



## Online resources . . . for free!

BY MANAGING EDITOR DEBORAH BLOCK AND PAUL KARPS

**W**ITH THE nearly unlimited treasure trove of resources now available on the Web to direct mail fundraisers, we thought it was high time to begin a dialogue about this wealth of information.

We in no way claim the following to be a comprehensive overview of all that's out there. Instead, it represents a number of the fundraising sources we regularly use in our work as freelance direct mail fundraising copywriters. Some you may be familiar with, others may be new to you. Most important, check them out yourself by clicking on the links.

### SUBSCRIPTION-BASED LISTSERVS

There are a number of mailing lists—or what's known as listservs—to which we subscribe. The concept is that you sign up by e-mail. You then join the online discussion, which is deliv-

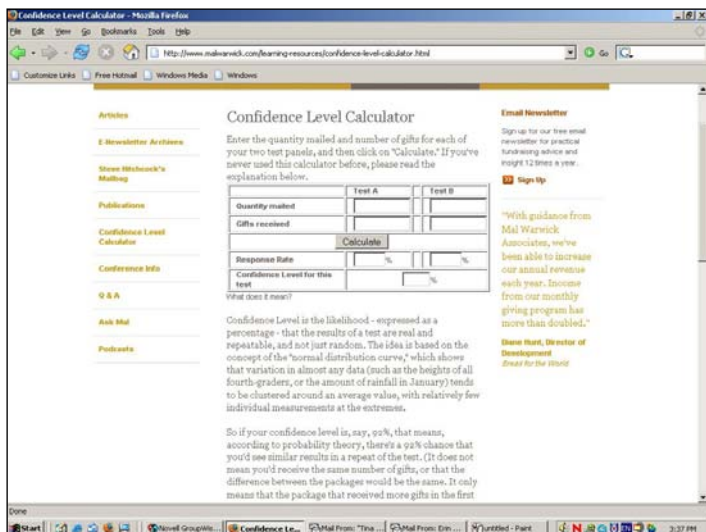
ered by individual e-mail right to your inbox. Members, sometimes from around the world, pose questions, answers, and general comments relevant to the list's overall focus.

All in all, the listserv is a tremendous way to get peer-based feedback . . . and feel part of a broader community of professionals who share your interests and concerns.

[FundList](#), started in the early 1990s, is one of the leaders in the field. It spans not only direct response, but the entire spectrum of the fundraising universe. FundList is predominantly a home for university fundraisers. However, the list also includes professionals from all sorts of nonprofit organizations, as well as fundraising consultants. What's more, the Web site itself features a wide assortment of archived discussions, presentations, articles, and actual solicitations.

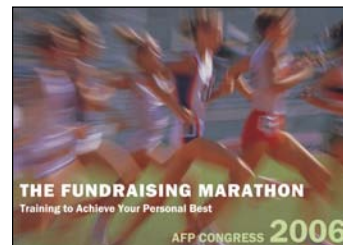
We also subscribe to both the Annual Fund

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## Canadian Fundraising Congress

Join Mal Warwick and an international cast of top speakers in Toronto, Ontario, Nov. 13 to 17. AFP Congress 2006 will take place then in the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. It's what many believe is the continent's best fundraising conference. For more information, [click here](#).

# Mal Warwick's Newsletter

SUCCESSFUL DIRECT MAIL,  
TELEPHONE & ONLINE  
FUNDRAISING™

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and Consultants lists hosted by [Charity-Channel](#). These are just two of over 200 discussion forums run by this organization—with a goal to “create a place where nonprofit professionals can connect, learn from each other, share information, and work together to advance the cause of philanthropy.”

The [Stewardship](#) list, hosted by the [Association of Donor Relations Professionals](#), covers all matters pertaining to donor relations. As such, it sometimes runs further afield from our own interests. This is certainly not an issue with the listserv for the [Direct Marketing Association of Washington](#). Rather, the problem here is that it's not a very active discussion. But when there is give-and-take, it's well worth it.

## NEWSLETTERS

An e-newsletter is different from a listserv in that it's a one-way communication vehicle. The bright side, however, is that while a listserv can generate dozens and dozens of e-mails you really might have no interest in, e-mailed newsletters can be consistently full of valuable insight and information relevant to you personally.

Like printed publications, e-newsletters can be daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly. Or even randomly—as in whenever the publisher has something to say.

Here are some of our favorites, all of which we subscribe to on a regular basis: [Fundraising Success Advisor](#), [Target Marketing Tipline](#), [DIRECT Newslines](#), [NPT Weekly](#), [Philanthropy Today](#), [DM News' White Paper of the Day](#), [Who's Mailing What! Archive Insider](#), and [The GuideStar Newsletter](#).

A number of fundraising agencies also distribute informative e-newsletters, apart from this distinguished publication (which we, frankly, put in its own category). Anyway, here are two we subscribe to: [CBA Test Patterns](#) and [CMS Edge](#).

## WEB SITES GALORE

Any number of Web sites chock are full of articles, tools, PowerPoint presentations, case

studies, news items, and related information on direct response fundraising. Mal, of course, would wring our neck if we didn't mention the [Mal Warwick Associates](#) site, which has loads of goodies on it.

But also look around at what other agencies have to offer. Not sure where to start? Check out the membership list of the [Association of Direct Response Fundraising Counsel](#) and go from there. In fact, the ADRF-CO site itself is a good resource. As are the sites for other industry organizations, like the [Direct Marketing Association](#), the [DMA Nonprofit Federation](#), and the [Association of Fundraising Professionals](#).

Plus, the major publications maintain fairly impressive storehouses of information: [The Chronicle of Philanthropy](#), [The NonProfit Times](#), [Fundraising Success](#), [Contributions Magazine](#), [DIRECT](#), [DM News](#), and [Target Marketing](#).

One additional site we've found quite useful—though it does require free registration—is the [dma-Z DataCard Network](#). With this tool, you can search a database containing 55,000 active mailing lists, package insert programs, card decks, and other response media. It's a great way to get the quick lowdown on a direct mail list you may be interested in.

Finally, did we mention that all of this stuff is *free*? Ain't technology grand?

## Now it's your turn!

Okay, okay. You can stop jumping up and down, screaming at your computer screen, “What about this?” or “How did they miss that?”

Because honestly, we know we've left out a lot of great direct response fundraising resources. These are just some of the tools we ourselves use on an ongoing basis.

So now the ball's in your court. Tell us about your favorite Web site, listserv, or online resource. We'll then try to pass your tips along in upcoming newsletters. Just e-mail us at [bkkreative@aol.com](mailto:bkkreative@aol.com).

—Managing Editor Deborah Block and Paul Karpis



# Small tests, big results

BY PETER SCHOEWE

**I**F THERE'S a holy grail in direct mail fundraising, it's the big, breakthrough test. I've seen test after test searching for the one new idea that will double results—and open up whole new universes of folks interested in giving to your cause.

But something can be lost in the excited “wow!” when a new test package is unveiled. And that's disciplined, incremental testing against a control that will lead to reliable, if unspectacular, increases in results.

And if you think about it, it makes sense to test small. Car manufacturers don't start from scratch when they design a new car. Often, a completely new package throws away a good portion of what made the control into a control.

So what are some good, small tests to try against your existing packages? A cheap but important test—that's far too easy to overlook—is trying different Ask strings. If you have a high average gift but low response, you may want to test a smaller initial Ask. If your response is high but average gift is low, you could test adding a special reach gift to the end of the string. I've had success making this reach Ask into a symbolic number referenced in the letter (such as \$104 to help feed 20 hungry children).

For existing donors, you should test whether it's better to ask for a repeat of their most recent contribution or their highest previous contribution—and whether your upgrades are too aggressive, or not aggressive enough.

Another good technique—and one that can boost both average gift and response—is to circle an amount in the Ask string and tie it to a benefit of membership. On a recent test against its control acquisition package, [Riverkeeper](#) (Tarrytown NY) circled \$35 on the reply slip, while adding a note to reemphasize how members joining at that level would receive a free tote bag. Just that one small change in the package increased the response

rate by 15%, while boosting the average gift by almost \$3.

Ask string tests won't have a big effect on the cost of your mailing. But, if you are looking to increase response by adding expense, I've found it's much better to invest in the personal feel of the package rather than in splashy design or colorful graphics.

It's a sad fact that bright, flashy packages often lose in head-to-head tests against their plainer cousins. On the other hand, you can usually test your way upward in personalization, finding that each added expense results in better response and more net revenue.

For example, for your higher value donors, you might first test a closed face envelope against a window envelope. If the boost in response justifies the increased expense, you could test handwriting the donor's address or using a real address label for your return address.

And once you get inside the package, you can test many other techniques to help your donor feel that your letter—unlike all those others—came from a living, breathing person.

You could test lasering a personalized letter versus printing a “Dear Friend” letter. You can test adding an involvement device, such as a petition or card for the donor to sign and return. I've even tested paper-clipping a business card to the letter, so the donor can get in touch if he or she has more questions. (It was expensive, but it boosted response.)

None of these tests will win you any awards—or even a “wow!” when you present them to your boss. But they should help create that greatest reward—a robust direct mail fundraising program with consistent and reliable results.



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## Where's Mal?

**September 5 - 7, 2006**

**Agra, India**

SAFRG South Asian Fundraising Workshop

Closing Plenary: *It's Your Turn Now*  
Workshops: *Raising More Money in Your Community through the Power of Networking and Creating an Inspiring Message for Your Organisation*

[More info.](#)

**September 13, 2006**

**Berkeley, California**

Green Business Program - Sustainable Business Alliance  
Keynote: *Values-Driven Business*  
Site: Anna's Jazz Island, 2120 Allston Way

7:00 pm

[More info.](#)

**September 15, 2006**

**San Francisco CA**

Heartland Thought-Leader Gathering

“Conversation starter”: *Values-Driven Business*

Site: The Presidio

[More info.](#)

**September 20, 2006**

**Berkeley CA**

Social Entrepreneur Speaker Series

*Values-Driven Business*

Site: Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley

[More info.](#)

## Gaining!

Organizations polled by *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* report steep increases in online fundraising. Gifts to the 167 nonprofits that provided the publication with numbers for 2004 and 2005 showed Web giving rose 148.1%—from \$366.1 million to \$908.4 million. While some of this climb can be attributed to Indian Ocean tsunamis and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, 127 of the groups—which didn't raise funds for those natural disasters—still reported a median increase of 50.5%.

In fact, that figure of 50% is consistent with other studies that have shown online giving overall rising at a rate of between 40% and 50% per year since the mid-1990s. The total is still small—estimated at between \$3 billion and \$5 billion per year—and accounts for no more than 2% of all philanthropic gifts in the United States (some \$260 billion in 2005, according to *Giving USA 2006*).

However, it doesn't require a degree in advanced mathematics to figure out that with 40-50% annual growth, 1-2% of total giving will loom large within a decade. So, keep your eyes open. You ain't seen nothing yet!

—M.W.

# Beyond e-mail: landing pages

BY RACHEL ALLISON

**I**N THE WORLD of online direct response, e-mail has historically been the star. But is e-mail *really* all there is to raising dollars and awareness online?

Well, of course not. With the rare exception of in-e-mail forms (which have yet to hit a majority of inboxes), you still have to take your readers *out* of their inboxes and *on* to another page before they can actually take the action you desire.

That page you land on—whether it's a donation, advocacy, or Tell-A-Friend page—is a landing page. And just like your e-mails, your landing pages need careful attention in order to perform well.

But here's the great part: Giving your landing pages a conversion-boosting makeover is easier than you think.

Just ask yourself the following questions to see where you might be losing list members to landing page abandonment:

■ **Is your design simple and uncluttered?** The look of your landing page is the first thing people will notice, so make sure it's not losing people. Your HTML wrapper should be simple and avoid unnecessary links that lead visitors off the landing page.

■ **Is your branding consistent?** Branding consistency starts with making your organization's logo prominent on both e-mail and landing pages, but it doesn't end there. The rest of your landing page should reflect the design of your e-mail, as well. Even if you can't control the entire look of your landing page (as may be the case if you work with an ASP), you can repeat colors, fonts, and key images from the e-mail. This simple step visually reassures your readers that they're in the right place and makes your campaign look more professional.

■ **Is your headline optimized?** The headline is the first text your viewer will read, so get the most out of every word. Make the headline bold and in a big enough font to read easily. Write a headline that's a clear, concise call to action and fits in with your e-mail copy. This is

not the place to be cute. Clarity is key.

■ **Does the text underneath your headline match your e-mail copy?** Underneath your headline, include a short paragraph (2-3 vertical inches of text, max) explaining your action or donation campaign. First make this blurb easy to read by using black (other colors are harder to read) and at least a 10-point font. Then match your blurb's language to the copy in the e-mail you linked from. Landing pages that repeat phrases and language from their e-mails reinforce your message and outperform landing pages that don't keep their language consistent.

■ **How long does it take to fill out your form?** The longer it takes for people to fill out your form, the more likely they'll abandon it. Take out any and all unnecessary form fields—simply capture the information you need. (Of course, this does not mean taking out opt-in fields that let people opt out of joining your list. These fields aren't optional.)

■ **You're not done yet! What about your "Thank you" pages?**

So your viewers have made it through your design, headline, text, and form—and they've finally taken action or donated ... Congrats! But there's still one last thing you must do: thank them. This means more than just typing the words "thank you" on a resolve page. First, always, always take 1-2 sentences to tell them why their action/donation makes a difference. Then give them more options to stay involved. Do this by including a Tell-A-Friend form on your thank-you page, if possible. If it's not, simply offer links to other action campaigns, donation pages, and more information on your issue.

Just like e-mails, landing pages need careful attention.



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# Integrated fundraising gets real

BY SHEERAZ HAJI

**I**NTEGRATED fundraising has come of age.

Integration can mean data integration; integration across an organization's departments, affiliates, or chapters; or integration across communication channels.

■ **Integration of data:** California PBS station [KVIE](#) uses member preferences from offline marketing activities to personalize e-mail messaging, which has helped to increase its average e-mail click-through rate from 5% to 31%.

■ **Integration across departments and/or organizational chapters:** [Planned Parenthood Federation of America](#) uses an online communications program to coordinate content management, e-mail communications, fundraising, member management, and advocacy, enabling the organization to manage activities across its nationwide network of 125 affiliates and 110 partners. This has made PPFA a national leader in best practices in online fundraising.

■ **Integration across communication channels:** [Environmental Defense](#) saw the need for a new organizational structure as it pursued an integrated national marketing campaign involving print, TV, radio, and online ads; Web site content; and press outreach. The power of integration showed itself when a story in the *Kansas City Star* was picked up in Google News, delivering 5% of the organization's Web traffic to the campaign Web site ([www.fight-globalwarming.com](http://www.fight-globalwarming.com)) and adding measurably to the organization's list of online supporters.

■ **Integration across media:** The [Humane Society of the United States](#) has an active online and offline donation program to support its advocacy work. To see whether an integrated e-mail and direct mail approach would make a difference in total donations, HSUS conducted a test: Some members received a pre-e-mail and direct mail appeal, some received either an e-mail or a direct mail piece, and others received a direct mail piece and a post-e-mail. The test segments that received both an e-mail and a direct mail piece

performed better than expected. While there are many database, data management, and content challenges in integrating online and offline activities, the initial results were so intriguing that more testing is planned.

Any one of these approaches can lead to an overall lift in dollars raised, brand equity, and response rates to fundraising appeals. But don't think any of this is a no-brainer. Integration can be difficult for several reasons:

**1) Organizational design and structure issues.** It takes a real leader to address these structural and management issues.

**2) Offline/online databases.** While advancements in Web services have made it much easier to interchange and synchronize data, nonprofit organizations still have to decide which data should move back and forth between their offline and online databases and how the data is structured. No matter what you hear, data integration is a complex job.

**3) Resource constraints.** Integrating e-mail communications with direct mail, Web, and print campaigns requires an investment of staff and consultant time to write content, run and analyze reports, conduct tests, and evaluate what worked and what didn't. Nonprofit organizations frequently don't have the budget to hire enough staff to invest the time.

The first step is to focus on the donor experience and learn about best practices and trends among peers. Integrating online tools with traditional fundraising and marketing tactics, though new, shows great success. The hot trend now is integrating online fundraising and messaging tools into Web site content management systems.

Stay tuned. You'll see even more success stories next year!



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## Junk?

Nonprofit e-mailers take note! Consumers consider e-mail spam to be "anything they don't find interesting"—even if they have a prior relationship with a company. That's the finding of a survey by Return Path and reported in *Target Marketing*. Fifty-five percent of study respondents say most of the e-mail they receive from companies they do business with is "junk."

What happens to your e-mail once it leaves your screen?

## Tips & Timesavers

Once you've drafted a fundraising letter, what's the next step?

Naturally, you're convinced it's a masterpiece without equal in the annals of the nonprofit sector. You can barely contain your enthusiasm. So, should you rush right off and print that gem, so it gets into your donors' hands as quickly as humanly possible?

I humbly suggest that this is not a good idea.

Apart from any efforts you take to submit the letter for review by others—whether your boss, your assistant, your spouse, or a colleague—there's an even easier step you can take to ensure that your letter really is the masterpiece you think it is.

Read it aloud.

In four decades of writing fundraising letters, I have never, ever found that the word choice and phrasing I thought so brilliant when I sat at the keyboard held up completely when I read my work aloud. I have always—always—discovered that words, phrases, and transitions that seemed to sparkle on paper just don't work in the light of day.

Do yourself a favor: Make sure your letter sounds as good as you thought it was when you wrote it.

—M.W.

Send your own Tip or Timesaver by e-mail to [mal@malwarwick.com](mailto:mal@malwarwick.com), or mail to *Mal Warwick's Newsletter*, 2550 Ninth Street, Suite 103, Berkeley CA 94710-2516. In return, we'll send you a free copy of *Mal Warwick's Testing, Testing, 1, 2, 3: Raise More Money with Direct Mail Tests* (Jossey-Bass, 2003), an indispensable tool for direct mail fundraising (one that explains what you can and can't test!).

# Writing powerful e-mail subject lines

BY RAJ KHERA

**Y**OU MAY HAVE the world's greatest fundraising appeal that you're sending out to your permission-based e-mail list, but will it be read? Or will it be deleted?

We live in a bite-sized world. Information is flying at your audience so quickly that they can only take bite-sized pieces of information in, process it, and decide if it's worth their interest or not. When your recipients scan their bursting-at-the-seams inboxes, will they choose to open your e-mail and read the message you've worked so hard to craft?

## SUBJECT LINES ARE THE KEY TO GETTING YOUR E-MAILS READ.

Here are six tips to make sure that your subject line gets past the spam filters and stands out from the crowd:

### 1. SET EXPECTATIONS.

Give your subscribers an accurate idea of what they will be receiving from you and how often. Many Web sites post previous messages so visitors can see an example of what they can expect to get. Be very clear.

For example, avoid: "Subscribe to our newsletter." Everyone uses that, but rarely do people set expectations.

Instead use: "Subscribe now! Upon subscription, you will receive an e-mail from us every Tuesday with the subject line, '[XYZ Pharmaceutical News.] Living with Diabetes Newsletter.'" That sets expectations very clearly.

### 2. USE RECOGNIZABLE SUBJECT AND FROM LINES.

Always include your brand name at the beginning of your subject line so recipients know the e-mail is from you. Your Subject and From lines work together. A person will quickly observe both and determine if your e-mail is worth reading. Make sure that both of those lines offer congruent information. For instance, many nonprofits start their Subject lines with their organization's name in brackets.

For instance, avoid: "Health Newsletter"

from "mass-e-mail-mailings.org" or some other domain that doesn't match your organization name.

Instead use: "[XYZ Group] Bylines Newsletter, May 2006" from "XYZGroup.org." Some e-mail management companies—such as my firm, MailerMailer—let you use your own domain when sending messages to ensure Subject/From congruency.

### 3. DON'T SELL.

Avoid words that try to sell your customers, such as "free" or "buy" or "call now" and other words that appear too sales-like. Also, quotations, exclamation points, and all caps are usually triggered by spam filters before your message even gets through to the inbox.

So tell, don't sell. Rather than trying to persuade people about the value of opening an e-mail, the most effective subject lines simply tell readers what they have received. Instead of using "Open this now" or "Don't miss out on this opportunity" to get

your readers to open the message, simply tell them what your message is about. Some of the most opened permission-based marketing e-mails have subject lines that simply say, "XYZ Policy Newsletter."

### 4. BE INTERESTING.

When you decide to tell and not sell, it's easy to simply create boring subject lines. Instead, spend a few extra moments to create a subject line that uses powerful non-triggered words. One way to help solve this problem is to give your marketing message a strong name and put that in the subject line. For example, "Saving Furry Little Animals: The XYZ Animal Protection League Newsletter." This works for both occasional marketing messages and regular messages. You get a double advantage from it because it allows you to brand your message ("Subscribe to our popular newsletter: "Saving Furry Little Animals") rather than simply pro-

*Continued on page 7*

Will your readers choose to open your e-mail?

Continued from page 6

vide a link on your site that says “subscribe to our newsletter.” Think the word “newsletter” is boring? Sales guru Jeffrey Gitomer calls his newsletter: “Jeffrey Gitomer’s Sales Caffeine.” Words like “high octane” or “power tools” or “tips” are three terms that can punch up a subject line.

#### 5. BE PROFESSIONAL.

Avoid being too cute or familiar. Although a friendly e-mail subject line may get past the electronic spam filter, a subject line like “hi there” from an e-mail address that is not recognized as a close friend will set off the human spam filter. “High Octane Tips by XYZ Widget Association” is brandable, interesting, and professional . . . much more than messages that say, “in regards to your question” or “I thought you might like to read this.”

#### 6. KEEP IT SHORT AND SIMPLE.

Although computer screens are getting larger (and thus subject lines can be longer), 50 to 60 characters remains a good number to aim for as people will simply not read much more than that. Put your strongest words in the front. “[XYZ Health News] Living with

Diabetes Newsletter” is 58 characters in length (including spaces). “Jeffrey Gitomer’s Sales Caffeine” is very powerful and only 32 characters long, but still works well, even though the strongest words are at the end.

Subject lines are often thought of as being similar to headlines in newspapers or the sales content on the outside of a direct mail envelope. But they’re not. Newspaper headlines are seen in conjunction with the rest of the document (the text and pictures), and your subject line is seen quite separately from the rest of the document. And direct mail envelopes are meant to entice people to open them with hard-sales tactics while hard-selling e-mails are seen in a less favorable light.

Ultimately, you’ll enjoy the greatest success when you think of them as words on a restaurant menu: clearly, distinctly, and plainly telling the reader what to expect without a lot of hype.



Raj Khera is a partner in [MailerMailer](#), a Web-based e-mail list management service. Copyright 2006 by Raj Khera, MailerMailer LLC. All rights reserved.

## Planning!

Forty-six percent of the most affluent 1% of Americans plan to donate a portion of their wealth to charity when they die. This is according to a study by U.S. Trust Company and reported in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. Of that number, 48% of those surveyed plan to leave gifts to academic institutions, 44% to health-related causes, 36% to religious institutions, 30% to public-policy groups, and 17% to libraries or museums.

## Can my subject line be confused with spam?

If your message’s “Subject” line reads like subject lines commonly used in spam, your recipients (or their e-mail filters) will likely confuse it with spam and possibly file complaints or block your future e-mails.

To improve the chances of your message getting opened and to reduce the chances of someone filing a complaint against you, ask yourself these questions when composing your message’s subject line:

- If you read only your subject line and nothing else, would it cause you to question whether the e-mail was legitimate? (Does the tone resemble subject lines often found in spam?)

- Will the subject line enable recipients to recognize immediately why they are receiving the e-mail? (Does the subject contain your “brand” name?)

Think about your subject line and message text very carefully before you send your message. Anything that screams of “in your face” advertising may generate complaints from your subscribers, even when

using the double opt-in method of acquiring list members.

Terms like these in your subject line or in the content of your message will likely be red flags to recipients:

- URGENT!
- FREE!!!
- Save
- Breaking News
- !!!
- \*\*\*
- \$\$\$

Consider giving your list a name and use a similar subject line each time you send a message. For example, many organizations use this format as their message’s subject line: Weekly Newsletter: and then include the newsletter’s topic for that issue and possibly even the date.

If a recipient sees something recognizable about you in the subject line, you will likely see an increased open rate while simultaneously reducing or eliminating spam complaints.

—Raj Khera

## Subscribe!

It doesn't cost a nickel to subscribe to *Mal Warwick's Newsletter: Successful Direct Mail, Telephone & Online Fundraising*. At a cost of just the few seconds it takes to enter your e-mail address below, you'll receive 12 idea-packed issues, one every month.

For a FREE subscription to this newsletter, [click here](#).

To tell a friend [click here](#).

# Is your year-end appeal appealing?

BY DEBORAH BLOCK AND PAUL KARPS

**M**AKING THE MOST of your year-end appeal—whether it mails in October, November, or December—just makes good sense. With that in mind, here are some copy suggestions for getting out your “season of giving” message . . . and, we hope, welcoming in lots of contributions.

### THANK YOU VERY MUCH

You might start your letter off with something like, “Thanks to your loyal support . . .” In essence, be sure to make your donors feel they’ve played a vital role in your success over the last 12 months. Because collectively, that’s *exactly* what they’ve done!

### LOOKING BACK

Many nonprofits use an end-of-the-year mailing to review the highlights of the last year. This might include a basic laundry list of accomplishments and objectives met—all made possible “because of generous friends like you.”

These are often written as bullet points for quick reading. Just make sure to write your copy in friendly, easy-to-follow language. No bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo allowed.

And even when the bulk of the copy emphasizes the past, leave a portion of your letter for what’s coming up. Because you still need to tell donors what their gifts today will mean tomorrow.

### LOOKING AHEAD

That brings us to another well-used strategy: Stress the future. Many organizations choose to deemphasize the past by using the year-end appeal to focus on the priorities, concerns, and issues they face in the immediate future and throughout the year ahead.

Once again, you can use a bullet-style list—with the same readability caveat applying here. In addition, try to come up with compelling examples of how a gift can make a real difference as you start off the year.

### COMBINATION PLATTER, PLEASE

What might work best for your group is to give equal attention to both the successes of the past year and the challenges of the next. Especially if you had a major accomplishment . . . and one or more urgent issues to fill donors in on.

In this case, you might consider writing a longer letter. Or use the letter to focus on the past and a separate insert for the future. Or vice versa. Remember, it’s also okay to use the bottom panel of the reply for this type of information.

### HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Of course, you can always just keep it short and merry, as plenty of not-for-profits choose to do. That means thanking donors for their valued help in the past year, wishing them a happy holiday season, and asking them to continue supporting your good cause.

Some organizations also include a holiday card, ornament, gift tags, or the like. If you go that route, acknowledge this freebie with a line like, “Since you’re such a good friend, I wanted you to have . . .”

### DON'T FORGET THE BUZZWORDS

There’s no reason to be shy about what you’re doing. So make sure you generously sprinkle your copy with references to a “year-end gift.” Use the outer, your Asks, the reply, and the reply envelope.

And if donations are tax deductible, don’t forget to say so. That adds an element of implied urgency to your appeal. You might even consider a “December 31 deadline” reference.



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