



DIRECT FORUM

VOLUME 5. ISSUE 7

* * * * JULY 2009 * * * *

Direct Forum is a free e-mail newsletter containing useful direct marketing tips, news updates and how-to information. It's convenient, informative and I am not trying to sell you anything!

- 1. WANT TO ENSURE THAT YOUR DIRECT MAIL FUNDRAISING WILL WORK? THEN START WITH A GAME PLAN.**
- 2. AS I SAID LAST MONTH, IT'S NOT ONLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU ACKNOWLEDGE DONATIONS PROMPTLY, BUT HERE'S HOW YOU CAN SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION.**
- 3. ALL GOOD THINGS HAVE TO COME TO AN END SOMETIMES.**

WANT TO ENSURE THAT YOUR DIRECT MAIL FUNDRAISING WILL WORK? THEN START WITH A GAME PLAN.

You must have a game plan to start with.

Set up an *annual schedule of mailings*, because the most important first step is to make sure your mailings go out in a timely manner. Whether you only send two or you send twenty-two pieces of correspondence to your donors a year, you must stick to a game plan that works best for you.

Direct mail fundraising is most effective when you continuously provide your donors with ample opportunities to support your cause. The pieces of correspondence you send them should not all be solicitations for funds but should consist of the following elements: direct mail appeals, newsletters, emails, annual reports, thank you letters and informational correspondence.

Chances are your donors also give to other charities, so if you don't stay in touch with them constantly you risk losing them to charities who do. That old saying holds true - **Out of sight, out of mind.**

My recommendation is to stay in touch with them three or

four times each year. That is the optimum number of mailings acceptable from a charity as per a recent survey in the UK.

Backing that argument are pros like **Bob Stone**, who says in his book ***Successful Direct Marketing Methods***: "*Mail more often than you think is acceptable.*"

Also, loyal donors like the attention that a direct mail piece provides.

Another recent survey conducted in the UK reported that regular donors not only understand but appreciate why charities must use direct mail

- 74% of respondents said they were happy to be contacted by direct mail from charities they support;
- 53% think that direct mail is a good way for charities to raise money for their work;
- 50% do not mind charities contacting them on a regular basis while 12% did;
- 80% of donors want their charities to be environmentally friendly and use recycled materials.

AS I SAID LAST MONTH, IT'S NOT ONLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU ACKNOWLEDGE DONATIONS PROMPTLY, BUT HERE'S HOW YOU CAN SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION.

Just like fundraising letters work best when they come from the heart, so do letters of appreciation for a donation.

Here are some tips for acknowledging gifts from high-end donors:

1. Have your closest link to the donor send the thank-you. So be it a key staff member, a board member or a client, if that's appropriate, who knows the donor best, have them personally sign the thank you in blue ink. It is more meaningful coming from someone they know.
2. If the donor's surname is printed in the greeting, have the person signing it scratch through the name and

hand-write the first name. Also ask them to add a short personal note in the margin as below:

Hi John,
~~Dear Mr. Sample,~~

*Your gift came
in just at the
right time.
Thank-you*

3. Just like in a good fundraising letter, the first sentence is key. It sets the tone and just as you would write to an acquaintance, it should be a casual one-to-one communication and not business-like or 'corporate-speak' or 'committee-speak'. Avoid words like, "We" and "Our", "On behalf of", etc.

Here, just one example of how to start a thank-you note:

Imagine my great surprise and utter delight when I walked into my office this morning and there on my desk was a donation from you.

4. Use a P.S. as you would in a normal letter. It adds another touch of one-to-one communication between you and the donor.

You can use the P.S to drive them to your website. Mention upcoming events, give them a progress report of planned activities or alert them to mailings or a newsletter they can expect soon.

5. Make the donors feel good about their generosity. Give them a progress report as to how their gift has been used, how it has helped the appeal or how it will help ensure the vitality of your organization's mission.
6. Add a way they can contact you in case they have any questions or wish to know more about a particular program. Give them your phone number and/or your email address.
7. Finally, if you or another staff member does not have a flair for writing, I highly recommend that you hire a writer for this very important piece of communication, just like you do for your direct mail solicitations.

Thanking people quickly and warmly is crucial to ensure that your loyal donors stay and don't stray. As

I said earlier, chances are your donors also give to other charities and how you treat them will determine their future gifts and their ongoing support.

When acknowledging smaller gifts from donors, here are some tips:

1. Since this is a thank-you note make sure it is donor-focused with plenty of 'you, yours', etc. in the piece.
2. Have a professional writer look at your current thank-you letter and make some suggestions or even draft a few new versions for you..

ALL GOOD THINGS HAVE TO COME TO AN END SOMETIMES.

First the bad news:

I recently got an email from **Steve Lloyd**, publisher of **Direct Marketing**, that the publication would be discontinuing my monthly column, **Direct & Personal**.

This is a column that I have written for the past seven years, which features well known people for their contributions to the field of direct marketing and gives a peek into their careers, what made them successful and into their lives.

I have been fortunate and enjoyed meeting and getting to know so many wonderful and talented people from whom I have learned so much.

For those who heard the sad news and responded in such an overwhelming manner, "I thank you personally."

Now, for the good news:

Encouraged by so many readers who wrote to say how much they had enjoyed the column and because I personally think it is worth pursuing, I have decided I will continue to write **Direct & Personal** and bring you interviews about the many unsung heroes in our business.

One person, who has graciously volunteered to keep the column alive, is **Peter Mosely**, who will post it on the **DMAT** (Direct Marketing Association of Toronto) website.



Above: One of my earliest interviews with **Ellen Nichols**, Director of Development, **Integra**.

Over the seven year period I have interviewed over 50 well know people in our industry. Soon, you will be able to catch them all on my website: www.designersinc.ca

The column, under the new name **All Star Direct & Personal**, will include past interviews and many new ones starting July 2009. It will be available on my website: www.designersinc.ca and on www.dmatoronto.org.

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