



This article is the first in a series of articles on year end giving for both donors and nonprofits.

Together we make a difference.

Labor Day has come and gone and school has started now is the time all area Not for Profits gear up for year-end appeals. This is an important opportunity because studies that show that over 50% of charitable giving happens in December and most especially do not put off your appeal *until December!*

As donors you may have noticed that last December your inbox was flooded with nonprofit emails begging you to give. Often a letter in December is too little too late.

So what is the best way to do year end fundraising?

Generous year end giving isn't merely the result of a barrage of appeals and emails in the last weeks of the year - successful year end fundraising takes strategic planning.

Here are 3 tips to help you jumpstart your fall fundraising.

1. Draft your fundraising letters

Summer is the perfect time to get your fundraising letters ready! I'm still a big fan of regular mail. It gives people something physical to hold and use as a reminder. Snail mail is still a proven foundation for developing online giving too!

I recommend sending three letters at these times:

- **Late August/early September**
People are getting back to the regular patterns of school and work so your letter is more likely to be received, read, and responded to.
- **Early to mid-November**
In the USA, this letter could be a Thanksgiving themed fundraising letter. "In this season of Thanksgiving, we are grateful for..."
- **Mid-December**
I like having one last letter hit mailboxes in mid-December. The holiday season gets busy. People won't always remember the November letter. So get something in their hands that they can put in their bills-to-pay stack so they'll be able to donate when at the end of December.

As with anything you read about fundraising, you need to test this for your organization. But this generally works well.

2. Look for ways to reinforce letters with social media

Your donors don't live solely online or off-line so your fundraising needs to be multi faceted. You should be taking the opportunity to reinforce your fundraising letter themes in all your social media outlets.

One way could be to simply tweet or post this to your social media accounts: *"XYZ Nonprofit supporters: check your mailbox for our latest update!"* and include a link to a donation page as well.

Another could be to use the same theme as your letter. If you're fundraising for land conservation, perhaps you build an "adopt-an-acre" campaign for your fundraising letters. In the fall, you could simply use the same "call to action" in social media and drive people to a specifically themed donation page. *Make sure you are ready with landing pages for each request for the donor to find you.*

3. Harness the power of volunteers

People expect us to promote our year end fundraising. But they often take it more seriously when one of their friends promotes our year end giving appeal.

Identify your organizations' best friends. During the next few weeks keep a post-it note on your desk and write down the name of people that regularly seem to share and interact with your content. Include people that show up at your office or volunteer or seem to always be telling others about your nonprofit.

Ask them to assist you by helping you shape your fall fundraising appeal. Ask them for their email address (if you don't have it) so you can keep in touch with them. Then run your fundraising letter theme by them. Ask them if they'd help share those messages when the time comes.

Your goal is to make it ridiculously easy for them to help share your message. So as your letters get sent and your updates get posted, be sure to *email* them notifications and links to the respective updates.

If 2012 was any indication of what 2013 will look like, even more charities will be flooding people's inboxes at the end of the year. But if you do these three simple steps this summer and you'll be well on your way to benefiting from donors' year end giving. When they see your communications, it will be tied to a story you've been telling them all fall!

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