this clear and encourage more people to use the feature, since this could be a good first step towards them donating more significantly and effectively.

Important learning:

- Measuring how long people stay on the website and the extent to which they click through to other pages from the one they started on.
- Note how many hits research on the blog gets, and research on other places (like when guest blogging).
- Having chapter mentors who are in regular contact with chapters, and can work out to what extent we're providing the materials chapters would like, and the to what extent chapters are doing calls to action
- Work out which social media posts do well and badly.

C) Inspiring people to want to get involved
(*Read/hear more* $\Longrightarrow$ *Regular contact*)

Metrics:

- Number of people signed up to the Trust
- Number of My Giving dashboard signups

Encouraging people to go from vaguely interested in effective giving to be really engaged, involved and committed seems a particularly important part of the pathway for us to focus on, because this is less viable for individual volunteers to support people on. In many cases, since donating 10% of your income for your whole life is a large commitment, people are likely to need quite a lot of time and engagement to get to the point where they are happy to do it. (There are some members who sign up very quickly, but it seems that they are cases where the person was already very motivated to give, and so we don't affect their action a great deal. Therefore it makes sense to focus on the former rather than latter group.) In order to get people involved, we need to provide ways to do so which are interesting and easy to find / obvious. If we expect people to want to have regular contact with us, it is important to show that we are really well informed and nice to interact with. Therefore, for this step to go well, it is important to ensure that our whole team is well-informed, friendly and responsive.

Main activities:

- **Make it as easy and convenient as possible to donate to our recommended charities.** In some cases that will just mean having links to doing that on the website and in newsletters. One important way we do this is through maintaining the Giving What We Can Trust. We aim

to make it as easy and appealing to use as possible. An important part of this is making sure that people feel secure using it. A few things we are going to do over this year with the Trust: Organise an audit for the Trust (since it had more than £500,000 move through it in the financial period where that was the auditing limit). We will be aiming to send people receipts automatically when they pay into the trust. We will be trying to get tax deductibility for the trust in a larger number of countries.

- **Clear routes through the website.** We will make sure the website has clear ways to get involved - donate, sign-up to the newsletter and join. Make sure that there are natural flows through pages towards taking action. The website rebuild will mean that it will be easier for us to A/B test these.
- **Regular calls to action on the newsletter, social media and the blog.**
- **Make it easy to meet others people interested in effective giving.** People tend to be motivated by connections with others, so making sure they have the opportunity to interact with like-minded people seems crucial in getting people to take action. Increasing the number of chapters, and supporting them to put on regular events, will mean that there are more places in the world where it's easy for people to meet up with like minded people. We will also try to help people to meet up with people in their area - for example by better advertising where our chapters are.
- **Make clear how friendly and well-informed our community and team is.** We need to make sure our community is one that people would like to get involved in. We will therefore continue having personal blog posts about people's stories, and maintain a good 'people' page. We will ensure that our team is well-informed, and try to make sure they're visible - eg writing blog posts on our blog and the EA Forum, so that people feel they know us and are happy to contact us. We will also try to make clear how thorough the research behind our recommended charities is and what the most important ongoing debates and open questions are, in order to encourage people to engage.
- **Encourage volunteering.** Many people like the idea of volunteering with an organisation before committing money, in order to get to know what they're doing and the people. We have many areas it would be helpful to have volunteers helping on, and have found volunteers to be very useful in the past. Therefore, we will be continuing to try to find the best ways to encourage people to become volunteers, and to support them in being so. For example, we will be recruiting a number of volunteers to be chapter mentors over the next few months, to support the new chapters we are setting up. This will include talking to people when they first join about whether they would like to volunteer.

Important learning:

- We'll be moving most of the front end of the website from Drupal to being static pages in order to make A/B testing pages easier
- Measure the extent particular calls to action work (eg if we suggest donating to the Trust in the newsletter, keep track of whether we get a bump in donations to the Trust, and see if people clicked through from the newsletter).

- Ask members what their impression of the community is. This will likely be skewed since we'd expect people who join to have on average a fairly positive view of the community. Another interesting group to contact would therefore be people who did Try Giving in the past and did not continue. We would like to better understand the reasons for this, and plan to send a survey out early next year.

D) Encouraging people to become a part of Giving What We Can
(Regular contact $\Longrightarrow$ Substantial commitment)

Metrics:

- Number of new members
- Number of people signing up to Try Giving for the first time

As well as similar kinds of factors to those which seem important to get people involved (discussed above), we have found in the past that many people are more likely to join if given a specific nudge towards joining - either a specific question about whether they have considered it, or a more general prompt like the online pledge event students held in Dec 2014. Doing these often feels awkward, and is therefore less likely to happen organically among volunteers than other things (although the student event shows that it does sometimes).

Main activities:

- **Individual outreach (and recruitment for that).** We have previously done rounds of concertedly reaching out to individuals who have shown interest in effective giving and Giving What We Can. This seemed to be an effective use of time, but the numbers involved were fairly low, so we would like to experiment further. It would be ideal to have one person who is responsible for knowing as many as possible of the people who are at some point on the pathway to joining GWWC, and at what points it might be useful for them to have questions answered / be prompted / be introduced to others to talk to etc. We aim to hire a staff member to take charge of this. Ideally, they would also reach out to influential people who seem likely to be interested in the ideas.
- **Encourage chapters to focus more on people pledging.** Encourage mentors to talk to chapters about the number of people in their chapter who have joined, and how they might encourage people to join and do Try Giving. One part of this would be encouraging and supporting them to hold pledge panels, which seem to have worked well in the past as ways of getting people to take action.
- **Make taking action as convenient as possible.** Make it as straightforward as possible for people to donate to our recommended charities and the Trust, and to join GWWC.

Important learning:

- Experiment to find out what affects whether people join. We will try to build up information on this from talking to members, and by trying out different prompts on the newsletter, dashboards etc.
- For each of various ways of doing individual outreach (Facebook, email etc), keep track of how many people we contacted, how many people replied, and how many took an action.
- Keep track of how many members say on their joining form that they're in a chapter and how many people say they're in a chapter when talking to Alison but hadn't said that on their form. (Use that to extrapolate for people who don't talk to Alison?). Compare that to number of members chapters think they generate.

E) Supporting people to remain long-term active members
(*Substantial commitment* $\Longrightarrow$ *Long-term involvement*)

Metrics:
- Proportion of members who kept their pledge
- Proportion of new members Skyped

It is crucial to make sure that people don't just initially commit to effective giving, but actually follow through over the long-term.

Main activities:

- **Be really on top of charity recommendations.** We are moving an increasing amount of money, which increases the importance of making sure that our recommendations of charities are as good as they can be. We also need to communicate how we choose the charities and the thoroughness of the research well in order that people follow those recommendations, and make sure that we are able to answer any questions members have about which charities are more and less effective. Because of that, we are considering hiring a second researcher. We will be putting out an advert for one in this recruitment round, although we will only hire someone if we find someone really good.
- **Keep track of donations.** We will continue to ask people to report their donations (including by increasing visibility of My Giving), which allows us to track our impact as well as providing a nudge to make donations, and gives an opening for discussing charities to give to.
- **Stay in regular contact with members.** We want to make sure that members continue to feel part of Giving What We Can, and will try to find the best amount of contact to achieve that. We will also make sure that people get information about the impact they're having, either by emailing them ourselves or by making sure that the charities they donate to through the Trust do so.
- **Encouraging community feeling.** It is easier to stick to commitments if we have friends who are doing the same, and it is useful to talk to others about how to best donate. Therefore, we

will be trying to support members to get to know other members who are similar or near by. We will also try to get to know as many members personally as we can. These will be partly through providing opportunities for members to meet up - either by putting on member events ourselves, or by publicising events like Effective Altruism Global among members.

Important learning:

- Ensure that people who signal an interest in being connected with a chapter (e.g. by saying so in their signup form) are able to find their nearest group. Continue to improve the process of providing this information, particularly to new members and try givers, and update chapters on any changes.
- Learn more about how much contact members want from us, and from other members. How often would members typically like to receive a newsletter from us? What proportion of our members want to meet up in-person with each other, and with us?

Summary

In order to get to our goal of 2000 members by the end of June 2016, we intend to refine our understanding of the pathway people take to becoming members. We will focus on understanding better the steps people go through and test out different ways to facilitate those. In particular, we will rebuild the website to be more easily testable, and trial a number of different ways to reach out to people individually. Meanwhile, will continue to build support for our chapters, as they seem to be effective at attracting members.

Advisory Board

We met with our Advisory Board to discuss the review and plan. This board comprises: Catriona Mackay, a civil servant in London; Anke Hoeffler, a development economist at Oxford and Luke Ding and Mark Barnes, both previously traders in London and now full-time philanthropists.

They were broadly happy with both the review and the plan. They recommended changing the website to make it more community oriented, for example by adding a regular stream of upcoming events to the homepage. We discussed increasing our outreach to professionals, as well as supporting our professional members more (for example, by introducing them to other members in the same field and city). We will be working more on outreach to professionals with Mark. We discussed staff retention, as being an important consideration with which we've had trouble in the past. The advisors recommended increasing salaries as one possible way to increase retention. We will be considering adopting a new salary policy in the new year. They made a number of other useful suggestions such as having a separate social media feed of what is new in development (after discussing this in the team we decided that Hauke would use his own accounts to do this), and thinking about what times of year people are likely to get pay increases and bonuses, and encourage them to donate at those times.