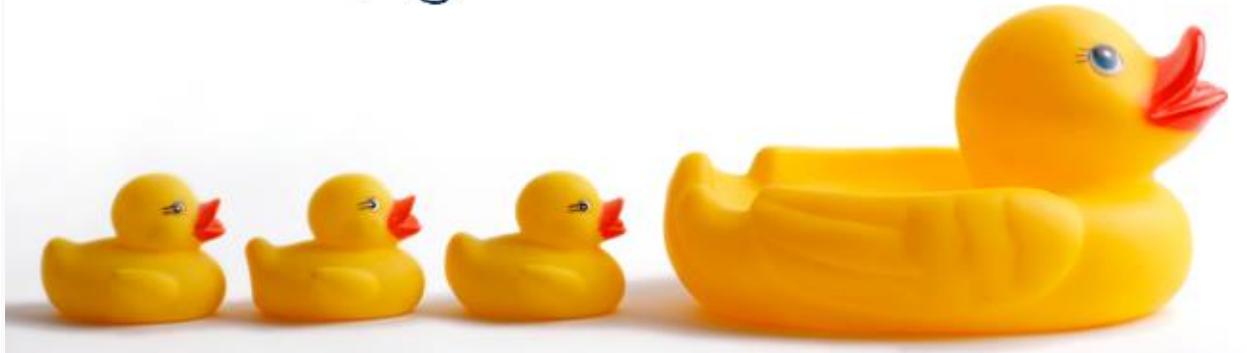


Are all of your ducks in a row?



The last six weeks of the calendar year are make or break time for nonprofits. In fact, nearly 30% of nonprofits raise 26-50% of their annual fundraising in November and December – when folks are feeling their most grateful and generous. Nearly a third of all annual giving happens in the single month of December, and 12% of all giving happens in the last three days of that month! You really don't want to miss out on this most giving time of year!

That means going above and beyond simply sending out a single year-end mailed appeal letter. Because once you've sent it, and waited a few weeks for responses to come in, that single appeal becomes pretty much a lame duck. If that's all you've got, you're sunk. If you want to get in on more of that holiday spirit, you must **get all your ducks in a row. Now!**

Let two little words be your mantra: PLAN. AHEAD.

Here are some tips that will help you have the **best fundraising season ever!**

### **Year-End Nonprofit Fundraising Action Tips**

**1. Send Impact Reports to Set the Stage** - If you've not done so already, get 'quacking' and send a report to remind donors how they helped. Every donor should get something, even if just a brief email with a photo of someone they helped and a quick "You're our hero!" or "You did it!" Also consider sending a special thank you gift to donors and volunteers who went above and beyond during the year.

**2. Clean Up Your Prospect Database** - Get rid of the dead ducks on your mailing list. There's no sense spending money to mail duplicates and/or deceased and wrong addresses. Ditto to folks who've repeatedly demonstrated they aren't going to support you.

**3. Establish Priority Goals Based on Last Year's Results** - Look at retention, upgrades and downgrades from last year and evaluate your areas for improvement. Your database is a potential gold mine when it comes to setting your year-end strategic fundraising objectives. If you don't focus in on what's working/what's not, you're likely to repeat last year's results. And you prefer to exceed them, right?

**4. Prioritize Contacts with Your Most Promising Supporters** - You don't want to lose your sitting ducks. Even folks not on your major donor cultivation list may be among the top 10 – 20% of donors who give

you 80 – 90% of your funding. If you want to keep these folks, build a plan that assures you don't duck out on them during the time of year they're most likely to give!

**TIP:** Create a list of those who gave last year but not this project/program. Sort them according to dollar range, so you can prioritize contacts with the largest donors. You're going to want to remind these folks of their generous past support (thank them!) and let them know they've still got time to renew and make a difference this year.

**TIP:** Make sure to evaluate folks based on cumulative annual giving. A \$100/month donor is not a \$100 donor, but a \$1,200 donor. When you sort based on most recent gift, you'll miss these important loyal supporters.

**TIP:** Don't overlook Peer-to-Peer fundraisers who bring in significant gift totals. These folks can be the functional equivalent of major donors, and you want to be sure to put in place strategies to encourage their continued engagement and investment.

**TIP:** Don't overlook volunteers. Volunteers are twice as likely as non-volunteers to donate. Sometimes, they simply aren't asked well. Consider making them a separate campaign segment, and send them a tailored appeal that recognizes their already generous contribution to your cause.

**5. Prepare a Year-End Email Series:** This will not only bring in gifts on its own, it will also bolster your offline campaign by reminding folks they intended to give. You want to send enough emails to maximize your chances during this most heavy giving period of the year. Did you know 10% of gifts arrive in the last 48 hours of the year? It's best to plan at least five email touches in December (one can be in your e-news), with a year-end blitz of at least three e-appeals between December 26<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. The best times to email prospects are between 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Subject lines should not be an afterthought. 33% of email recipients open emails based on the subject line alone. Personalized emails improve click-through rates by 14% and conversion rates by 10%. Send fundraising emails more than once. You never know when you'll reach someone at an optimum time. 23.63% of email opens occur within the first hour of delivery.

**6. Plan a multi-channel campaign:** Maximize your chances prospective donors will notice and act on your appeal. People today are more (or less) responsive depending on the way you connect with them. While your email appeal was like water off a duck's back for Prospect A, they may take to a tweet with a link back to a compelling story on your website just like a duck takes to water! For Prospect B, on the other hand, direct mail may be the golden duck. Even they, however, might wait to act until they're reminded via email. This is why, when it comes to messaging, the "flock" (e.g., direct mail, email, website, social media, and telephone) will do better than any single duck trying to make it on its own. Don't be afraid to include campaign messaging on several different channels. While you may not be tweeting out direct asks, it doesn't hurt to include similar campaign theme, messaging, images and graphics so your year-end appeals stays top of mind for prospective donors.

**7. Plan Ahead to Call Your Most Important Lapsed Donors:** *Who you call, and how many you call, will depend upon your own resources and the makeup of your donor base.* Again, begin with those who've given the most, as well as those you believe have the greatest potential to become more major donors. Also take a look at those who've given consistently over a period of years. These are your most likely future planned giving donors – the ones who might leave you a bequest. The same holds true with ongoing, loyal volunteers. You don't want to lose these folks, so find out why they may not have yet renewed.

**8. Plan to Send a "We Miss You" Letter to Lapsed Donors You Can't Call:** Some folks may manage to duck the question up until the last minute. Don't give up! Send them a letter letting them know you miss them.

Also send this letter to donors you called, but were unable to reach. Make it brief, direct and as personal as you can manage (e.g., if you called and left a message, reference the fact you're sorry you missed them). And stay upbeat and positive. Reward your donor for their past giving and praise them for their ongoing generosity and good intentions.