

A Fundraising Appeal: When Does Your Nonprofit Need One?

6 min read



Most donors understand that nonprofit organizations are always open for donations – even if your donor communications do not always specifically ask for money.

Key Takeaways

- **When Your Nonprofit Needs a Fundraising Appeal:** Some common types of fundraising appeals include Giving Tuesday appeals, year-end giving appeals, event sponsorship requests, or...
- **Describe the Positive Impact and Negative Consequences:** Describe what will happen when you meet your fundraising goal (positive impact) and what would happen if you do not reach your fundraising goal (negative consequences)...
- **Could Outsourcing Your Nonprofit Financial Management Improve Fundraising?:** A robust outsourced back office can actually help you increase the funds you have available for fundraising efforts while also helping you to maximize your return on fundraising appeals...

A fundraising appeal, however, goes beyond basic donor communication with the goal of actively encouraging donors to make donations to specific fundraising campaigns through both postal mail and electronic communications.

When Does Your Nonprofit Need a Fundraising Appeal?

A regular schedule of fundraising appeals in addition to, perhaps, more event-specific appeals can be highly beneficial when included in an NFP organization's overall fundraising policies and fundraising best practices. There are several times when your organization might benefit from using a fundraising appeal. This includes both routinely scheduled appeals that occur throughout the year and campaigns that are organized in response to specific events, unexpected costs, or to meet unexpected needs.

Some common types of fundraising appeals include Giving Tuesday appeals, year-end giving appeals, event sponsorship requests, or fundraising campaigns to raise money for a specific purpose such as replacing a delivery vehicle or helping to cover a specific beneficiary's medical bills.

10 Fundraising Appeal Best Practices for NPOs

1. Set Goals and Create a Strategy

Every fundraising appeal should have a clearly defined goal that defines success for the campaign. In other words, you should know how much you need to raise, by when you need to raise the money, what you plan to do with the money, and the impact you expect the funds to have on your organization and/or mission.

Once your goals are defined, you need to outline a strategy for executing the fundraising appeal. This should include combing through your donor list to determine the best methods for contacting your donors, writing powerful content for your donor appeal, designing a layout for the appeal, and providing multiple donation methods for donors to use.

Be sure to assign specific tasks (with deadlines) to specific people in your organization to ensure the appeal is executed on time and as planned.

2. Be Direct

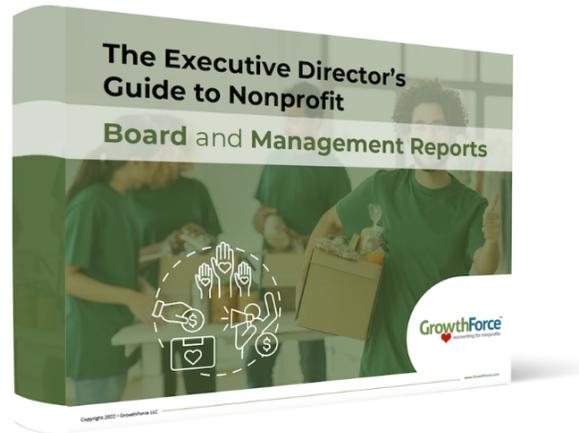
The donor communications in your appeal should be fairly direct. They should clearly define the problem your organization needs to solve and why the issue is important or why it needs to be solved now. You should also detail what your offer is (i.e. what will happen when your donor chooses to give). Your offer could explain the impact of different sizes of donations or even exchange a small gift in return for their generosity.

Read More: [Fundraising Do's and Don'ts for Your Nonprofit](#)

3. Describe the Positive Impact and Negative Consequences

Your appeal communications should also describe the big picture of the impact of the donations your organization receives. In other words, describe what will happen when you meet your fundraising goal (positive impact) and what would happen if you do not reach your fundraising goal (negative consequences).

[The 8 Best Nonprofit Reports and How to Use Them in Your Organization](#)



As an executive director, you can't fundraise effectively without timely and accurate financial data at your fingertips. [Download today.](#)

4. Use Storytelling

Storytelling is the most powerful form of communication. While your appeal should be direct and fairly concise, it should also tell a story that connects your big-picture goals with the smaller, human-sized, more relatable impact of your mission. The best subject for storytelling in a fundraising appeal is people-based. Tell a story about a specific person or family you plan to help with the funds raised in this appeal. This draws your reader into the content and keeps them hooked for the ask.

Raise more money by showing donors the tangible results of their gift

5. Create a Sense of Urgency

Your appeal should create a sense of urgency that spurs donors to give now, rather than next month or next year. Your content should include phrases such as, "We need your help now," or "Please give today." Additionally, create a deadline for the fundraising appeal, asking donors to give before the campaign ends on a certain date.

Read More: [How To Successfully Host Virtual Fundraising Events](#)

6. Appeal to Your Donor's Feelings

Donors can logically understand why your [organization](#) needs support, but they won't be moved to actually give until they feel emotionally connected to your mission. Sharing personal stories about the specific ways your organization has helped individuals in the community can appeal to emotion in addition to sharing your organization's aspirational future vision and describing what could sadly happen if you do not meet your fundraising goals.

Communicating your fundraising appeal on a human level that appeals to a person's tendency toward compassion and empathy will result in a more effective campaign.

7. Design an Attractive Appeal

The design of your communications (electronic or mailing) needs to be clean, readable, and accessible. If the most important information is buried below dense paragraphs, then your donors might not see it. Be sure the most important points of communication are easy to spot on the page and simple to digest in the form of quick bullet points.

8. Use a Thermometer

A thermometer that measures your progress toward a donation goal can be a great way to create a sense of urgency and fun during a fundraising appeal. After donating, people love seeing the marker move up a little closer to the top and it can help your donors better visualize their collective impact on your organization's funding.

9. Connect Donations to Impact

It's important for donors to understand exactly how their donations help you further your cause. Use your communications to tie donations directly back to impact by explaining how the money will be used and how much money can affect specific types of results. For example, defining the specific impact of different donation levels can help to inspire donors to give more while also more directly understanding the good they can potentially do.

Read More: [12 Tips For Executive Directors To Increase Online Donations](#)

10. Make Giving Easy

In every fundraising appeal, ease of giving should be a top priority. Provide your donors with plenty of giving methods including mail-in envelopes, dedicated donation phone lines, online donation pages, quick links from social media, and more. Giving should be easy, safe, and secure for donors, so take steps to ensure your website's payment portals and your donors' data are adequately protected.

Could Outsourcing Your Nonprofit Financial Management Improve Fundraising?

Outsourcing your nonprofit organization's back office (bookkeeping, accounting, and financial management) can benefit the organization in several ways that start with the cost and time savings accrued as a result of outsourcing this non-core function of your organization.

The cost of outsourcing saves your organization money in labor expenses. Additionally, working with your executive director and board of [directors](#), an outsourced team can apply their nonprofit financial management experience and expertise to help you use [your financial data and reports](#) to identify ways to maximize productivity, fundraising ROI, project ROI, and impact.

As a result, a robust outsourced back office can actually help you increase the funds you have available for fundraising efforts while also helping you to maximize your return on fundraising appeals throughout the year. Simultaneously, a smart back office can ensure you use the funds generated by these appeals in the most efficient and effective way possible, maximizing your return and expanding your impact.