

Direct Mail Fund Raising *Survival Kit*



Is Direct Mail
Fund Raising For Me?



5 Things Wrong, 5 Things
Right With Direct Mail
Fund Raising.



Ten Commandments
of Direct Mail Fund Raising.

Is Direct Mail Fund Raising For Me?

1 Emotion?

Is the issue you want to mail on really important to the potential donor? Not should it be, but is it already? Does your cause bring anguish to the prospective donor? Or is your institution one he cares deeply about? If not, forget it! And don't substitute your own views for that of the potential donor, because in this case, his view is the only one that counts.

2 Uniqueness?

What is it that makes your appeal unique? What is it that sets you or your organization apart from the competition? There must be major, clear cut differences in the eyes of the potential donor, not just in your eyes. There's lots of competition in the mails for contributions. What niche or need do you fill that no other individual or organization fills? If there are only subtle differences, then perhaps you should find another way to raise funds.

3 Visibility?

Is the potential donor already aware of the problem that you wish to solve or the opportunity you wish to seize? Do you have to explain it? If so, you are in trouble. Direct mail fund raising is targeted at the "choir." If the donor isn't at least somewhat familiar with the problem, he'll never get to the request for funds.

4 Patience & Time?

Do you have the patience and time needed to let the direct mail fund raising process succeed? Direct mail can provide a solid funding base for a foundation, or organization, but it takes time to work. Direct mail is not an instant money machine. First, a donor file must be built. That takes time. Maybe as much as six to nine months. In the meantime, patience is required as funds are plowed back into building the donor base. There

If you are considering a direct mail fund raising program or wondering why your current effort is not meeting your expectations, ask yourself the following seven questions. Unless you can confidently answer "YES" to each and every question, you had better think twice before you proceed.

are exceptions, but plan on the rule, not the exception. If you are impatient, consider a different plan of action.

5 Commitment?

Are you prepared to make a personal commitment to making the fund raising effort a success? Signers, testimonials, case studies, research are all your responsibility. If you're not prepared to put the time and effort into making the program work, maybe you had better re-think using direct mail to raise funds.

6 Now?

Are the funds needed right now? Direct mail donors look for immediate results. If you want to solve a problem well into the future, they'll wait and contribute later. There is an urgency to every successful direct mail fund raising program. No urgency, no funds.

7 Techniques & Copywriting?

Are you prepared to stand back and let your professional fund raiser do his job? Are you willing to limit your input to matters of factual research, organizational policy, and law? Are you willing to use "command response" techniques that have a track record of success? Are you willing to sign off on fund appeals that contain words, grammar and sentence structure that differ from your personal taste? Are you prepared to resist the urge to make copy changes just for the sake of putting your personal mark on the fund appeal? You had better answer with a loud YES if you want your fund appeals to work. Unless your appeals use techniques that "command" a response and unless they use emotional, "now-or-never" phrases constructed from simple, everyday words, don't expect them to succeed. It's not going to happen.

5 Things Wrong, 5 Things Right With Direct Mail Fund Raising

1 It Costs Too Much.
Let's face facts. It costs too darn much to raise money through the mail. The number one culprit, postage, has increased some 400% in the last decade. This means that not enough money is left (if any) for the project and programs of the client.

2 It Takes Too Long.
A typical start-up organization won't get any money out of the program for six months or more after the first mailing. Direct mail doesn't mean instant money.

3 The Risk Is Too Great.
A new organization has no way of knowing whether or not direct mail fund raising

Here's What's
Wrong
With
Direct Mail
Fund
Raising!

will work, but the bills have to be paid even if the program flops.

4 You Can Never Stop Prospecting.
No matter how old or successful the organization, the prospecting must continue to replenish the attrition of donors from the file.

5 Prospecting Is a Loser.
That's right, while there are exceptions, almost all organizations lose money in the prospecting process. This means that the net income from house appeals goes not only to the projects and programs of the organization, but also to cover the prospecting losses.

1 It Provides a Sound Financial Base.
Once the direct mail program has generated a house list for an organization, it can count on funding for years to come.

2 It Provides an Opportunity.
Direct mail unites average Americans into a powerful force for good. It gives donors of all sizes in all parts of America a chance to have an opportunity to participate in solving problems, preserving institutions, and otherwise making America a better place to live. And when they help, they feel better about themselves and about their country.

3 It Demands Accountability.
Organizations that depend on direct mail for support must perform. Without performance the contributions dry up.

Here's What's
Right
With
Direct Mail
Fund
Raising!

4 It Provides Independence.
Because direct mail donors are typically small donors, no one individual donor can dictate policy or make demands upon the organization.

5 It Enhances Image and Visibility.
When hundreds of thousands, even millions of fund appeals are sent out on behalf of a foundation, nonprofit cause, or institution a positive and lasting image is created in the mind of the donor. This image will help to strengthen all other projects and programs undertaken by the organization.

10 Commandments of Direct Mail Fund Raising

Or ten trite, sententious, banal, hackneyed, prosaic, and axiomatic direct mail clichés that happen to be true.

ONE

“Once you start explaining, you’re dead.”

If the donor isn’t familiar with your institution or cause, you’re not going to explain it – enough to get a contribution – in a four-page letter.

TWO

“Confused people say no.”

Kinder version of “ya gotta tell’em to lick the stamp.” Even when the donor is familiar with your cause, don’t confuse him by lumping in additional issues. And give your donor step-by-step instructions. Tell him how to make out the check. Tell why you have a deadline and what it is. Put your address on every piece in the package. And tell the donor about every piece – reply envelope, news article, postcard, etc.

THREE

“People give money to solve problems, not to make friends.”

What challenge to the donor’s personal ideas or individual tragedy is your group fighting to rectify? He’ll give to help you right a wrong or save an institution in jeopardy, but not because you’re wonderful and doing lots of good things.

FOUR

“Dead donors don’t donate.”

When selecting lists, be careful with lists that have words like “supporters,” “activists,” etc. Look for words like “donors” or “contributors.” And always pick recency over dollar amount.

FIVE

“KISS” – (“Keep it simple, stupid.”)

Don’t get so carried away with fancy graphics that you forget that your objective is getting a contribution – not winning an art award. Keep words monosyllabic, no more than 15 to a sentence. No more than four lines to a paragraph with lots of one line paragraphs.

SIX

“Nobody ever lost money on a follow-up.”

Well, maybe they did. But follow-ups are usually found money. Select the house donors who didn't give to a really good house mailing. Send them a follow up note or gram. Gently remind them that they didn't give last time. They are your loyal supporters and you were counting on them to give. And this is their second chance.

SEVEN

“Follow the formula—Attention, Problem, Solution, Close the Sale.”

Don't reinvent the wheel. Follow these steps in your fund appeal if you want to avoid disaster—Grab the ATTENTION of the prospective donor in a way that won't allow him to set your letter aside. Next, present the PROBLEM in a way that generates an emotional and sympathetic response. Now, show him your SOLUTION. And finally, CLOSE THE SALE in a compelling and no-holds-barred fashion.

EIGHT

“Mail it.”

Don't get bogged down trying to create the perfect mailing. Time is money, especially in direct mail fund raising.

NINE

“You're asking for money, not educating the public.”

Your number one goal in fund raising is raising funds. Every word should be used to reach this number one goal. You can try to have two number one goals. But it will cost you money. Tell the donor what your organization is doing so that the donor will donate. If educating the public – not getting a contribution – is your number one goal, you will pay the price in fewer and lower contributions.

TEN

“Make them reach for their pens.”

Your fund appeal should “command a response.” By asking for a signature on a “note of encouragement” or on a petition or post card, you will help the prospective donor gain a sense of ownership which will boost response and commitment to your organization.

The ECG Way

The Eberle Communications Group, Inc., is a family of talented and dedicated individuals who share common values and aspirations.*

We strive for these goals through a personal commitment to the following principles:

1

Priorities. We keep ours straight . . .
God, family, country, business.

2

In business, clients come first.
Their success is our success.

3

Quality through commitment.
There is no other way.

4

Innovation without risk doesn't exist.
Go for it!

5

There is no substitute for integrity.

6

Mutual trust.
We can't do our best without it.

7

Everyone a leader. Everyone a team player.
It's the key to excellence.

8

Courtesy is a must.

9

Pride. We're proud of what we do.
We're proud of each other.

10

Fun. We enjoy work. We enjoy life.

*The *Eberle Communications Group, Inc. whose companies include:*

*Bruce W. Eberle & Associates, Inc.; Fund Raising Strategies, Inc.; InternetFundRaising.com, Inc.;
Kaleidoscope Publishing, Ltd.; and Omega List Company.*



Fund Raising Strategies, Inc.

1420 Spring Hill Road, Suite 490, McLean, Virginia 22102
VOICE 703-226-0212 FAX 703-821-0920 EMAIL beberle@fundraisingstrategies.com