
DONOR COMMUNICATIONS

I Just Called... to Say... “I Love You”

Hillary@inbetterwords.com
www.InBetterWords.com



Donor communications done well = retention

Builds trust and confidence

Makes donors feel valued and appreciated

Keeps them informed, engaged, connected

Creates a positive give-and-take **relationship**

What donors get

Their donation buys them:

- Appreciation and admiration
- Sense of accomplishment, personal satisfaction
- Feelings of usefulness or hope, control, justice
- Local impact

(Wow – you have a lot of power!)

Communication is a means to an end

When you accept a donation, you make a promise.

- Without communication, you can't deliver
- If promises remain unmet, retention may suffer

Communications can seem like a lot of work, but not vs:

- Finding new donors, repairing relationships, starting over from scratch

Compare to a friendship – built slowly, destroyed quickly/fade

“You need to make a plan”

- Donor retention
- Sanity retention, easier delegating
- Budgeting of time and money
- Measure outcomes/get feedback
- Great for saying no

Plan basics (check out Bloomerang for a good template)

- Timing: date-of-gift based
- Who (Dev, Board, Exec)
- Format (call, letter, tour, newsletter)
- Goal (for each contact)
- What's included (info, links, story, request)
- Time and dollars?

Immediately upon receiving gift

Confirmation page / automated email

- Acknowledge receipt of gift
- Say thank you, with general impact statement
- Tax receipt
- How gift will be used
- Make aware of other opportunities/learn more

Within 48 hours

Phone call from Board member

- Very first way to say “you’re important and special”
- Even for smaller donors?
- Board member invites for coffee
- Board comfortably engaged in fundraising

Board members as communicators

- Can they articulate your vision? Their passion?
- Make them comfortable
- Invite them with you to hear the spiel
- Practice at Board meeting
- Put org in bio, LinkedIn, email signature and bring it up in meetings

Within 7 days

Thank you letter

- Add a handwritten note
- 100 letters, 30 seconds each = 50 minutes
- Impact story
- Foster relationship with you/Exec Director

Within 10 days

Welcome packet – thank and inform

- Different letter
- Gift or photo
- Materials: Brochure, annual report, recent newsletter, PR and/or advocacy update
- Brief survey – How contacted, why chose us

Monthly (?) e-newsletter

- Mix of print and digital
- Find ways to simplify the process
 - Connect programs with dev/marketing staff?
- Content ideas: impact, stories, how trends effect your customers, news, advocacy, edu on issues, staff spotlight, Board/volunteers at work, goals, behind the scenes

Monthly (?) e-newsletter con't

- Some numbers, but be careful
 - Serving hundreds vs saving one
- Opportunities to get involved
- Show breadth of programs
- Short, but meaningful
- Photos!

Within 30 days

Stewardship piece

- Thank you with in-depth impact story from perspective of service-recipient

Within 45 days

Tour invite

Within 60 days

Survey

- Critical to avoid anecdotal mistakes
- Why did you give? What do you expect from us?
What is your connection to our mission? What do you think of what we've sent so far?

(Afraid to ask this?)

After 90 days

Appeal/ask

- Will vary based on amount of previous gift, relationship developed, etc.

Once-per-year items

Annual report, gala invite, etc should be included

Quick audit

Check goals column to make sure everything is covered.

- Have we: thanked, informed, included, invited, celebrated, educated, entertained our donors?
- Have we earned their trust, built their confidence?
- Have we made their tremendous impact clear?

Quick audit con't

- Mix of group/individual communications
- Is communication two-way? Invite donors to give feedback, attend discussions or brainstorm sessions, help you advocate, etc
- Do your donors hear voices? Holistic experience.

How often to communicate

There are no rules, but don't break them. More about why and what you communicate.

Most complaints:

- I don't know where my money is going
- I don't feel valued (volunteers, too!)
- Only hearing to ask

How often to communicate con't

Most complaints:

- Invited to gala 8 times but nothing else (and the in between stuff counts a lot more if it makes a donor feel special. I.e., not a newsletter?)
- Can you avoid unnecessary communications by de-duping lists, and removing people who have already RSVP'd or donated?

Messaging

- It's about them, not org. Create feelings, cultivate a relationship between the donor/nonprofit and donor/customer, foster sense of community
- Impact and vision, not what you do all day
- Give your donors a job only they can do
- Don't start at the beginning every time (history?)

Messaging challenges

- Multiple mission points, populations served
 - General, yet emotional
 - Pick one as needed
- Difficult to access stories

Writing

- Conversational. Sixth grade reading level
- Create an outline
- Say what's true, edit later
- Be genuine and leave that part in!
- Write today, send tomorrow. Read out loud.
- Important part first. "Since 19xx" will not excite/engage.

Do me a favor

Don't let award winners say they're "humbled"

verb (used with object), hum·bled, hum·bling.

to lower in condition, importance, or dignity; abase.

to destroy the independence, power, or will of

What about lapsed donors?

If they didn't get enough love, tell them you know that

- Think carefully about a meaningful communication piece that will confess, apologize, talk about impact

What about prospective donors?

- Impact stories, inform and educate, trust and confidence, relationship carrot. Start at beginning?
-

Make all of this a little easier

Habits

- Collect stories all year long
- Take photos at everything and encourage others to
- Set calendar reminders – for plan or special opportunities (a year ago today...)

Last thoughts

- “Surprise and Delight” - take/keep notes and look for opportunities (article, local performance, volunteer)
- Meet donors where they are in terms of technology, messaging, etc – make it about what they need to hear, and how

Oh wait – we have to talk about social media!

- Retention – think of as newsletter
- New donors
- Newsletter savings account
- More photos - great way for people to feel what it's like to be a donor, Board member, volunteer, user
- Two weeks before Giving Tuesday is not the time to decide you're going to maximize Facebook

Questions?

Thanks to Jill Singer for designing this beautiful PowerPoint for me.
It looked really nice before I mucked it all up.

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