The

Essential
Donation Page
A/B Testing
Lab Manual

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

New to donation page A/B testing? This lab manual will help you plan + launch your first A/B test.

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The Author

HELLO THERE! I'M ADAM.

I'm a digital marketer who spends an unusual amount of time thinking about conversion rate optimization and A/B tests (yes, I'm *that* person).

But here's why you should care: testing can make a big difference for nonprofits by showing what really connects with donors.

In this eBook, I'll walk you through planning, launching, and reviewing your first donation page A/B test.

From picking the right place to put your mission's value proposition to finding that magic gift array combination, you'll learn how small tweaks can lead to big wins - without guesswork.

So, ready to see which version comes out on top?

Let's get after it.

CHAPTER 0

Testing is Your Nonprofit's (Digital) Fundraising North Star

Why should you even A/B test things? We've got the stats that prove the case that you simply can't afford to not do it.

Let's cut to the chase: If you're not running A/B tests on your donation page, you're leaving money—and donors—on the table. Digital fundraising isn't "set it and forget it." It's a game of constant optimization. And in a world where every click counts, not testing is like driving with your eyes closed. Sure, you might stay on the road, but chances are you'll miss the turn to greater impact.

Stats don't lie: Testing is non - negotiable

Here's the deal: nonprofits that embrace testing outperform those that don't. By a mile. Don't believe us? Let's break it down:

- **Conversion Rates Up to 150% Higher**: Simply prioritizing your value proposition at the top of your donation page can skyrocket conversions by 150%.
- **Revenue Gains of 253%**: A single-column form design (goodbye clutter!) drove a 253% lift in revenue per visitor. That's not a typo.
- **More Loyal Donors**: Monthly donors have retention rates between 70%–90%. Want more of them? Testing recurring gift options boosted conversions by over 210%.
- **Smarter Decisions, Less Guesswork**: Adding trust badges increased donations by 20%, while a clear call-to-action drove 195% more revenue.

These aren't tweaks. They're transformations. And they come from testing—not trusting your gut or "winging it."

Testing is like GPS for digital fundraising

Without testing, you're navigating your digital fundraising with an outdated map. Sure, you know the general direction, but do you really want to bet your mission on luck? Testing gives you hard data on what works (and what doesn't), so you can stop guessing and start growing.

Imagine if your donation page converted just 1% more visitors every month for a year. That's a snowball effect leading to exponential growth. Now imagine the opposite—doing nothing, staying stagnant, and watching other nonprofits race ahead.

What's the worst that could happen?

You've probably had a "brilliant" idea for your donation page at some point. Maybe it worked.

Maybe it tanked conversions so hard your team didn't want to talk about it. Without testing, you'll never know why. You'll never learn, improve, or confidently try again.

Testing isn't just about getting wins—it's about de-risking changes. It's your safety net, ensuring no tweak torpedoes your bottom line.

A culture of testing is a culture of winning

Testing isn't just a strategy; it's a mindset. The nonprofits that thrive in digital fundraising are the ones that make testing a part of their culture.

They know that every click, every donation, every insight gets them closer to fulfilling their mission.

So, ask yourself: Can you afford not to test? Because in 2024 and beyond, testing isn't optional. It's essential.

Welcome to the lab.

Let's get to work.

CHAPTER 1

The Basics of A/B Testing

Ever wonder what an A/B test actually is or why your nonprofit should be running them? Then start here.

What is A/B testing?

A/B testing is a method of comparing two versions of a webpage or app against each other to determine which one performs better.

For nonprofits, running A/B tests on donation pages and forms is crucial for sustained long-term digital fundraising growth.

It helps identify the most effective design and messaging that maximize conversions (and donations).

By experimenting with different elements such as headlines, images, and call-to-action buttons, nonprofits can optimize their donation forms and pages to increase conversion rates, ultimately leading to more donations and greater support for their missions.

Why you should run donation page A/B tests

Yes, testing is a good way of seeing if your wild donation page ideas *might* actually work.

But, you should really be thinking about using A/B testing as a way to learn more about your donors and what they want.

With key learnings from A/ B tests gathered over time, you're optimizing your donation pages to be more donor-centric while maximizing sustained growth.

From an operational standpoint, there's 3 primary reasons why your new anthem should be ***when in doubt, test it out*** 🧪".
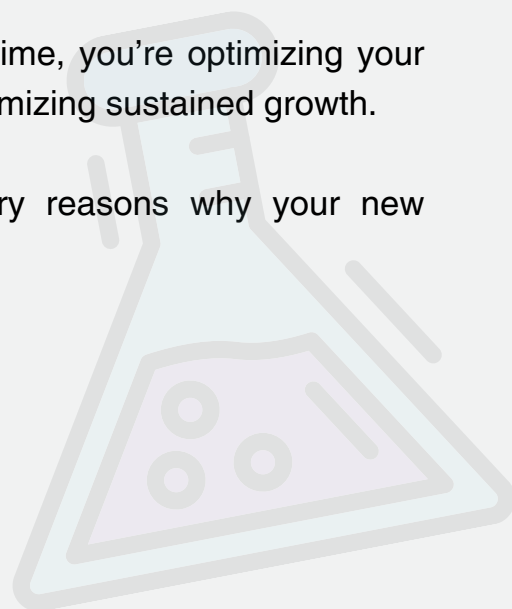
1. IMPROVE CONVERSION RATES

Yep, it's an obvious pick here... but conversions are the primary purpose of a donation page so we're going with it.

Through A/B testing, nonprofits can experiment with various elements on their donation pages to achieve higher conversion rates while tracking and understanding the changes that led to positive (or sometimes negative) outcomes.

After all, if you converted 1% more website traffic each month, how would that impact your mission?

2. GET THE MOST OUT OF WEBSITE TRAFFIC

Why aim for higher conversion rates on your donation pages?
To maximize the impact of every website visitor.

Whether you're already running fundraising campaigns or plan to start, increasing conversions is crucial. Each donation is a step in a larger donor journey, leading to greater engagement and support.

For instance, if you're investing $10,000 in a PPC campaign to drive traffic to your donation page, why not optimize that page through testing to ensure you're getting the most out of your investment?

Ultimately, your nonprofit's goals are tied to the actual funds raised through these conversions.

Higher conversion rates = more donations = greater impact.
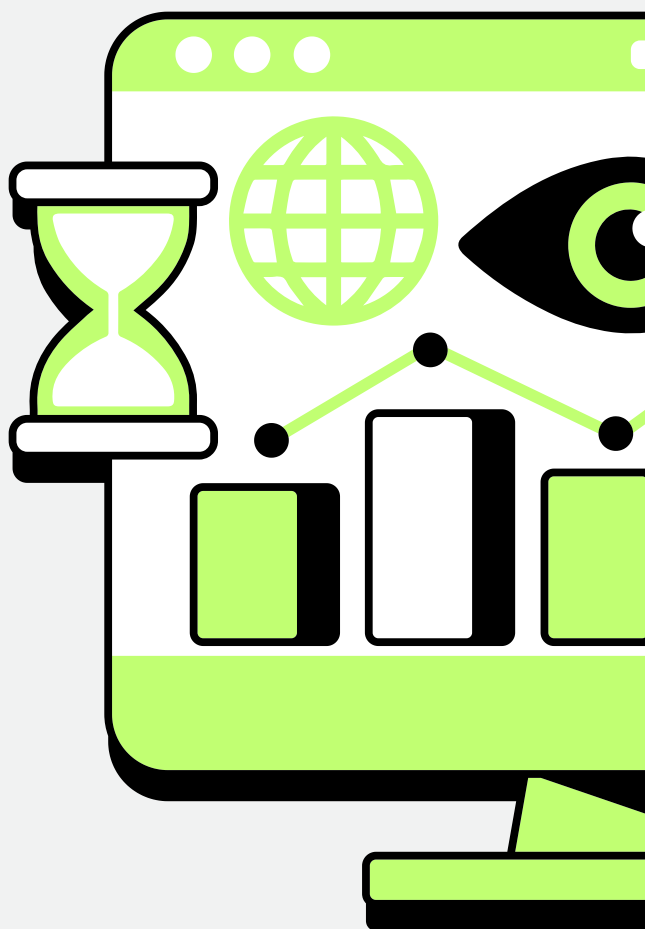
3. DITCH THE RISK OF DONATION PAGE UPDATES

We've all had that sinking feeling at one point or another.

You have a vision for what your donation page could look like, and you're incredibly confident that conversions and donations will skyrocket once you implement the changes.

You're so sure that you jump straight into the editor, make the changes, and go live.
…and then you check your donation page/campaign dashboard the following week…

Your conversion rate dropped from 4% to just 1%.

Ooof.

Instead of making drastic changes with your fingers crossed, you can significantly reduce the risk by running a simple split test first.

- Build the donation page you envisioned as a variant
- Launch it as an A/B test against your current control page using iDonate.
- Monitor the data to see if your assumptions are correct once statistical relevance has been achieved.

Best case scenario, your new version outperforms the old one.

But by de-risking the change, you can quickly revert if things don't go as planned.

CHAPTER 2

7 A/B Tests You Can Run Tomorrow

There's a near infinite things you *could* test - here's the 7 your nonprofit can start with today.

What can you A/B test?

Many nonprofit organizations base their decisions on a mix of experience, intuition, and personal opinion when determining what might resonate best with donors.

While this approach occasionally succeeds, it often falls short.

When you begin A/B testing, it's essential to set aside assumptions and focus on data-driven insights: properly interpreted data doesn't lie.

There are numerous elements you can experiment with during your testing. While you have control over the variations and content, the ultimate decision of what works best lies with your donors.

> Value proposition

It's statistically proven that including a value proposition, a section where you why someone should give and how donations impact mission progress, as the first section of your donation page elevates donor conversion by as much as 150%.

Testing value proposition content, length, and layout are all easy to accomplish and can be one of the clearest paths to success – especially if you are moving from no value prop copy to a well thought out section.

> Donation frequency

Nonprofit of all shapes and sizes are working through how to launch (or grow) their recurring giving programs.

It makes sense, as monthly giving can provide nonprofits with a reliable fundraising revenue stream.

Testing something as simple as adding a tabbed option that gives your donor the option to choose how they want to support your mission is a great thing to start testing.

> Gift array variations

When it comes to gift arrays, there's so many different combinations and values that can be use that it would be near impossible to land on the perfect combination for your donation page on the first shot.

Further, what appears to be working now may not work as well 6 months from now.

Ever wondered if 4 donation options performs better than 6 donation options on your gift array?

Test it out.

Same thing goes for finding the sweet spot for your donation page when it comes to the values you provide in your gift array.

Tripling down on this, you can even test if having your gift array shown in a ascending value order is more impactful than descending value order.

> Billing information fields

Helping potential donors build downward momentum on your donation form is key to maximizing conversions.

The key here is to make sure you only have the absolute minimum fields that are required to complete a donation – but just in case you absolutely feel that you need to have a subscription bit-box included in this section, there's an easy way to see if it's really hurting conversion rates...

Test it out.

Wondering if removing an option to process ACH in your donation form will decrease overall conversions + donation dollars?

Test it out.

> Payment security

Are you seeing that potential donors are making it all the way to payment information section of your donation form and then bailing?

One of the easiest ways to combat this is to test the impact of adding copy around processing security and adding a padlock icon.

> Re - engagement tactics

Ever wonder if the tried and true "check-out upsell" strategies from e-commerce sites would work to convert one-time donors to monthly supporters?

Sounds like a job for A/B testing.

Remember, though – this might lead to a decrease in metrics like average donation size, but the trade-off is that you are building your monthly giving program, where the retention rate hovers in the 70%-90% range.

CHAPTER 3

How to Launch Your 1st Donation Page A/B Test

You are 8 steps away from unlocking your mission's next wave of digital fundraising growth - no science degree required.

How to start A/B testing in 8 steps

Ok, we've got the basics of A/B testing down.

Next up: planning to launch your first A/B test.

For this step-by-step process, we're going to tag in our favorite testing partners, NextAfter, to outline how you should approach planning and executing your first donation page A/B test.

1. IDENTIFY YOUR GOAL
2. MAKE SURE YOU CAN MEASURE YOUR GOALS
3. CRAFT YOUR HYPOTHESIS
4. CALCULATE YOUR SAMPLE SIZE
5. DESIGN YOUR VARIANT
6. LAUNCH YOUR A/B TEST
7. VALIDATE THE TEST AND DOCUMENT
8. RUN ANOTHER A/B TEST (AGAIN AND AGAIN)
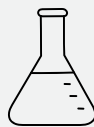
1. Identify your goal

Start your A/B test by defining clear goals based on data and observations. Effective goals come from fundraising benchmarks, donation analytics, donor feedback, and market research.

Even gut instincts can be worth testing.

2. Make sure you can measure your goals

Accurate tracking is crucial for an effective A/B test — you can't optimize what you can't measure.

Ensure you have three layers of tracking in place: traffic, conversions, and revenue.

This step can be tricky, but by using iDonate, you can track and optimize your donation page performance based on these 3 core measurements.

3. Craft your hypothesis

You've got your goal in mind and you've established that it's measurable.
It's time to draft your hypothesis.

Yes, it may feel like we're going back to high school chemistry class, but trust us – this step is crucial when assessing if the proposed test is a success, a failure, or led to completely unexpected insights all together.

NextAfter provides an easy-to-use template for drafting your hypothesis:

Because we saw (data/feedback), we expect that (change) will cause (impact). We will measure this using (metric).

Breaking this down, here's what each key input means:

- Data/feedback: This is what you have observed from your analytics data, feedback from donors, benchmark reports, or insights from your colleagues.
- Change: This is what you expect to be different between your control and treatment.
- Impact: This is the result you expect to see.
- Metric: This your primary conversion goal (i.e. form submissions, donations, revenue, etc.)

And finally, a real-life example of a donation page hypothesis:

Because we saw **low conversion rates**, we expect that **adding more value proposition copy** will cause **greater donor response**. We will measure this using **total donations**.
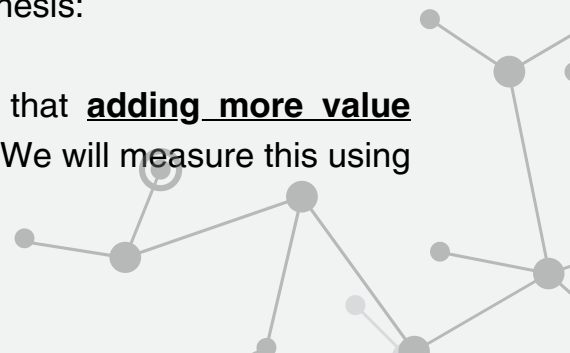
4. Calculate your sample size

Setting your sample size will be critical to ensuring your test reaches a statistically relevant outcome.

Cutting your experiment short could lead to inconclusive or incomplete results based more on random chance than true optimization.

With iDonate, you can set and track sample sizes for either traffic, donations, or specific frame of time.

How do you arrive at your ideal sample size for your experiment?

Here's a few resource that you can use to get a good read on your experiment's sample size:

- Optimizely's A/B Test Sample Size Calculator
- A/B Tasty – A/B Test Sample Size Calculator

5. Design your variant

Thankfully, ½ of the work is already done with your donation form champion variant already being in play.

From here, using iDonate's A/B testing module, you can quickly create the challenger variant that supports the hypothesis created in step 3.

Further, you can use NextAfter's checklist to make sure your variant supports your hypothesis before launching:

- Does your variant support your hypothesis?
- Are you isolating your variables? (i.e. Don't test multiple hypotheses at once)
- Can an outsider easily see the change that you've made?

6. Launch your A/B test

Since iDonate has a built-in donation form A/B testing tool with these steps built into its native workflow, all that's left is to smash the publish button and track results.

If you are working with a 3rd party tool or testing plugin, there may be extra steps to launch a successful A/B test – NextAfter provides a handy checklist to make sure that you've got all the testing bases covered:

1. Build it.
2. Review it: Before you start your a/b test, ALWAYS double check it using this pre-launch checklist:
   - Does your treatment align with your hypothesis?
   - Has someone reviewed it to easily see the change(s) you've made?
   - Have you tested the action to make sure:
     - Everything works (links go to the right page, forms submit, donation forms work)
     - Tracking is working (you can see both samples and conversions from your control and treatment)
3. Run it.

7. Validate the test and document

No matter how hard it might be, let the data lead the outcomes and next steps once your test has hit statistical relevance.

In case you are wondering when to shut down your test, here's a few key guidelines that NextAfter provides:

- Let your donation page A/B test run for at least 1 week.
- Don't let your test run for more than 8 weeks.
- Don't touch your donation pages... no matter how tempting it might be.
- Make sure each variant has the same sample size.

If you are using iDonate's A/B testing tool, you're able to easily promote the winning variant based on statistical outcomes.

In addition to this, all tests are stored for historical review and sharing out to your team.

8. Run another A/B test (again and again)

You've launched the winning variant, but the job isn't done here.

The key to prolonged, sustainable digital fundraising growth relies on your team's dedication to continual A/B testing.

Test your value proposition.

Test your gift arrays.

Test your donation form.

Test your security form copy.

Test your CTAs.

Keep going. It may seem daunting and tedious, but keep this in mind: what would your nonprofit look like if you increased conversion rates by 1% every month for a year?

Or you see a 10% increase in average gift size every 6 months?

You won't see those positive changes if you don't commit to making testing and optimization a mindset.

CHAPTER 4

A/B Testing Metrics You Need to be Tracking

You can't improve what you don't measure. We've got 4 key data points to track + how to analyze your A/B testing results.
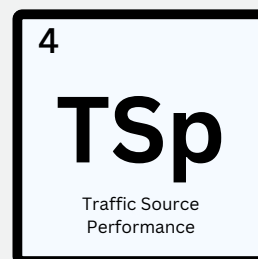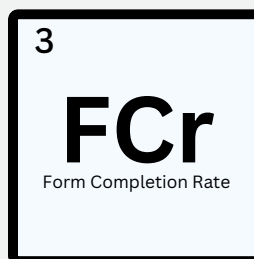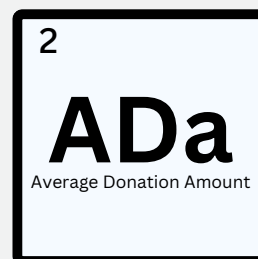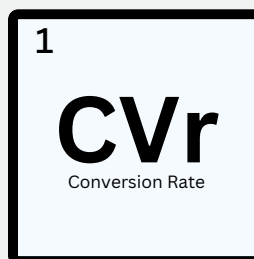
Donation page A/B testing metrics

When setting up testing metrics, it's key to remember that most nonprofits will only see enough traffic to validate testing based on donation-related numbers.

With that in mind, we've outlined a handful of key donation-focused metrics that nonprofits of any shape and size can use to launch (or refine) their A/B tests:

- **Conversion Rate**: The gold standard - like the reaction yield - measures the percentage of visitors who complete a donation.

- **Average Donation Amount**: Not just the number of donors, but the size of their contributions — akin to measuring the potency of your solution.

- **Form Completion Rate**: The efficiency of your reaction—how many visitors start and complete the donation form.

- **Traffic Source Performance**: Different reactants yield different results — compare performance across various traffic sources to see where donors are coming from.

1

CVr
Conversion Rate

2

ADa
Average Donation Amount

3

FCr
Form Completion Rate

4

TSp
Traffic Source Performance

How to analyze donation page A/B test results

After your test has been active for a while, it's time to don your lab coat and start analyzing.

The duration of your A/B test depends on various factors, so the timing for diving into the data will vary case by case.

Once you start evaluating your test, here's a simple framework to follow:

Review your goal metric(s)

First, analyze how your primary metric is trending.

- Improving: Great start—like a successful reaction.
- Declining: Not ideal, but not the end of the experiment.

Assess your progress toward any target set during the planning phase. Did you hit the target? Are you close but slightly behind? Or are you miles away, moving in the wrong direction?

At this stage, focus on the top-line data. We'll delve deeper next.

Look into related metrics that may have changed

Even though you're optimizing for one metric, dozens of others may be impacted.

Before declaring your A/B test a winner or loser based solely on the primary metric, spend time exploring other related metrics like time on page, lead quality, and donation completion rates.

Ask yourself a few high-level questions:

- Is anything significantly different with the metric?
- Are there any red flags before I end the test?
- What else could I test based on what I'm seeing?

Confirm or reject your hypothesis

After digging into the data, if your test results are statistically significant, you should be ready to "call" your hypothesis.

You have two options:

1. Confirm Your Hypothesis: Your prediction was correct, and the challenger beat the control. Declare the challenger as the champion.
2. Reject Your Hypothesis: Your prediction was incorrect, or the results are inconclusive. Declare the control as the champion or extend the test.

Come up with 5-10 new questions or ideas

This might be the most important step of all. Before closing the book on an A/B test, come up with 5-10 new ideas or questions based on what you learned.

These ideas don't need to be perfect or even make complete sense yet. What matters is continually "feeding the machine" of your A/B testing engine. If you generate five new ideas at the end of each test, your idea bank will grow quickly.

Important note: You don't need to launch every idea. Even if you implement only 10%, you'll never be stuck staring at a blank "create a new variant" screen again.

and remember: ***Always be testing.***

CHAPTER 5

10 A/B Testing Mistakes to Avoid

Take it from our experience - these are 10 of the A/B testing mistakes that your team should be avoiding.

Common donation page A/B testing mistakes to avoid

You know, everyone makes mistakes - but please, learn from some of the A/B testing lessons we've had to figure out the hard way.

- **Not running tests long enough**: Ending tests too soon is like trying to boil water without enough heat - give it time to simmer for reliable results.
- **Testing too many variables at once**: Testing multiple variables at once is like mixing too many chemicals - hard to tell which one caused the explosion.
- **Ignoring statistical significance**: Making decisions without statistically significant data is like trusting a hypothesis with no experiment - stick to the science.
- **Low traffic pages**: Testing on low-traffic pages is like trying to measure a reaction with a single molecule - ensure enough volume for meaningful data.
- **Lack of clear goals**: Starting without clear goals is like conducting an experiment with no end in mind- define your success criteria first.
- **Changing test parameters midway:** Changing your test midway is like swapping out reactants halfway through - keep your conditions stable for valid results.
- **Overlooking mobile users**: Ignoring mobile users is like only testing half your sample - ensure you consider all devices in your experiment.
- **Not segmenting data**: Failing to segment data is like ignoring different phases of matter - analyze results across different audience segments for a complete picture.
- **Ignoring user experience**: Focusing solely on conversions without considering user experience is like achieving yield but ruining the lab - balance both for optimal outcomes.
- **Failing to implement learnings**: Gathering results without implementing changes is like finding a breakthrough and keeping it in the lab - apply your findings for real-world impact.
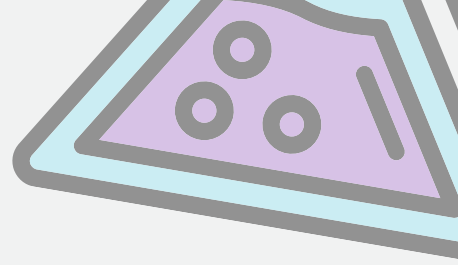-

CHAPTER 6

FAQs

You got questions, we might have answers.

Donation Page A/B Testing FAQS

How long should I run my donation page A/B test for?

Remember when we discussed how to figure out your A/B tests ideal sample size? Time to get to it.

The sample size calculator will go a long way to figuring out how long your A/B test should run for your donation forms and pages.

Don't forget - It depends on many factors, so there's no universal answer. With enough traffic and a big impact, you might get results in days.

Can I run more than 1 test at a time?

You totally can run more than 1 donation form/page test at a time.

Keep in mind, though, that depending on the type of tests you are trying to run at the same time, it could be ideal to combo-break your tests in succession.

This would potentially allow you to build positive momentum and continue to build on succesfull tests consecutively.

What success rate should I be aiming for?

For nonprofits optimizing their donation forms and pages, aim for an A/B test success rate between 20-30%. Achieving this balance is crucial, as it's more nuanced than exact science.

If your success rate exceeds 50%, it indicates that your original pages may lack several best practices and can be significantly improved without extensive A/B testing.

Conversely, a success rate below 10% suggests that your targets might be too ambitious or that your tests are too specific (e.g., changing just one word in a subheading).

What if my A/B test doesn't improve conversions?

Not all tests will succeed. Document learnings, and use them to refine future tests. Every result provides insights into donor behavior.

How long should I run an A/B test?

Aim for at least two weeks to capture a full donor cycle or longer if your site has lower traffic. You'll want enough data to see significant trends.

How do I know if my test results are statistically significant?

Use a statistical significance calculator or testing software to ensure results aren't due to chance. A 95% confidence level is common for reliable results.

What's a good conversion rate for donation pages?

Conversion rates for the industry hover in the 13-19% range, with many nonprofits aiming for a CVR % of 20% or more.

How do I avoid disrupting donor experience while testing?

Avoid drastic changes that may confuse users. Small, clear adjustments keep the user experience stable while providing insights.

Ready to get into the lab?

Build your first A/B test in 5 min with iDonate.

BUILD AN A/B TEST

USE THE CHAT-GPT GUIDE