

ALASKA



FOOD COALITION

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“Studies have shown that 40 percent of online donors make their gifts in December, and another 40-60 percent of those donations are made December 30 and 31.”

-Gail Perry, Philanthropy Journal

A Time for Fundraising

The Online Giving Study tracked donations through the Network for Good’s website which distributed 3.6 million gifts to 66,470 different nonprofits from 2003-2009. The study found online giving spikes during the month of December and large scale disasters. During disasters, donors are more likely to consider new giving options, while in December they are more likely to give based on relationships with the charities. Now is the time to create your end-of-the year fundraising plan. Here are some tips to help you maximize your efforts.

Solicit, Invite and Thank

Solicit donations as gifts. At the end of November or in the first few days of December, send a letter to all of your current donors suggesting a contribution to your organization as a holiday gift to a friend. Indicate that you will send the gift recipient a nice card in time for the holidays that will identify who gave the gift, describe the important work of your group, and explain whatever benefits the gift brings, such as how many hungry children will benefit from their gift.

Hold an open house. Invite either all your donors or just long-time or major donors. The purpose of an open house is not to raise money, but to thank people and build community among your supporters. It also provides board members good practice talking to donors without having to ask them for money. If you invite all your donors, also invite funders, press, volunteers, and anyone else who has helped you during the year. Hold it on a weeknight from 5:30 to 8:00 so people can come right from work.

No one should stand alone at an open house. Assign volunteers from your board or staff to circulate and talk with people. These volunteers should meet as many people as they can and learn their names, take notes on what they express interest in, and make sure to follow up. Afterward, everyone who greeted people should get together and make a list of whom they met and what they learned.

Send holiday cards. The board chair or executive director should send cards to board members, volunteers, staff, and anyone else who has helped out. The cards should thank them for something specific – a foundation program officer going out of her way to help strengthen your proposal, a computer technician not charging to repair your printer when you jammed it. Two scribbled personalized sentences are 1000 percent preferable to a flowery form letter.

Check renewals and pledges. Make sure all your major donors have been asked to renew their gift sometime during the past 11 months. If anyone hasn’t been contacted, figure out why and contact them by December 15th. In particular, be sure to contact anyone who hasn’t paid a pledge.

Implementing Your Plan

Right Now: Pick a specific project that you will build your end-of-year appeal around. Donors like to know where their money is going.

Before Thanksgiving: Send an email to your list, telling them a story about one person whose experience is related to the project you've selected. The purpose of this email is to introduce the project to your supporters in a personal way — through the eyes of someone in your story.

Early December: Send your direct mail appeal letter. Don't repeat yourself word for word, but use the same basic program descriptions and a similar story in this letter that you used in the email. But this time, ask for a donation. Make your 'ask' very clear. Please give {insert ask} so that {result that gift will produce}.

Mid-December: Send an email that refers to the direct mail letter, and reminds your supporters where the money will go and that they can give online if they'd like.

Send thank you letters to everyone who gives no later than a week after the gift is received. Online givers should get an immediate, automated thank you note/receipt as well as a more heartfelt thank you that doesn't look or sound like a receipt within a week.

December 30 or 31: Send an email that reminds supporters that it's their last chance to get a tax deduction and that reinforces the messaging from earlier about how the money will be spent.

January: Share your thanks and start reporting back on what you are doing with the donations.

Resources

Network For Good: Online Giving Study

<http://www.onlinegivingstudy.org/>

Fundraising: Making Use of December

<http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/119/fundraising.html>

A Quick, End of Year Fundraising Plan

<http://www.nonprofitmarketingguide.com/blog/2010/11/16/a-quick-end-of-year-fundraising-plan/>

Are You Ready for the End-of-Year Fundraising Push?

<http://nonprofit.about.com/b/2011/08/23/are-you-ready-for-the-end-of-year-fundraising-push.htm>

The Alaska Food Coalition is here to help. Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available online: <http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml> for additional information, contact Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition Manager: afc@foodbankofalaska.org

NEXT MONTH: Turning Clients into Volunteers