

Post-Telethon Wrap-Up Calling

How can it enhance my
telephone campaign?

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Post-telethon wrap-up calling

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to outline specifically what post-telethon wrap-up calling entails and how the inclusion of this module within your annual regular giving programme can help bolster both alumni participation and financial results.

Oxbridge colleges generally run an annual, two-week telephone campaign, which includes around 1,500-2,500 alumni and results in approximately 45% being contacted. If the number of completed fundraising calls could be increased, the number of donors and revenue gained from each telephone campaign would rise. However, to achieve this, both the size and duration of each telethon would need to expand.

Unfortunately, larger-scale telephone campaigns tend to encounter inherent difficulties:

- Oxbridge colleges are not happy to have students working during term-time.
- In order to recruit a larger call team, weaker applicants may need to be hired; these students tend to make lower quality phone calls and as a result, yield lower financial results.
- In reality, expanding the number of callers on a call team can be a logistical challenge, as there is a need both for a larger call room and additional accommodation.
- If an Oxbridge college did decide to undertake a longer telephone campaign, the entire call team (including weaker members) would need to be paid for working more hours; resulting in a lower return on investment.
- Finally, telephone campaigns are labour-intensive and any increase in length may place additional strain on college staffing and resources.

To help combat the difficulties outlined above, Buffalo has developed a successful method of expanding a college's telephone campaign through the utilisation of our Bristol-based call room and professional call team.

What is post-telethon wrap-up calling?

In 2012, Buffalo decided to conduct extended telephone campaigns on behalf of a few of our Oxbridge clients from our Bristol-based call room. The purpose of this was to contact those alumni who had not been reached during the main onsite telephone campaign. The results were encouraging and since then, Buffalo has continued to prove that post-campaign calling strongly enhances the results of a telethon.

Making the decision to include the wrap-up calling module within your standard annual telethon package, can be determined from the outset, during the planning stages with Buffalo's business development team or at any point during the campaign preparation process. Furthermore, there is also the option to decide during the telephone campaign itself; based on the contact rate and amount received.

The preparation process

After the main telethon, your Campaign Officer will review those alumni who are yet to be contacted. Priority inclusion will be given to the most promising alumni in terms of call notes, ask amount and donor tag as well as overseas alumni and business numbers. A bespoke script will be developed and signed off by the Development Office; importantly, the project chat will be written by your Campaign Officer to ensure that the case for support is conveyed in a concise and passionate manner. Additional inserts such as an events diary and institution information will also be added into the wrap-up caller manual.

Buffalo's in-house, professional call team will undertake a detailed training session on the college and its case for support, which will be led by your Campaign Officer. Following the training session, the callers will be supervised at all times, so that any questions can be dealt with immediately.

“Wrap-up calling has made a significant difference to the totals received in our telephone campaign each year; one year enabling us to raise a further £60,000. We don't have the resources to call large numbers of alumni and the student callers have limited periods when they can work, so this provided a cost-effective way of reaching out to more alumni and seeking their feedback and support.”

(Dr Rachelle Stretch, Development Director, Trinity Hall)

Buffalo recognises that some Oxbridge clients have concerns regarding the utilisation of professional callers to contact alumni rather than the college's students. However, given the inherent difficulties associated both with running a longer telethon and recruiting a larger call team, it is not possible to have current students calling the unreachable alumni in the weeks following the onsite telephone campaign. As highlighted above, the professional call team receive a detailed training session from your Campaign Officer as well as continued supervision throughout the wrap-up calling period. From the outset of the call, the alumnus is informed that the conversation is not with a

current student. The first part of the call focusses on acquiring feedback for the college regarding events and alumni engagement; this works well and helps to build a rapport and accrue useful feedback for the college. Importantly, this module provides the college with an opportunity to follow up on promising incomplete calls in a professional manner.

Typically, wrap-up calling will last for about two to three weeks and will take place during morning, afternoon and evening sessions to maximise the contact rate. However, the number of sessions undertaken will depend entirely on the results gained. Return on investment will be gauged on a day-to-day basis in order to assess the feasibility of further calling sessions. In this respect, the wrap-up calling module is flexible and can be easily tailored to the performance of each college's alumni over the calling period.

Finally, your Campaign Officer will include an individual breakdown of the performance of the wrap-up module within the campaign report: specifically, the overall statistics, Bristol caller statistics and a comparative tag performance between the main telethon and wrap-up calling module.

College comparison

College A	No. Contacted	% Giving	Gift/Call
Main telethon	514	58% (298)	£327
Wrap-up calling	49	59% (29)	£402

College B	No. Contacted	% Giving	Gift/Call
Main telethon	514	62% (319)	£313
Wrap-up calling	48	69% (33)	£346

College C	No. Contacted	% Giving	Gift/Call
Main telethon	473	52% (246)	£296
Wrap-up calling	28	57% (16)	£396

College D	No. Contacted	% Giving	Gift/Call
Main telethon	574	49% (281)	£294
Wrap-up calling	68	43% (29)	£380

Above is a breakdown of 2016 main telethon and wrap-up calling results for four Oxbridge colleges. It is worth highlighting that the wrap-up calling timeframe varied between the four colleges: College A conducted post-telethon calling for just one week; Colleges B and C both undertook two weeks of Bristol-based calling; while College D ran wrap-up calling for three weeks. To provide context regarding shift quantity; on average, three calling shifts took place per week for these colleges in our Bristol-based call room. On average, 55% of alumni contacted during the wrap-up calling module were happy to donate towards their college fund. This was very promising and demonstrates the effectiveness of the module in engaging alumni with both the institution and the case for support.

Return on investment

When this service is agreed, Buffalo develops a bespoke Bristol caller script, before training and managing the callers during each calling session. As our clients only pay for completed calls, we only conduct calling sessions at times that will optimise the contact rate. Typically, we manage to match the contact rate gained by the student callers and with a more depleted dataset. The fundraising results gained by our Bristol callers are expected to match or better those gained by the student callers. This in turn means that our wrap-up calling service will generate a stronger return on investment than that gained during the main student-led telethon.

How can the wrap-up calling module enhance my telephone campaign?

Based upon the post-telethon wrap-up calling benefits and results examined within this paper; it is Buffalo's recommendation that this process becomes a standard feature of telethons for Oxbridge colleges.

The wrap-up module enables Oxbridge colleges to lengthen their telephone campaigns and thereby ensure the best possible contact rate; allowing calls to be made with those prospects who were not available to talk during the standard timings of the main telethon. Overseas prospects and alumni with business numbers, in particular, can be reached during the wrap-up calling timeframe. In turn, a larger number of contacts will increase the amount pledged each year, increasing a college's income stream. A higher contact rate will also ensure more donors are gained and so will help to increase a college's overall annual participation rates.

Furthermore, through the use of Buffalo's experienced and professional in-house call team, every call made on behalf of the college will be to a high standard. The bespoke script and caller training provided will ensure that our professional callers are well versed on your college in general, its case for support and event diary.

Buffalo asked a number of Oxbridge development professionals to provide feedback on how they felt the inclusion of post-telethon wrap-up calling helped to enhance their telephone campaign this year:

- "It is not practical for us to run a telephone campaign involving current students for more than two weeks, so this year we decided to try Buffalo's wrap-up calling service. This worked well, in that we were able to increase revenue from the campaign and our old members were receptive. The process was well-managed by Buffalo and the College-based administration followed on smoothly from the main campaign. We would definitely consider including this module again next year!" (Madeleine Hammond, New College)
- "I found the wrap-up calling sessions flowed very smoothly from our initial two-week campaign in College. The weekly reports and call-notes that I received were always clear and detailed. I was initially nervous that our alumni would not respond as well to non-Mertonian students, but my fears proved to be unfounded; the Bristol callers were professional and very effective, gathering useful feedback from our alumni and securing a lot of gifts (particularly renewals). which we would have otherwise missed as we ran out of time on the main College campaign. I would certainly consider running wrap-up calling again." (Sarah Jones, Merton College)

For further information on how the wrap-up calling module can be incorporated into your annual telephone campaign consultancy costs, please contact our Business Development Manager, Chris Rainford on 01179 33 55 80 or chrisrainford@buffalofc.co.uk.