

## Online Fundraising that Respects the List: The Essentials

### **Build Trust**

Donors are trusting you to make the right decisions with their money. Give them a good reason to do so, and don't betray them.

### **Offer a Value Proposition**

Show people how their donations will make a difference. What problem are you trying to solve? How will their money help get you there? Be realistic in what you're asking.

### **Get Specific**

Be as concrete as possible about how you will be putting the money to use. Will it fund a particular ad in a given state? Will it buy mosquito nets for thousands of people? Will it pay for a staff member to work in a country or on a project? Show, don't just tell, how you'll use a donation.

### **Form a Human Connection**

Tell your human story whenever you can, particularly that of someone your organization has helped or is supporting. Or, feature one of your volunteers or staff whose work is supported by your online fundraising.

### **Create Urgency**

People give in the now, so give them a reason to. Do you need to respond to an opponent's attack? Buy yard signs and door-hangers to help with grassroots turnout? Or respond to an outright existential threat, a la Planned Parenthood or the labor unions in Wisconsin? Show people why it's urgent that they give money NOW.

### **Beware Manufactured Crises**

If everything's a crisis, nothing's a crisis. Beware crying wolf: strike a balance between urgency and perspective.

### **Listen to Your List**

Listen literally when possible, by creating opportunities for supporters to give you ideas or direct feedback. They'll usually appreciate the chance to offer something substantive, though beware "share your story" asks done for their own sake. Also, watch your list's behavior. What appeals do they respond to? Which ones have a high unsubscribe rate? Which advocacy actions were popular and could be used as a fundraising hook?

### **Follow Up**

Let people know how their money was used. SHOW them the value of their dollars.

### **Trust Them**

Try to get supporters to work on your behalf. When possible, set up a distributed fundraising network that lets your members run their own campaigns.

### **Fundraise for the Long Run**

Don't just treat members as individual ATMs! Your list is a precious treasure that you want to rely on for a long time. When fundraising, first do no harm! Balance the need for short-term revenue vs. the long-term value of people who might drop off if you're over-aggressive now.

### **Rule #1: Don't Bullshit People**

They'll see through it soon enough, and they'll punish you for it once they figure it out. Usually by leaving, but sometimes by making a stink about it.