

TRAC Pledge Research Group

Understanding Sustainers – Survey Highlights

“Simple convenience – and a social conscience.”

Over 30% of pledges in March came from sustainers, so it’s critical for stations to understand what motivates these donors and how best to communicate with them. As its kickoff project, TRAC fielded a short online sustainer survey in Sacramento and S. Carolina. The results from 323 sustainers provide terrific insight into why stations are seeing such a big response to the sustainer pitch. As more stations participate in the survey and the questions evolve, TRAC will be able to provide a storehouse of quotes and ideas for creating new sustainer spots and language to keep pledge pitches fresh and authentic.

Surveyed sustainers were:

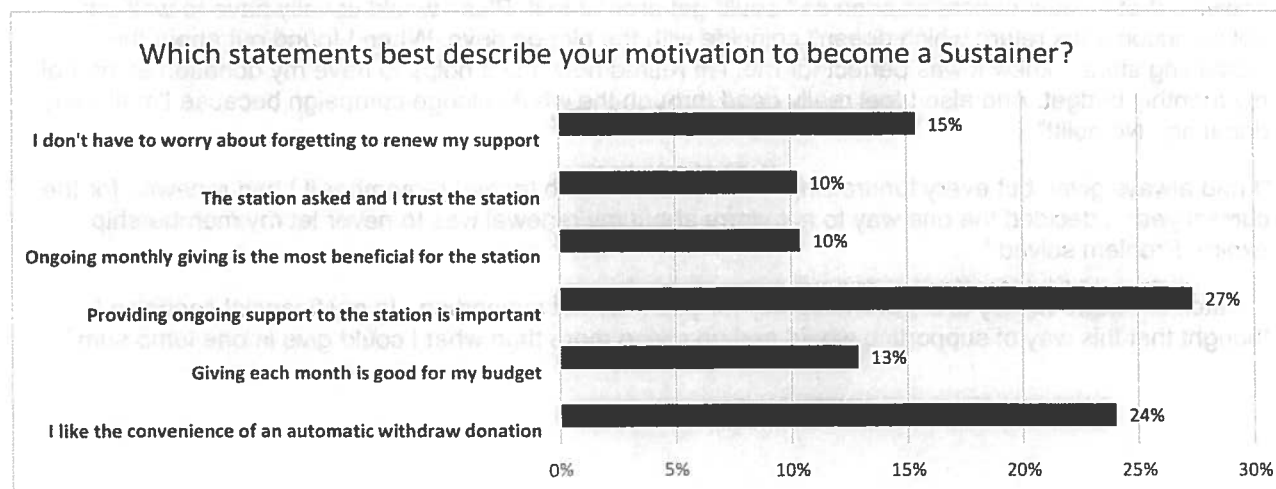
- Long term members - 66% are 5+ year members – but they are new to sustained giving.
- Boomers 46% (and most of them women).
- A bit younger! 11% were 18-49, which is higher than the 8% of pledgers this age.
- Less likely to take a thank you gift - 33% said no thanks!
- Half of them said watching the regular schedule prompted them to become sustainers
- 38% said a pledge drive prompted them to become sustainers

Sustainers endorsed the following language as having impacted their decision:

- My membership will continue without mail or phone renewal reminders - 31%
- My donation ensures that my family and I will experience all that public media has to offer - 21%
- More of my dollars can be used for programming and community outreach, and precious resources can be preserved - 18%
- Donors who support on an ongoing basis have a long-term impact on the station - 17%
- It was the only way I could afford the thank-you gift offered - 13%

“Problem Solved!”

Sustained giving is very attractive to committed PTV supporters, because it solves problems for *both* the donor and the station. The number one motivation sustainers cite is that providing ongoing support to the station is important, but a close second is simple convenience. Donors recognize and appreciate that the sustainer model helps both parties. Open ended comments often repeated these sentiments. *“It just made the whole process simpler and allows ETV to have a steady funding stream.”*





Sample of Respondent Comments on Why They Became Sustainers

It is no surprise that at the base of sustainer support we find the six core values (advertising free programming, kids' safe haven, balanced programming content, promotion of lifelong learning, arts programming and high quality programs) which are all underpinned by a deep trust in public television. The samples below give an idea of how sustainers feel about their station & and sustainer giving model.

"I don't have to put out a larger sum of money at one time. For me and my budget it's easier to do smaller monthly donations and I don't have to think about. It's done for me!!"

"I've watched many entertaining, informative, and engaging programs on KVIE over the years and always deferred my support. I felt the automatic withdrawal was a great solution."

"It allows me to give more without risking financial struggle from unexpected expenses. It eliminates the anxiety associated with wanting to give and being uncertain of what I can afford when asked to pledge. It ensures that my contribution is made, so I don't risk forgetting to send it and creating the expense of reminders."

"I have enjoyed your programming for many years and have been a member in the past. My financial/income situation has changed greatly disallowing a regular membership for some time. I am very happy to be able to have become a member again as I enjoy your evening programs greatly each week. Thank you for being able to accept small funds on a regular basis."

"I did not have to keep up with renewals and I am able to give more since it is spread over twelve months."

"Member supported - no commercials! (Well, almost none.)© Excellent programming."

"I am a long-time supporter of public radio and television, since I was a young adult in the mid-1980's. In my car and around the house, I exclusively tune into public radio, and only rarely do I watch anything other than public television. The quality and breadth of the programming, the balanced and in-depth news reporting, and the freedom from being bombarded by advertising are all qualities that have made me a devotee of public broadcasting. A Sustaining Star membership is a very easy on the budget and convenient way for me to show ETV that it can count on me for support, just as I count on it for continued outstanding programming."

"Every year I would know that I wanted to renew my membership, but I would remember as I was driving to work or just waking up in the morning. I would put it off and suffer through the pleas for donations, still knowing that I would donate as soon as I could get around to it. Plus I would usually have to wait until I got my income tax return which doesn't coincide with the pledge drive. When I found out about the sustaining stars, I knew it was perfect for me. I'm retired now and it helps to have my donation as part of my monthly budget. And also I feel really good through the whole pledge campaign because I'm already donating. No guilt!"

"I had always given but every fundraising event caused me to try and remember if I had renewed for the current year. I decided the one way to not worry about my renewal was to never let my membership expire. Problem solved."

"I watch the news nightly and have felt guilty for years for not supporting. In my financial condition I thought that this way of supporting would end up giving more than what I could give in one lump sum."