

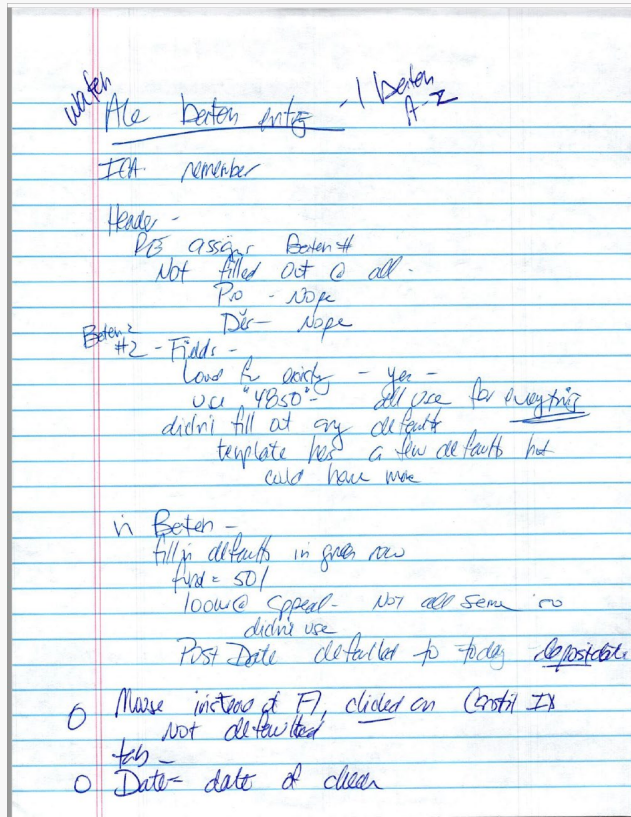
Optimizing Gift Entry Flow

Bill Connors, CFRE

Independent Consultant on Raiser's Edge NXT and version 7

BillConnors.com

Why? Don't we already know all this?




 Consulting and Training on Raiser's Edge®

Gift Processing Review at [REDACTED] Foundation

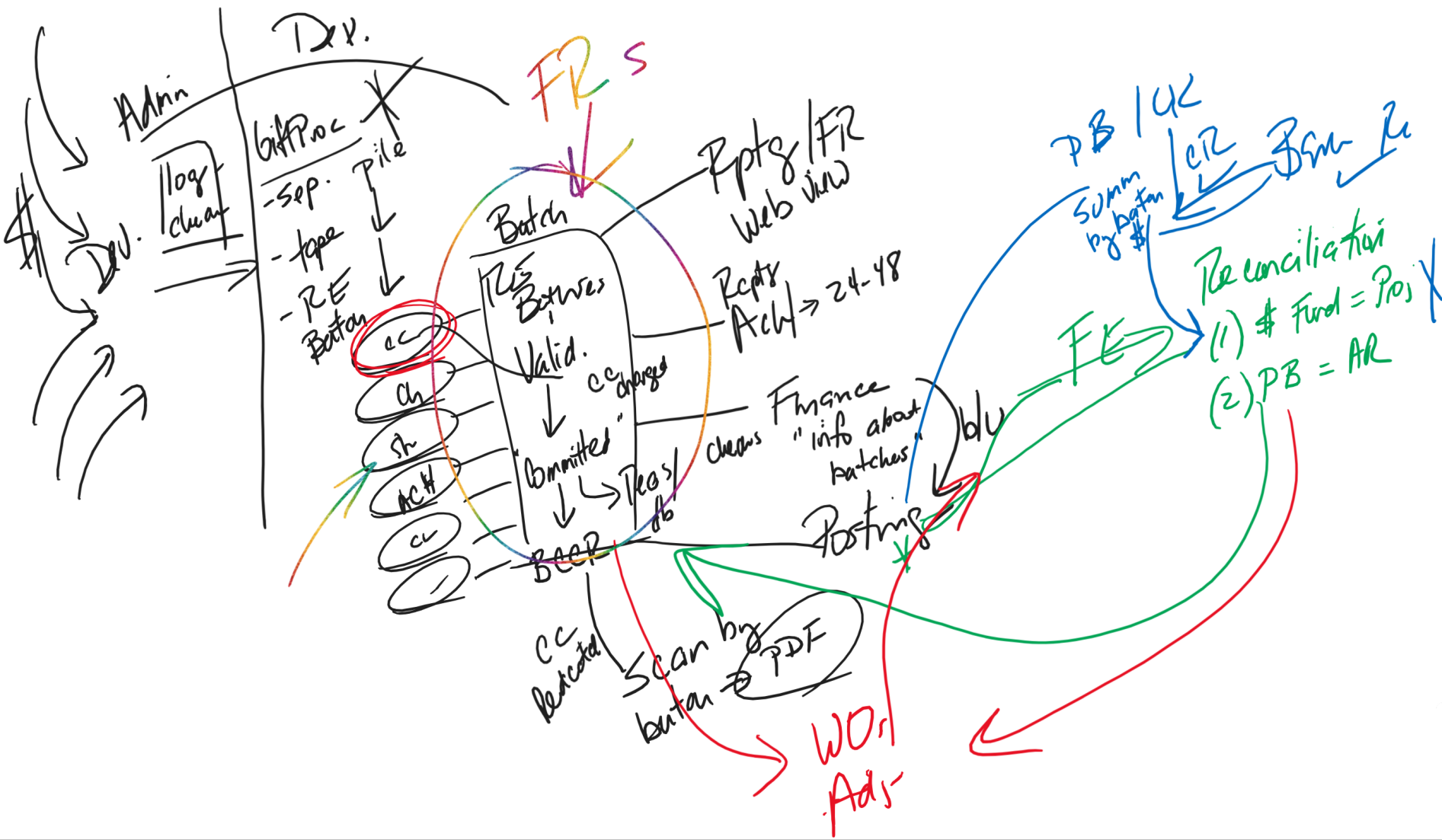
May 20, 2024

The following are brief bullets from the notes I took during my onsite visit on Wednesday and Thursday, May 15 and 16, 2024, meeting with the Foundation's Donor Relations (gift processing) team. The purpose of the visit was to look at current processes for opportunity for improvement in the gift processing workflows and to be a resource to the team for their questions.

99. Kudo: Sounds like you have far fewer issues knowing what to do with white mail and major gifts that arrive than most organizations have.

Thank you again for the opportunity to work with you!

© 2024 Bill Connors, CFRE – Confidential and Not for Distribution beyond staff of [REDACTED] foundation. Page 11



Agenda

- Chronological flow of data and steps
- Recommendations, tips and tricks
- Focuses: (1) efficiency and (2) financial controls
- Will go quickly to cover a lot, but won't cover everything
- Going to use Checks as an example

Online Giving Continues to Make Gains

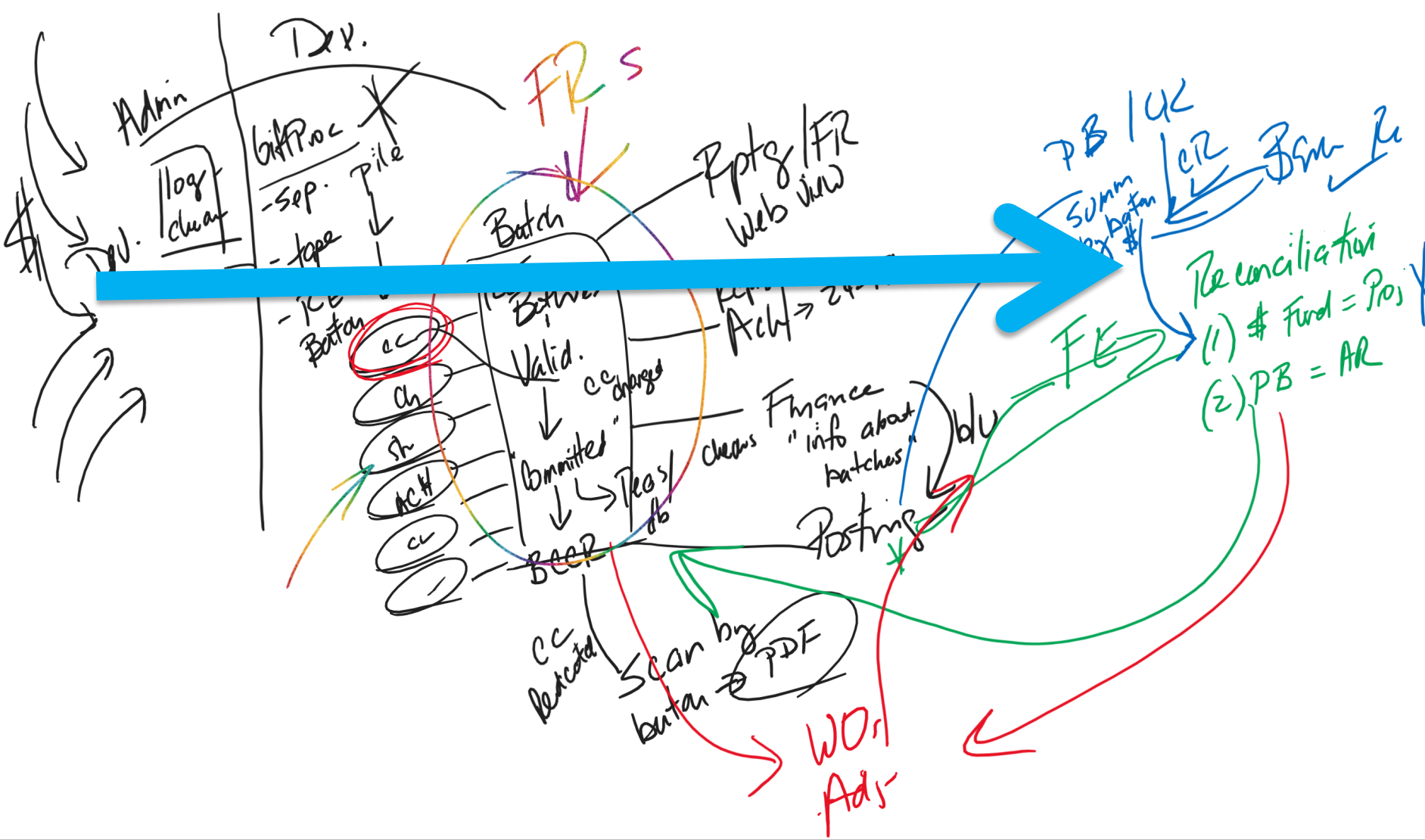
The percentage of charitable giving donated through online sources rose from almost 8% in 2022 to over 12% in 2023. Total Online Giving remained stable during 2023, with no statistical change.

https://live-blackbaud-institute.pantheonsite.io/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/BBI_2023_Trends_Spotlight_2024-Final.pdf

Gift Arrival



- These days, lots of ways gifts arrive: mail, online, wire transfers/direct deposits, stock transfers, hand delivery, third parties, etc.
- Mail should go to the fundraising department *first* (development, advancement)
- Finance should not open, scan, deposit, or do anything with checks – they should not even have them – until delivered *from* the fundraising department



Check Logging



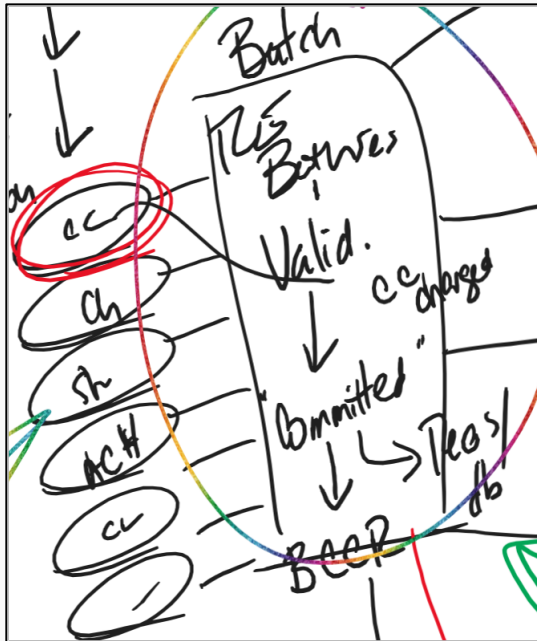
- For checks only
- Financial control tool usually required by auditors
- Created by someone other than gift processor
- Hard copy log or printed from spreadsheet
- Signed and dated, filed away
- Not looked at unless a problem; not compared to anything

Creating Gift Entry Piles



- Prepare backup material for entry
- Secure, uninterrupted physical area
- Separate into piles for RE batches
- Principles:
 - A batch = a deposit
 - Efficiency, but don't overdo it
- Original checks stay with collateral
- Print a tape from an adding machine
 - # of entries
 - Total \$ amount

RE Batch Entry



- Again, a batch = a deposit
- Batch in database view except for recurring gifts and web view donation forms
- Do not look up constituent records before or during gift entry
- All gifts booked in the financial system should be entered into a batch

“Posting”

- In RE, gift entry is called “gift entry,” not “posting”
- In database view, we “commit” batches
- In web view, we “approve” batches
- “Posting” means to communicate the gift information to Finance electronically or manually

Batch Header

The screenshot shows the 'Gift Batch Setup' window with the 'Batch Header' tab selected. The window is divided into several sections:

- Batch Statistics:** A table showing current batch statistics.

Running number of gifts:	0	Number of matching gifts:	
Running amount:	\$0.00	Matching gift amount:	\$
Created on:	9/4/2024 4:45:57 PM	Times committed:	
Last changed on:		Last committed on:	
- Batch number:** 4425 (highlighted in blue)
- Batch category:** General (dropdown menu)
- Projected no. of gifts:** 26
- Projected amount:** \$9,360.00
- Automatically display:** (dropdown menu)
- Description:** Checks rcvd 9/4/24
- Options:**
 - Batch is recurring (with History button)
 - Include batch for bank depositing
 - Other users may access this batch

At the bottom of the window are navigation buttons: < Back, Next >, Cancel, Save, and Data Entry.

- **Batch number:** no year, no hyphen, no date, just a counter
- Use **Projected no.** and **amount**
- Fill in brief description

Batch Templates

The screenshot shows the 'Gift Batch Setup' dialog box with the 'Fields' tab selected. The 'Batch Header' section contains '1 Batch Header', '2 Fields', and '3 Defaults'. Below this, it says 'Select the fields to be used for data entry in this batch.' There are two columns of fields: 'Gift fields' and 'Data entry fields'. The 'Gift fields' list includes: Acknowledge, Acknowledge date, Amount, Amount bills, Amount coins, Anonymous, Appeal, Authorization code, Bank, Campaign, Cardholder name, Check date, Check number, Constituent Code, Constituent ID, Constituent Name, Credit card number, Credit Type, and Date. The 'Data entry fields' list includes: Constituent Name, Amount, Date, Type, Fund, GL post date, and GL post status. There are 'Up' and 'Down' buttons next to the 'Data entry fields' list. At the bottom, there are buttons for '< Back', 'Next >', 'Cancel', 'Save', and 'Data Entry'.

The screenshot shows the 'Gift Batch Setup' dialog box with the 'Defaults' tab selected. The 'Batch Statistics' section shows: Running number of gifts: 0, Number of matching gifts: 0, Running amount: \$0.00, Matching gift amount: \$, Created on: 9/4/2024 4:51:22 PM, Times committed: , Last changed on: , Last committed on: . Below this, there are fields for 'Batch number' (set to 'Check Entry Template'), 'Batch category' (set to 'Templates'), 'Projected no. of gifts', 'Projected amount', and 'Automatically display'. There is a 'Description' field with the text 'Template for checks. Do not use this batch for any direct gift entry!'. At the bottom, there are checkboxes for 'Batch is recurring' (unchecked), 'Include batch for bank depositing' (unchecked), and 'Other users may access this batch' (checked). There are also buttons for '< Back', 'Next >', 'Cancel', 'Save', and 'Data Entry'.

- Create and use templates!
- Load from Existing Batch...templates! Not a former batch with gifts, but templates!
- Name the templates in the **Batch number** field
- Select and sort the fields for the batch on the template Fields tab (no Check Date or Number)
- Enter **Default Values** on the template true for all or most uses of the template (e.g., Type = Cash, Payment method = Personal Check)
- Mark **Hide?** for all defaults always true (e.g., Gift Type)

Batch Defaults

Gift Batch Setup

1:Batch Header | 2:Fields | 3:Defaults

You can enter a value in any of the fields below to create a default value for that field.

General

Field	Default Value	Hide?
Constituent Name		<input type="checkbox"/>
Amount		<input type="checkbox"/>
Date	9/4/2024	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Type	Cash	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
GL post date	9/4/2024	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
GL post status	Not Posted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pay method	Personal Check	<input type="checkbox"/>
Campaign		<input type="checkbox"/>
Appeal		<input type="checkbox"/>
Package		<input type="checkbox"/>
Fund		<input type="checkbox"/>
Reference		<input type="checkbox"/>

< Back Next > Cancel Save Data Entry

- Enter further defaults for this batch
- Hide defaults true for all gifts

Batch Entry Tips

- Use the Constituent Window
 - Turn on from the View menu
 - Set up from the Constituent menu
- Get training and experiment with database view Batch – it is the single most loved tool of RE, even more so than Query (Function keys)
- If gifts aren't sufficiently coded, “work with” fundraisers on that; for example:
 - Printed appeal and package codes; Constituent ID, too!
 - Gift Entry Warning note and business rule
 - No emails from fundraisers!
- Always Validate before you attempt to Commit

Committing a Batch



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "Commit Gift Batch" with two tabs: "1: General" (selected) and "2: Payments". Under "Step 1: Enter general information", there are several options:

- Validate batch before committing
- Create gift query of committed gifts
- Create a new batch of exceptions
- Create control report: Summary (dropdown menu) Preview Print
- Delete batch after committing
- Automatically apply gifts to pledges and recurring gifts
- Only apply gifts to pledges and recurring gifts with the same fund(s)

- Validate again
- Do not create a query!
 - Use the default batch <ask> query or build your own
- Preview the control report, don't Print
 - Usually Fundraising keeps a copy
 - Usually Finance gets a copy

Reporting to Fundraising Team about Gifts



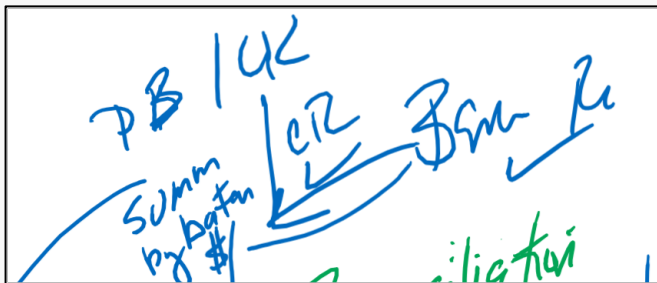
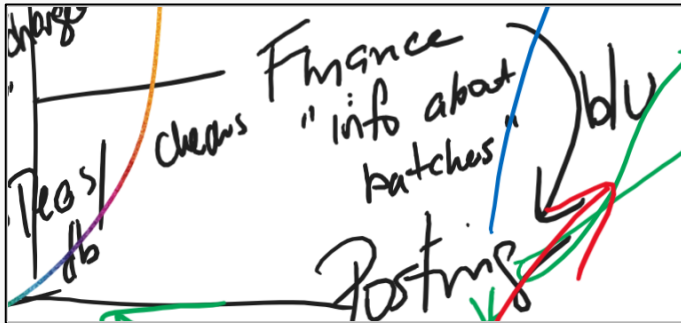
- Do not run or email reports to fundraisers about the day's gifts
 - It's inefficient
 - It's a security issue
- Instead, they should be using the web view *daily* and they can get from there
 - Work Center > Gifts: gifts of most relevance to them
 - Lists > Gifts: all the gifts they want to see

Receipting and Acknowledging



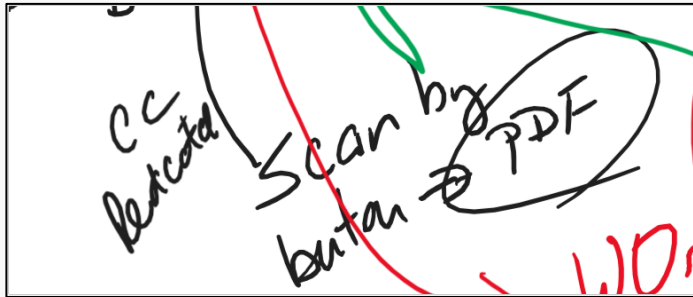
- Do once per day: “best practice” is all gifts are acknowledged within 24-48 hours
- Do only once per day; do not do per batch, do the whole day at once
- Multiple tools available between the two views, but the most common tool is still **Donor Acknowledgement Letters**
 - Learn conditional statements
 - Learn conditional merging
- Mark gifts Acknowledged!
- Do not make copies of letters

Posting to Finance



- Give checks and BCCR to Finance in a secure manner – or other backup
- Otherwise, post multiple batches, not one batch a time
- Ideally, electronically post
 - Do at least weekly
 - Finance does
- Otherwise post by report
 - Ideally an RE posting report
 - Otherwise some other canned report

Electronically Store Backup Material

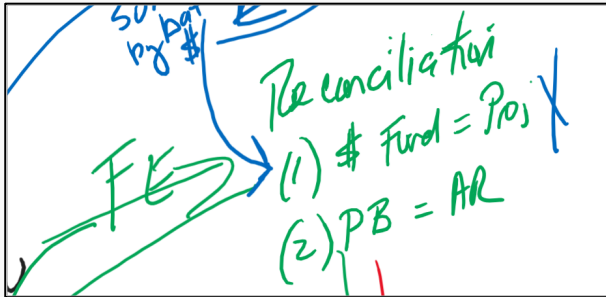


"The check is inherently insecure," Anchin said.
"Handing over a check is akin to sharing a screenshot of bank details alongside a Venmo transfer — no one would consider this safe."

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/19/the-death-of-the-personal-check-retailers-move-toward-check-zero.html>

- Scan only the checks the auditor requires, do not scan every check
 - Redact account info on those scanned
- Destroy credit card info, don't rely on a black marker
- Invest in high-speed scanners with document feeders that scan both sides at once
- Shred the originals once scanned
- Don't waste lots of time organizing files of scans and PDFs

Monthly Reconciliation



- Regardless of financial system, you should reconcile each month
- Even electronic posting is not a substitute for monthly reconciliation
- You should reconcile two areas:
 - **RE Fund total** = project revenue total
 - This also reconciles the dollars
 - **RE Pledge balance** = account receivable balance (Pledge Status Report, Format 2)

Some Final Ideas

- Create defaults for funds and campaigns on appeals to speed up data entry and accuracy
- Don't overuse or repeat data in Reference
- Invest in equipment to save staff time: envelope openers, multiple monitors, good printers, fast scanners, remote deposit machines
- Consider physical security as well, such as real safes (not flimsy locked filing cabinets) and locked doors
- Create documentation – not a lot of “click here” and screenshots, but explanations why
- Cross train and rotate duties

Thank you!

Bill Connors, CFRE

Independent Consultant and Trainer on Raiser's Edge NXT and version 7

415.377.9197

bill@billconnors.com

billconnors.com

Free documents that do **not** ask you to give your contact information are available at billconnors.com/resources, including:

- “How Would You Enter THIS Gift?” about Soft Credits, DAFs, etc.,
and
- “Preparing RE for a Capital Campaign – Gift Management”