most influential

50 MOST INFLUENTIAL

There are more new names, more women and a hell of a lot of social media stars. Why, then, does this year’s Fundraising 50 Most Influential feel so familiar? CELINA RIBEIRO reports

In a year in which 19 new faces have made a showing in the 50 Most Influential it is one of the sector’s most familiar ones that has taken out first place in the poll.

Ken Burnett, of Relationship Fundraising, Burnett Works, Clayton Burnett and numerous International Fundraising Congresses fame, has topped our annual poll which seeks to anoint the most influential figures in the fundraising world.

But, as ever, does the true influence lie somewhere else in the poll? Soon after this year’s voting opened, one Mark Phillips (that’s @markyphillips to you) wrote on his Queer Ideas blog for fundraisers to vote with their hearts. The twittering Bluefrog chief executive made quite an impact: nine of the ten people he listed as his personal most influential fundraisers have made it into the top 50.

Phillips leads a tweeting, blogging charge on this year’s poll in which 16 of the 50 Most Influential are active Twitter users. Twelve, including Mr Burnett, are bloggers. The Twitterati have indeed grown in number, influence or propensity to vote compared to last year when only five got into the top 50.

As ever, women remain under-represented in the poll, but we do have a record number of women appearing in the top 20 (six), which is double that of last year. The number of women in the entire 50, however, remains static: 14 this year, 14 last year and 13 in 2009.

How the poll works
Fundraising opened the 50 Most Influential poll in mid-April and closed it for voting in early June. During that time we had hundreds of votes, with individuals ranking the ten (or less) most influential people in their fundraising. Once the poll closes, Fundraising tallies up the number of votes each person has received in the different positions. When someone votes for an individual as their first-most influential person, that vote is assigned ten points, their second-most is assigned nine points, the third assigned eight points and so on. These points are then added up and the person with the most points wins. Simples, no?

Ken Burnett (8)
Consultant, writer, speaker
When it comes to fundraising veterans, there are few whose shadows loom quite so large over contemporary fundraising as Mr Relationship Fundraising, Ken Burnett. While it seemed we lost him to French farm life for a while, Burnett is back consulting with mate Alan Clayton and supporting the online fundraising library SOFII
Mark Phillips (17) Managing director, Bluefrog
The influence of Mark Phillips is all over the 2011 Most Influential list. The blogger, Twitterer (and, also, co-founder of agency Bluefrog) wrote a blog following the launch of the poll calling for people to really think about their votes. Phillips listed his personal ten most influential – nine of which now feature in our 2011 top 50.

Joe Saxton (5) Driver of ideas, npfSynergy
The sector’s one and only ‘driver of ideas’ has climbed closer to the top spot on this poll, which he once dominated for three years running. Saxton has been back in the spotlight more this year, particularly on the issues of mobile fundraising, the proposed abolition of cheques and what the public consider an admin cost.

Michael Naidu (20) Assistant director of fundraising – individual giving, Mencap
Naidu has been lurking in the ‘teens’ and ‘twenties’ region of the Top 50 over the past few years, but this year he finally cracks the top ten. Chair (or acting chair) of the PFRA since 2007, Naidu is another vocal advocate of face-to-face fundraising and a one-time Fundraising magazine Fundraiser of the Year winner.

Milly Ahmed (4) Independent fundraiser
The former joint managing director of Gift Fundraising is currently working on bringing out a new fundraising venture later this year, but before she left the face-to-face agency she oversaw Gift’s launch of SMS for regular giving on the street. The long-time face-to-face advocate’s new venture will reportedly focus on other areas of fundraising.

Imogen Ward (-) Director of marketing and communications, Merlin
Since Ward joined Merlin eight years ago, the charity has seen a massive increase in its income, from just £1m to £60m. Ward, who also sits on the Institute’s fundraising policy board, is working on a programme of more growth for years ahead. This is her first appearance in the poll.

Tanya Steele (13) director of supporter relations and fundraising, Save the Children
All eyes are on Steele’s charity this year after the development organisation launched a three-year campaign to raise an additional £150m. Steele’s had quite an impact on Save the Children since joining, and looks set to become a standard-setter in fundraising for years to come.

Mick Aldridge (1) Chief executive, Public Fundraising Regulatory Association
Last year’s top-place-getter, Aldridge has slid down the poll slightly this year. While the PFRA has been relatively quiet this year so far in terms of mainstream media ‘exposes’, Aldridge retains his influence – perhaps a result of being the longest-serving chief executive of any of the three main fundraising umbrella bodies.

Mark Astarita (10) Director of fundraising, British Red Cross
As if he didn’t already have enough to do running the fundraising at the British Red Cross, which brings in something like £120m in voluntary income a year, Astarita recently stepped up to fill the position of chair of the Institute of Fundraising for a 12-month period.

David Cameron (-) Prime Minister
Cameron trumped his Conservative colleagues in this year’s polling, gaining vastly more votes than the minister for civil society and the Chancellor. It’s the first time for a while that a politician has featured so highly in the poll, suggesting that fundraisers view his government’s spending cuts and efforts to incentivise giving as having a rather large impact on their work.

Rachel Beer (-) Consultant, Beautiful World
There are Twitterers and there are Twitterers. Beer, the inventor of npfTweetup, is a proper Twitterer. She’s also a consultant and speaker, working with some of the UK’s biggest charities – the likes of RNLI, RSPCA and the like. Not content with just those strings to her bow, she also founded The Charity Place.
Influential. Until April this year Cohen was interim director of the performance programme at Charities Evaluation Services, but generally works as a consultant for multiple charities from across the sector.

Graham joined Amref last year after more than a decade in fundraising. Within that time she’s worked also as a consultant, led the national fundraising team at Comic Relief and launched the first ‘Have a Heart’ Appeal on Heart Radio. She’s now hoping to lead Amref on a period of growth and innovation.

Veterans, people with learning disabilities, women striving towards self-sufficiency in the developing world, tigers – whoever or whatever your charity works to support, protect, rescue or repair. Without the stories, aspirations, hardships and successes of charity beneficiaries fundraisers would simply not exist.

Marvell has been a constant presence since joining two years ago. In particular he has been pushing the organisation’s big continuous professional development agenda and leading on the effort to get more fundraisers on to trustee boards.

One half of the consultancy Clayton Burnett, which huddles fundraisers away for intensive work days by some lovely Scottish loch, if you’ve been to a fundraising plenary session in the past five years, you’ll likely have heard him speak. He’s also holding the fort as chief exec of telephone fundraising agency Relationship Marketing.

The charity announced a strategic plan involving massive expansion and fundraising growth. George is also chair of legacy promotion organisation Remember A Charity, which last year sparked a coordinated international legacy-promotion effort.

Longfoot is one half of the founding team of Open Fundraising, which has been running for nigh-on three years, but which has been pulling in some big clients – WWF, Christian Aid, British Heart Foundation – Longfoot and his team have some big boys on their books. One of their projects this year brought regular giving to SMS donations.

It’s only right that the person responsible for raising money at the charity which raises the most voluntary income in the country gets a mention in this poll, n’est pas? Taylor, who leads a team of 2,000 fundraisers at CRUK, also became an Institute of Fundraising trustee this year.

If Nick Hurd has been anything for the sector, it’s consistent. Unlike Labour, which changed its third sector ministers like they were jeans from Primark, Hurd has stuck at his portfolio for years. With the review of the Charities Act 2006 due later this year, he could prove even more influential yet. He’s still six positions below his boss, though.

Referred to by Mark Phillips as no less than “the king of the charity newsletter”, the American author of four fundraising books makes his debut appearance in the poll. He belongs to that contingent of fundraising consultants – well-represented in this poll – who travel the world, speaking at conferences and hosting workshops.

Brooks is one of the veteran fundraisers who has taken to social media with the enthusiasm of an intern on a three-month placement. An avid Twitterer and writer of the Future Fundraising Now blog, Brooks has been working the sector for over two decades. The Seattle-based fundraiser also hosts a podcast called ‘Fundraising is beautiful’.

A chief executive on the Most Influential list? Yes, it’s true. But Hughes-Hallett is no ordinary chief executive; the Marie Curie Cancer Care chief has made a big splash this year as chair of the Philanthropy Review, dealing with government and the sector alike on the issue of how to incentivise giving.
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