

# The Matching Mirage

Why matching can create donor skepticism and what we can do about it.

Donation matching is one of fundraising's most effective tools to inspire generosity, but as it grew in popularity, its meaning blurred, losing some of the clarity that made it so powerful. Following the [State of Donation Matching report](#), MatchNice conducted a live poll of 122 nonprofit professionals to capture their honest perceptions of how they believe matching works today. The results are eye opening.

## Getting Matching Right

Nonprofits can lead with integrity and impact by focusing on three simple donation matching principles.

- 1 Easy**  
Make it effortless to set up matches, invite matchers, and educate donors.
- 2 Transparent**  
Let donors see real-time progress and impact without extra steps or confusion.
- 3 Accessible**  
Make matching visible and available on your website and any donation page.

### Misunderstanding

**52%** of nonprofits said that they **didn't know the difference** between a match and a challenge. Let's break it down.



### Match

A **match** is when a donor commits to multiplying (e.g., 1:1, 2:1) donations as they come in, contingent on others giving. Matches only happen when others donate.

VS

### Challenge

A **challenge** is a set amount, pledged or pre-secured, used to motivate others. It may be conditional on a goal, but is often fully committed and framed as a motivational tool.

**Both can work—when they're clear.** Whether funds are pre-secured or truly contingent shapes trust, builds urgency, and inspires generosity. Donors respond to real-time giving, not a marketing spin.

### Inside Perception

The confusion is causing **overall skepticism**. These figures show how nonprofits perceive live matches today.



**55%** 

**don't believe that matches are truly contingent on donations** when promoted to donors.

**70%** 

**believe nonprofits promote previously secured funds are misrepresented as matches.**

**Donors value clarity.** When matches are clearly explained and visibly aligned with donor intent, they spark momentum and trust. Lack of clarity, even when unintentional, can dilute the power of giving.

## Redefining Matching, Together

The **best matching campaigns are built on trust**. When nonprofits lead with clarity and honesty, donors respond with generosity. The future of matching is transparent, real-time, and donor-aligned, and MatchNice makes it easy to get there.



[See how MatchNice uses Certified Matches to build trust and boost generosity.](#)