



## Do You Need to Give Up Direct-Mail Fundraising?

*People are wary of their mail today. Does that mean it's time to stop sending fundraising letters?*

**Q:**

We are a small nonprofit organization and have always raised money by mailing out fundraising letters. Since the anthrax scare and people's wariness of mail today, I wonder if we need to give up direct-mail fundraising. Should we switch to e-mail instead? If so, do we need to change our letter-writing techniques? We will appreciate any help you can give.

**A:**

You're right to be concerned. A survey by the Direct Mail Association ([www.the-dma.org](http://www.the-dma.org)) shows that a third of people are treating their mail with new suspicion.

But that doesn't mean it's time to give up direct-mail fundraising. The best approach is to combine e-mail with your traditional fundraising letters. Here are some rules that will help:

1. **Use e-mail to alert people** to expect a letter or package from you. Organizations using this approach report a 20-30% increase in responses.
2. **Don't send unsolicited e-mail.** E-mail only those who already know your organization or have contacted you for information.
3. **Keep your e-mail messages short.** Save your impassioned appeals for your letters.
4. **Include your organization's** name, address, logo, phone number, and Web site on your envelopes.
5. **If you send items in the mail,** make sure the front of the envelope tells what's inside.
6. **Answer your e-mail promptly.** The great advantage of e-mail is its interactive power—but that means you must be ready to respond. People expect answers to their e-mail within 24 hours.
7. **Consider using postcards** in addition to your traditional fundraising letters.
8. **Check with your mail house** to be sure they don't use powder to keep material from sticking together. Instead, suggest they use silicone products or other substitutes. If people complain about a white powder in your mailings, explain that this residue is a normal part of the mailing process and poses no danger.
9. **Focus on building relationships.** That means using a combination of techniques to cultivate and enhance connections. Use e-mail for its fast, interactive character, but keep sending your longer fundraising letters by mail.
10. **Stay informed.** Keep up with the latest developments at [www.usps.gov](http://www.usps.gov), [www.the-dma.org](http://www.the-dma.org), and [www.nonprofitmailers.org](http://www.nonprofitmailers.org) ■