

How to Optimize Your Direct Mail Fundraising Campaigns

 fundraisingkit.com/blog/optimize-direct-mail-fundraising-campaign

By Ally Smith

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An essential part of a fundraiser's responsibility is to ensure that their nonprofit's fundraising strategies and campaigns are revised and optimized from time to time. If a strategy or campaign isn't yielding the intended outcomes or making the expected impact, it is crucial that the fundraiser and nonprofit team steps back and make necessary changes.

While many fundraisers are becoming more accustomed to [making changes to online fundraising strategies](#), only a few are taking the time to optimize their direct mail fundraising campaigns.

There has been so much [debate about the viability and effectiveness of direct mail fundraising campaigns](#), and as such, many nonprofits aren't doing enough to invest in these campaigns.

This article examines the value of direct mail fundraising in today's climate and explores how nonprofits can improve and optimize their direct mail fundraising campaigns.

Do Direct Mail Fundraising Campaigns Still Work?

With so many digital means of reaching donors these days, you may wonder if it is still worthwhile to pursue traditional forms of solicitation such as direct mail. The truth is direct mail fundraising is still a valuable tool to reach donors, especially when combined with digital solicitation.

Print ads engage readers longer than digital marketing does; they elicit a higher emotional response, and our memories of them last longer. Donors are more likely to read print appeals than email appeals, and the average direct mail response rates are between 5 and 9%, while fundraising email response rates sit at 1%. Go print!

Combining your direct mail and digital fundraising efforts is more impactful than doing only the latter. In 2016, direct mail fundraising campaigns motivated 36% more donors to give online compared to the previous year. You can use print to reinforce messaging that donors see online and ultimately drive more online donations.

One study even found that direct mail fundraising along with digital marketing yields a 28% higher conversion rate. So, the question isn't if direct mail fundraising still works or not. The question is, how are you using direct mail fundraising to complement your online fundraising efforts?

Even more importantly, how often are you optimizing your direct mail campaigns to improve your outcomes? Let's explore three ways that you can do that.

3 Ways to Optimize Your Next Direct Mail Fundraising Campaign

1. Know and segment your audience

Getting to know your audience is the first step to optimizing your nonprofit fundraising mailing. The more specific your audience is, the more targeted your messaging can be, which will help you cut through the noise and reach those donors.

First off, will your audience be donors or prospects?

This is an important delineation because the way you approach each group will be very different. Prospects need to be convinced that your organization is worthy of their donation. In contrast, donors are already convinced of this and only need to be invited to give again or keep engaging with your organization.

If you're focusing on just donors, you should consider segmenting your donor list. You can create targeted, personalized direct mail fundraising campaigns that speak pointedly to specific donor segments. This means you only send relevant direct mails to the corresponding segments.

You can segment donors by geography (where do they live in?), demographic (what is their age, gender, profession, etc.), donor behavior, and engagement (are they monthly donors, one time donors, annual donors, etc.) and psychographics (what do they value? is there a specific cause that makes them donate to your cause such as animal rights or mental health advocacy?)

Donor analytics tools, such as KIT, can pull segments out of your donor data for you so you can tailor your direct mail campaign to the right audience. Once you know your segment, you should make your messaging as personal as possible. Studies show that adding a person's name to letters increases response rates by 500%.

More so, consider using a conversational tone in your letter. Write the letter as though you are speaking directly to the recipient by using pronouns such as “I,” “you,” and “we.” The more personal and relatable your direct mail is, the better your chances of a positive response.

2. Make your direct mail content concise and skimmable

The content of your nonprofit direct mail campaign should be concise and consistent with your organization's brand, messaging, and voice.

Your letter should be easy for readers to digest, which can be achieved by using short sentences and paragraphs. Donor attention spans run short, but that doesn't mean that your letter needs to. Some experts believe that longer letters perform better, but the key is to make the content skimmable so that readers are drawn through the letter quickly. The people who want to read more deeply will do so, but the skimmers will get the point.

You can make direct mail content skimmable by using *italics* or **bolded words**, so they stand out to readers. Subheadings can also help headers skim content. Recipients will be reading the letter so much faster than you are when you are editing, so if it sounds choppy to you, it probably will not to readers. Make sure to repeat the things you want readers to remember so the message comes across (i.e., the ask!).

Another tip is to let your inner grammar geek go. Your content should be conversational, which means formal grammar may not always apply.

Your print content should always be consistent with the rest of your organization's brand, such as your website, social media, or TV advertising. The reader should recognize your nonprofit wherever they encounter it so that the messaging can be cumulative in their relationship with your organization.

So, if your print visuals didn't get a refresh along with the website or your social media team works independently from those handling direct mail, it may be time to schedule some time to get everyone on the same page (haha, pun intended).

Get a professional graphic designer involved if you can. They can ensure that the direct mail design is eye-catching, and all of those fonts that you have used to make the letter skimmable don't appear cluttered but appealing. Not every donor will read the letter word for word, but if all they do is skim your letter, at the very least, they will take in the visuals and the key messages.

Lastly, be consistent with your call-to-action (CTAs). Experts say donating to charities lights up the pleasure receptors in our brains. You can initiate this sensation by suggesting recipients make a gift and using descriptive language that allows them to imagine what it will feel like to make that gift. Then, repeat that a couple more times in the letter (without being too pushy).

3. Track your progress

Your nonprofit's direct mail fundraising strategy should be a set-it-and-forget-it affair. You need to test that plan by setting goals, tracking progress, and measuring results. Your direct mail fundraising campaigns are only useful if you have the data to prove that they are.

As you run direct mail fundraising campaigns, response rate, donation rate, and donor acquisition costs are a few metrics you can observe. You can find more direct mail fundraising metrics here. You can also use KIT to monitor these metrics and track the progress of your direct mail campaign.



Watch Video At: https://youtu.be/abShBOyo0_Y

What is Fundraising KIT?

Direct mail fundraising campaigns can do more than just raise money for your nonprofit organization. They can also help improve the quality of your relationship with donors. Donors will always appreciate a personal, thoughtful approach to a solicitation. With direct mails, you can tick that box. So, make sure you optimize your direct mail fundraising campaign and send out those letters.



Ally Smith

Content Writer at Fundraising KIT

With a passion for nonprofit innovation, Ally has spent her career helping build community capacity and supporting social innovation as a customer success manager turned, youth worker, turned social researcher.

After leaving the tech start-up landscape, she pursued a Master's in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership and has since supported nonprofits to innovate and grow. A Canadian ex-pat and social entrepreneur based in Edinburgh, she enjoys hiking, baking bread in a panic, and pursuing the full Scottish experience- rain and rugby included!