

5 Tips on Communicating with Donors

In the world of fundraising, it's about building relationships. Successful fundraisers will tell you that cultivating donors and advocates for your cause is all about creating a relationship and sustaining that connection, whether you are posting, emailing, direct mailing, picking up the phone or holding an event as your means for communicating with constituents.

Social media and web-based tools have not changed the dynamics of connecting with the people you want to reach. They provide additional methods for building the relationship, albeit in different ways. Key to success with whatever medium you choose to deploy is knowing your audience, how best to reach them and understanding the platform that's most appropriate for the particular communication, e.g., video on TikTok or YouTube, a photo or graphic on Instagram, a link on X or Threads, a story on Facebook.



Metrics and dashboards of your fundraising numbers may tell you a lot about what resonates and what, in fact, may not work so well, how to segment your communications and customize the content you deliver while remaining true to main messaging. At the core, however, is the fact that *making a connection* is what it's all about in fundraising. Here are a few communications tips.

1. Tell People the Value or Outcome of Your Services

Say more than what you do. Instead of, “*We provide after-school services for low-income families,*” tell them, “*Children with nowhere else to go find a safe place where they can learn and play after school.*” In additional messaging you can elaborate and explain why the need is there and how you help address that need. You want people to be able to picture what you do and relate to it.

2. Highlight Your Accomplishments

Donors want to be a part of success. They want to know that their donations are doing something positive and making a tangible difference. Be timely and as specific as possible in conveying what your organization has accomplished. You want donors to know that they are a part of a dynamic organization, even if nothing “special” is happening at the moment.

The \$10,000 grant we received from the Jane Doe Foundation last month enabled us to buy a new van this week that will transport up to 15 seniors to doctors’ appointments.

Annie and Angus, the two injured boxer dogs we pulled from the county shelter last week, are under veterinary care thanks to everyone who contributed to the emergency fundraiser. They will be ready for adoption when they are healthy and we get to know their personality.

3. Tell A Story (and use photos, video, graphics)

This is one of the best ways to make an emotional connection with your supporters. Share the story of a recipient of your services, your organization’s impact on a volunteer’s life, or other real-life examples related to your cause. The fact that nearly six million cats and dogs entered U.S. shelters and rescues in 2024 is a staggering number. (Source: ASPCA) Still, giving is an emotional act and the moving story of Roscoe the stray who finally found a home, for example, provides strong motivation.

This is not to say that numbers don’t matter. They do, a great deal, and particularly during times of economic uncertainty and government funding cuts. Your administrative costs and use of donated funds are important to many donors in making decisions about charities to support. Alternating your communications with the messaging strategy that appeals to different stakeholders can help reach everyone. Your donor communications plan should account for what messages you want to convey, to whom, using what platform and when.

4. Tell People How They Can Help

People want to engage with you. If there are ways they can help, let them know and include activities other than donating money: hands-on volunteering, being an advocate (sharing on social media), connecting loyalty cards or rewards points, donating goods or items from wish lists, holding at-home or virtual fundraising events. The more involved they are and the greater personal connection they feel toward your organization and cause, the more likely they will donate and become repeat or sustaining donors.

5. Say Thank You and Tell Them How They’ve Helped

You need to say, “thank you” and demonstrate how donations are helping at least as many times as you ask them to give. During times of economic uncertainty donors want to know the impact of their giving, that they are valued and that they made the right choice in investing their dollars. Keeping the connection going can help you retain your best donors.