

Breakthrough Tips to Boost Your Fundraising

Are you willing to try something unusual to get people's attention?

By Gail Perry

We all know how hard it is to get our donors' attention – and their money – these days. The brilliant marketers John Lepp and Jen Love at Agents of Good have a few provocative, out-of-the-box tips:

Stand out by surprising and delighting your donor.

John and Jen describe an incredibly successful campaign for Second Harvest in Toronto – referred to informally as the “beep-beep campaign.” They created a food bank appeal that actually came from the food truck itself.

The truck was an iconic symbol that showed up everywhere: in fundraising letters, thank you's, the Web site. So Second Harvest's fundraisers used the truck in their campaign and gave it its own provocative voice. In the appeal, the truck said: “Please help Second Harvest buy me so I can deliver food! I have a dream that one day I will rev up my engine with joy knowing that I am delivering food to hungry men, women and children throughout our city.”

People fell in love with the talking truck. By adding a new, unexpected voice, Second Harvest really got their attention.

Use an involvement device.

In its mailing, Second Harvest asked the donor to take a sticker from the letter and move it to the pledge card. At first, Second Harvest's fundraisers worried that making this request would confuse donors and keep them from sending back the card. But they decided to take the leap, and the strategy worked beautifully. Far from being turned off, donors liked being asked to do something a little different.

Giving people something tangible to do makes them feel more involved in your cause. Small as such an action is, it pulls donors closer to you.

Ask for the full amount you need right on the pledge card.

What? Yes, Second Harvest's fundraisers asked donors for exactly what they needed: \$65,000. They offered four check boxes on the pledge card: one for \$100, one for \$500, one for “other,” and one for \$65,000.

Seeing a large, specific amount raises people's sights. They ask themselves, “Can I give a little more? Can I help them get a little closer to \$65k?”

Also, someone just *might* send you the full amount you need. It *has* happened. During one campaign, a donor wrote a check for \$100,000 and sent it back in the reply envelope.

Even if you don't receive such a large check, asking for an ambitious amount gets your donors to stop, look, think, and take your ask seriously. And that's what you want!

Be willing to invest to gain a big return.

This campaign cost about \$2 per piece if you include all costs. And the mailing went to around 10,000 people.

That's a significant investment – one that many boards and CEOs are afraid of making. “We just don't have it in the budget!” they say.

But how much did this appeal raise? About \$80,000! So they spent \$20k to raise \$80k. That's worth contemplating!

And here's something even more incredible: Second Harvest's next appeal, six months later, raised more money than the beep-beep campaign. Because it was so memorable, the appeal reverberated in the community and had long-term, far-reaching impact.

Use an unusual envelope.

Think about your own mail. You often sort it over the trash can. You separate anything that looks like a personal note or an invitation out of the regular stack. You look at the personal stuff first. You take special notice of anything unusual.



“Giving donors something tangible to do makes them feel more involved in your cause.”

Why not use an out-of-the-box envelope with your out-of-the-box appeal? It definitely costs more money to use an extra-large envelope. Second Harvest could have cut the costs of its appeal significantly by using a “regular” envelope. But they wouldn’t have raised as much money.

Ask yourself these questions.

Do you have what it takes to pull off a campaign as successful as Second Harvest’s? Do you have:

- **updated technology on your Web site that you can change easily** when you want to try out something different?
- **the willingness to invest money** to make more money?
- **openness** to new ideas?
- **marketing and fundraising teams** that work closely with each other?
- **the courage to take a risk with your image** in order to make people laugh and take notice? To show a different side of your organization? To break your regular tone and revolutionize your approach?

If you do, then your campaign is bound to be successful! 

Gail Perry, MBA, CFRE, is the best-selling author of Fired-Up Fundraising: Turn Board Passion into Action. This article is adapted from her blog at gailperry.com.

More Pointers for a Successful Campaign

For more details from experts on launching a successful appeal, see these articles at www.NonprofitWorld.org/members:

55 Direct Mail Secrets (Vol. 25, No. 1)

How to Write a Fundraising Letter (Vol. 29, No. 5)

Making the Mail Work (Better) for You (Vol. 21, No. 2)

Think Out of the Box for Fundraising Gains (Vol. 29, No. 5)

Choosing the Right Typeface Means Cash for Your Cause (Vol. 15, No. 6)

Top Five Tips to Improve Direct-Mail Fundraising and Cement Your Future (Vol. 29, No. 2)

Reach New Supporters with Multichannel Tools (Vol. 29, No. 2)

Also see Learning Institute programs on-line: Resource Development and O for Opportunity: Exploring New Revenue Opportunities for Nonprofits (www.NonprofitWorld.org/LearningInstitute).



Richard Mussler-Wright
Membership Director, Idaho Nonprofit Center

“I use **NONPROFIT WORLD** to solve problems.”

Richard Mussler-Wright is Membership Director for the Idaho Nonprofit Center (www.idahononprofits.org). Before he joined the Center, he taught at project-based after-school centers, developed STEM curriculum, built robots, and designed the LEGO project. Education is a theme in his life, and he loves to help people help each other. In his words, “It’s an awesome experience to work with an organization dedicated to helping Idaho nonprofits realize their goals and further their causes. There is never a dull moment, and it’s engaging to work with passionate people. Our members radiate excitement, and that is infectious!”

Richard says: I became an avid **NONPROFIT WORLD** reader when I started working at the Nonprofit Center. **NONPROFIT WORLD** exposed me to the larger thinking of the nonprofit arena. I use **NONPROFIT WORLD** to solve problems and to stay on top of current trends and topics.

I often refer to the “Ask the Experts” section because these are the very same questions our members are asking me! As a big technology fan, I also check the “Apps for Nonprofits” and “People and Technology” sections.

It’s terrific when we apply a concept we read about in **NONPROFIT WORLD**. For example, we took a hard look at our office environment after reading the “Implementing Lean for Nonprofits” article (Vol. 32, No. 1).

I appreciate that the articles are archived on the Web site (NonprofitWorld.org). I frequently refer to them when working on problems.

I share copies of **NONPROFIT WORLD** at our events, and I always suggest to our nonprofit membership that they use this great resource. Thank you, **NONPROFIT WORLD!** 