

**Nonprofit 911 – July 2007**  
Cultivating Donors Online  
With Katya Andresen  
Sponsored by Network for Good  
[www.networkforgood.org/go](http://www.networkforgood.org/go)

The audio transcript can be found at [www.fundraising123.org](http://www.fundraising123.org)

Jono: Good afternoon, everyone, or good morning, depending on where you may be. My name is Jono Smith, and I work for Network for Good. I want to thank you for joining us today for Nonprofit 911, a fundraising session on cultivating donors online. We have had an absolutely outstanding response to the invitations for this conference call.

Almost 700 folks from nonprofits, literally across the world, received an email from Cameroon this morning and are joining us on the line today. To that end, as you probably received in your email this morning, we've extended two more sessions next week on Wednesday and Friday, at the same time, which is 1:00 PM eastern time.

You should have received an email from us this morning with a copy of some slides. It's optional if you want to reference those during the presentation. If you don't have those, there are no worries. It should be sitting in your email. If, for some reason you didn't receive those, please check your junk mail or your spam folders.

I know a few people emailed this morning to say they had some trouble locating them, but they did find them there. If you still don't have those, just go ahead and email us at [Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org](mailto:Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org), and we'll make sure you receive those notes from this presentation. Again, you don't necessarily need those to follow along today.

In just a moment, I'm going to be introducing Katya Andresen, our VP of Marketing for Network for Good, who's going to take you through five steps to improve the help of your online fundraising program. Then, she's actually going to take the questions that you send in at the end of the call today.

If you want to email us your questions during the call, we'll try to take as many of those as possible. Again, the email address is [Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org](mailto:Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org). We have received some great questions already, and Katya is looking forward to speaking to those here in just a moment. Again, thank you for joining us today. Without further ado, I'm going to hand the phone over to Katya.

Katya: Hello, everyone. Again, thank you so much for joining us today. As Jono said, I'm going to be covering five quick fix-its to the most common problems in online fundraising today. I'm going to weave in answers to the questions that you all have raised today. I'd love for you to email me during the call.

If you send email to the address we just gave you, they will come directly into my email box, and I will be happy to answer them as I go along. I've gotten a couple of emails from people saying they can't find the slides. Again, check your spam filter and your email box. It's a PDF file. If you don't have them, don't worry. They're not that significant, and I'm going to talk you through them, and we will send you another copy.

With that said, I was fascinated that, when we said are you stuck with online fundraising, we got literally hundreds and hundreds of people saying, "Yes," and getting on this call. So, I wanted to start the call today by giving some likely reasons that your online giving might be code blue, if we're going to go with this 911 theme.

I think there are probably three likely diagnoses if you're not getting the results that you want. Let me start by hitting those three most common mistakes or problems, and then I'm going to turn to how to fix them. The first is what I call the "Field of Dreams" syndrome. This is the first most common problem.

That's a problem with your message simply not getting out to enough places so you get to get any results. If you all saw the movie, *Field of Dreams*, and even if you didn't, I'm sure you've heard the mantra, "If you build it, they will come," which is actually totally false when it comes to online fundraising.

It's simply not enough to stick a DonateNow button on your homepage, sit back, and think that's going to be enough to get you results. One of your problems may be that you're not driving the traffic to your site, or attracting people to you at the rate that you would like. I'm going to talk a little bit more about how to do that, but that could be one of the problems you're having.

The emails you're sending out may not be effective, maybe they're getting bounced, or maybe you don't have a good email list. I'm going to talk a little bit about what to do about that. Problem number one might be that your message is not getting out there enough. Problem number two might be that you have the wrong message.

It might be that you've got issues with the messages on your home page.

You might have issues with the messages in your email. I'm going to talk a little bit today about how to have a better message, and one that's going to increase your conversion rates. I'd say the most common message error is "It's all about us" disease.

By that, I mean most of the home pages of nonprofits that I've checked out over time, I'd say 90% of them fall into this category unfortunately. They read like an About Us page, and so do the emails. By that I mean your About Us page belongs at the link on your website that says, "About Us."

That's where you put your mission statement, the history of your organization, and all those details. Too often, that's what we put on the home page, so that that's the first thing that people see. We want to get away from telling people all about us, engaging more, and taking a more donor-centered approach. We need to get away from talking about our mission statement, and how much we need people's money. It might be a message problem.

The third possible diagnosis is what I call "Call to Action" complex, or call to inaction, rather. Oftentimes campaigns fall down by lacking a clear call to action. This could be as simple as the DonateNow button on your email or website being hard to find, or you could have an onerous donation process or an onerous sign up process.

If you don't make it easy to people, make it really clear what you're asking of people, that may be part of the problem. It might be a reason you're not getting the results you want. It sounds really basic, but I got several emails just last week alone from different nonprofits, because I sign up for a lot of different lists.

A couple of them had incredibly compelling human interest stories, and they were really interesting, but they were just sort of an enewsletter, and there was no way to take action on the page. I was sort of shocked by that. I'm going to talk a little bit about how to spruce up your call to action. Those are three things to think about that might be barriers to you getting the results that you want.

What do you do? Jono said I'm going to cover five things. I am. I'm going to give you five rules for resuscitating your online giving program. The first one is to make everything you do far more donor-centric, email, websites and all outreach. What do I mean by donor-centric? Something's donor-centric if it answers the question, "Why me?"

This is going from an About Us page or email, to an email or webpage that answers the question, "Why should I care?" I, begin the donor. Why

should I care? What does this have to do with me? Why is this relevant to me? Let me give you a couple of examples of organizations that are great at doing this? These aren't from the slides. I'm just going to tell you a couple of stories here.

The first one is Make-a-Wish Foundation. I was on a panel with the brilliant marketing from Make-a-Wish Foundation a couple of months ago. She unveiled their new campaign, and this is just wonderful donor-centric. You can find it right at their website, [MakeAWish.org](http://MakeAWish.org). If you're not familiar with Make-a-Wish, that's an organization that helps children with life threatening illnesses make wishes and have them fulfilled.

Maybe it's a little girl who wants to dance with real ballerinas. Maybe it's a child who wants to meet a football star or what have you. What they've done is instead of emphasizing need and talking all about the mission of Make-a-Wish, they've put their volunteers and donors right at the center of their new ad campaign, which you can go view on their website.

They have a wonderful new spot where it highlights Stewart Snodgrass, who's a teacher that dresses up like an evil super hero so that a little boy can save a city. It has the whole thing orchestrated beautifully, and the story is about how Stewart Snodgrass changed someone's life, so he is the actual protagonist of the spot.

Obviously, there's an adorable child that's been helped and everything, but it's about what that person can do for the organization. Carbon Fund, which is a nonprofit that uses Network for Good services for fundraising, you should go check them out. They have a great page that takes about your carbon footprint, and what this means to you.

I can hear some of you thinking, "That sounds great, but I'm not that kind of an organization. It's easy to talk about Make-a-Wish from a donor perspective. I do things like legal aid, I do work that's very process-oriented, or I'm working on results that are far away." You can still be very much focused on the donor.

You can do that through compelling human interest stories, and attaching them to donor experience. You can do that by appealing to values that you know your donors have. There are many opportunities to do that, so I really encourage that. Another thing you can do to make your approach more donor-centric, is to do a better job at segmentation.

Segmentation is simply finding common groups of people, and understanding who they are and targeting accordingly. Emily wrote in with a question. She said, "Segmentation's great. We do quite a bit of it, but how much is too much?" Segmentation is pretty good. You want to be

as personal and targeted as you can in your communications.

It's going to ramp up your reply rates and your conversion rates significantly. You don't really know what the right segments are until you do some testing. That's one of the things I want to get across to you today. When you do your next big email appeal, send out three or four different versions of it. Don't just send out one.

Send them to different groups of donors and see which do the best. Then the next time you go out to do an email campaign, you have something to look at. You know, "Gee, a lot of people opened that email, and not very many people opened that email. I wonder why that was." You can start to analyze what's working and what's not working.

I want to give you some ideas of ways you can segment. The first one is that you can get your donors, your supporters and the people on your mailing list to segment themselves. When they come to you and sign up to be contacted by you, you can ask, "What do you want from us?" We do this for Network for Good.

When people come to us, we say, "Do you want information on online fundraising or email campaigns? What kind of information can we provide to you?" You can get people to say exactly the type of way they want to be contacted as well. Another thing you can do is study your donors based on what campaigns they've responded to.

What did they seem to really like? What things did they answer before? Then you can go back to them next time and refer to the campaign that they supported. You can segment by the amounts of money different donors give. For the small sum donors, you might want to emphasize campaigns where \$10 makes a big difference.

Large amount donors might want to describe their gifts in a more tangible way, based on the larger level of donation. You can also look at frequency. You'll want to communicate with your monthly donors differently that you communicate to people who only give to you once a year. Another thing to look at is geography.

Someone asked me how significant geography is, and I had this weak answer, "It depends on what you do." If you're an organization whose programs sort of vary by area, and you think it's very compelling to talk about what you're doing in the local area, then by all means, geography is important.

If you're an international aid organization, whether you're communicating with a donor in California or New York, it's suddenly not as important or

relevant, unless you have local events in their area that have to do with your international work that you might want to invite them to. Another way to think about segmenting is to look at referral source.

Where did someone come in from? Did they come from Flickr? When you talk to them, you might want to be using a lot of images, and encouraging activity on Flickr. If you don't know what Flickr is, hopefully you know what YouTube is. It's a website where everyone can share videos.

Flickr is a site where everyone can share photos. If someone came through to you from CharityNavigator, you're going to talk to them a lot about your results, because that is someone who's very focused on fundraising efficiency and the effectiveness of your organization. Another way to segment is to look at what people have done with you.

Have they volunteered? Have they signed petitions? That's another way to talk to them on a more personal level. That's the donor-centric piece, and if you look there's a slide. If you guys don't have the slides, don't worry. I have a slide that says, "Reviving your Message," and it's got three circles on it.

These circles sum up the donor-centric approach, but two additional things I want to bring into the mix here. Basically, your messages need to do three things. They need to answer, "Why me?" That's the personal piece that I'm about, the donor-centric piece. Then, there are two more questions. "Why now?" You need to get some sense of urgency, or immediacy, and then, "What for?" You need to start talking about impact.

What is someone going to get if they donate to you? Your far-off mission statement is not as tangible or compelling as the what for? You need to break down what you do, and think in human interest stories, success stories, or other results that are immediately understandable, and something that someone's really going to want to act on.

I had a couple people say they haven't gotten the results they wanted on their email. Leanne mentioned that. Martha asked me about communicating in print versus email. For both of you, I would say the first point is to say, on your site and email, are you answering these three questions in all your communications?

If you're not, that might be a problem, or you might be having an email delivery or formatting problem. I'm going to start talking about that a little bit later. Let's turn to, "Why now?" Someone's asking me to speak more slowly, so I will try to do that. In terms of why now, we find at Network for Good, people generally give money on two occasions online.

One is usually in December, at the end of the year. It's part of an annual gift that they're squeezing in by the end of the tax year. In fact, our two biggest days of the year are December 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. I know this sounds a little crazy, but you should definitely send out an online appeal in email the week between Christmas and New Years.

You're going to have a great conversion rate. Everyone is suddenly scrambling to make their last minute gifts, and if your name is front and center when they're making all those last minute gifts, that's going to be a very nice thing, indeed. People make a lot of gifts to a lot of charities that last week of the year.

The other time of the year that people typically give is if there's a big, large scale humanitarian crisis, like a tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, an earthquake in Pakistan, or that type of thing. What do you do if you don't have any of those things? What do you do if you're a local soup kitchen? What do you do if it's February?

One of the things that you need to think about is make it clear why someone needs to act now instead of tomorrow or never. I'm going to give you some great examples. A colleague from Mercy Corps has very nicely allowed us to share the results of one of their email campaigns, and you're going to see how, "Why now?" becomes such an important thing in the campaign.

The last of these three things that your message has to answer is, "What for?" You need to be very tangible. You need to have a very clear call to action. I noted earlier that a lot of campaigns lack a clear call to action. What are you asking for, and then, what happens when they take that action? What the impact?

How can you show you're a good steward of people's money? Do you have on your home page a pie chart, showing where donations go? If you don't look at [SaveTheChildren.org](http://SaveTheChildren.org), look at [Care.org](http://Care.org), look at [MercyCorps.org](http://MercyCorps.org), and imitate what they're doing. All of them have, on the bottom of their home page, information that makes it clear where your money's going when you support them.

That's not enough, though. It's not enough to say, "Don't worry. We're not going to spend all your money on overhead." You want to be very specific about what kinds of programs and what kinds of good are going to result. Don't just focus on need; focus on what someone is going to see happen because they supported you. That's really important.

If you have the PDF file, I now want to go through some examples from Mercy Corps. If you don't have it, don't worry. I will try to describe these

in a way that doesn't detract from your experience here. They shared with us the best emails of last year, and the lowest performing ones. What I find so interesting is the ones that did really well clearly have, "Why me?" "Why now?" and "What for?"

The ones that didn't do so well either fall down in one to three of those areas. Their best performing email the whole year was one that was for the crisis in Lebanon. They sent it out about a year ago, June 25<sup>th</sup> of last year. The headline was, "Humanitarian Fears Grow in Lebanon." They had a compelling photo of a woman crying next to a photo of someone bringing in some aid to the area.

I really like that approach because just with pictures, they've conveyed, "Why me?" "Why now?" and "What for?" "Why me?" You see the woman looking upset. You've heard the news. It's certainly something that connects with you emotionally, but right next to it, you see Mercy Corps already responding, and you realize on a very tangible level there's something that you can do right now to support it.

There's very good text in there. There's two separate links that are in the email for giving. You should always have a couple ways in every email to give, if it's a fundraising email. Here, I'd like to pause and say you should be sending out no more than two to three appeals for money a year. That's plenty, but you should be communicating with your donors three or four times that amount, just to thank them and to tell them where their money went.

Most donors say the number one reason they stopped giving to charity is how they were treated by the charity. If you're not thanking your donors constantly, and telling them what they've accomplished, and what you're accomplished with their help, then that may be why their a little bit grouchy when they do get the email appeal from you.

These aren't the only types of appeals that need to go out. When you're asking for money, put it in a couple of places. They have it in the first paragraph. They have it in the last paragraph. They have a Learn More link, and of course, they have an Unsubscribe link at the bottom. That was their best email. It brought in about \$70,000.

Another email that did really well is their year end appeal. I'm sure all of you know about 40% of volume for most nonprofits is the last month of the year. They had a, "Help us to prepare for the year ahead," appeal that also brought in nearly \$70,000 because again, that was perfect, since it was the time of year that people are inclined to give.

They sent that out December 27<sup>th</sup>. Like I reminded you, that week between

Christmas and New Years is excellent timing. They had a great response. Again, they've got a picture that shows a mother with her child that talks about their plight and the difference that you can make. They also did an appeal that did about \$50,000 to \$60,000 saying, "A thoughtful, caring last minute gift."

That's another good one for people who are trying to figure out a gift for someone at the last minute. That's a great appeal. You can give the gift of charity. That's a good appeal for answering, "Why me?" because it gives me a way to give a present to Uncle Bob who I completely forgot about, and I need to send him something.

Now, let's go onto email campaigns that didn't do so great. They did one that was just, "Helping you solve unemployment." They had a picture of a young man smiling. He was a teenager in Kyrgyzstan, and most people don't know where Kyrgyzstan is. He's a teenager there that's looking for work. It's okay. It's not terribly compelling.

What our friends at Mercy Corps said was that they had one donor write in and say, "I'll send you a donation if you can find my son a job." The idea of teenagers looking for work is something that some parents were struggling with, much less finding that, "Why me? Oh, I really want to do something about that right now. Let's employ a child on the other side of the world."

That one didn't resonate so well. They had another one, "Sowing the seeds of peace in Central Asia." It was talking a little bit about a peace program in Tajikistan. Again, if you're working on world peace, that's okay, but you need to find a way to make that a little less abstract, a little less far off, and with a little more of a sense of immediacy.

Why is this an intractable situation? Is it solvable or how can my gift really make a difference? I want to move on now to another point of these five points, which is making it easy. This will answer a number of questions that I got from all of you. There's a slide in here you'll see, and again, if you don't have them in front of you, this is the home page of the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

You need to skip ahead to slide number 12. I'm going to come back to slide number 10 in a moment. This is the home page of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and what I like about this page is that it succeeds on the easy front. What I'm talking about there is that your website and emails should make it very easy for someone to find and react to you in what they're looking for.

Basically, your website needs to have three welcome mats. My colleague,

Mark Rovner, from Sea Change Strategies, gave me this paradigm. I think it really works well, and this answers Karen's question. Karen wrote and said, "We're revamping our website. I don't know whether to appeal to our existing donors or our new donors."

The answer is that you need to appeal to both. There's a group of people that are going to come, and they're going to want to take action right away. For them, you need a really prominent button for taking action. As part of email fundraising, it needs to be a really large DonateNow button, and it needs to be in at least two places on your site.

It needs to be up in the navigation, and it needs to be somewhere above the fold, meaning in the part of your home page that comes up when someone goes to the site on their computer. It needs to be very visible there, as well. If it's tiny, or it's only in text, make it look like a button, and make it bigger. If you think I'm crazy, when we did this at Network for Good, on our own site, our conversion rates went up 30%.

It really does make a difference if you have a giant donation button. If you look at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, there are several ways to donate across the bottom of the page, and also you can DonateNow at the top right corner. It's very easy to find. There are some people who like to look at navigation, and some people who will look at the home page.

You want to make it easy for both of them to act. That's the first welcome mat for people who are ready to act. You need a second welcome mat that is for people who are kind of interested in you, but aren't necessarily ready to take action. For Karen, these would be the new donors she's trying to attract, who might find their way to her website.

For those people, you basically want to start to develop a lead generation mechanism from this. Your home page, as much as it needs a donate button, it needs a button where you're capturing email addresses. "Sign up for our enewsletter" is really not enough. I don't need to sign up for more newsletters, and I don't think I'm the only one. I get too many already.

Even if I like your organization, I'm not sure I necessarily want to get on a mailing list for appeals. One thing you might want to think about doing is figuring out a way to recast your email newsletter, or make it sound more interesting. In other words, you can still be sending out an email newsletter type of thing, but make it a little more compelling.

What's in it for the person to sign up for your enewsletter? Do they get updates on exhibit times? If you're a kidney foundation, do they get tips for living with kidney disease every month in their mailbox? That might be something that they'd want to sign up for. You want to find a way for

those people to give you permission to contact them.

You also want to have compelling content on there that starts to sell your cause, and that answers the, “Why me?” and “What for?” questions. One of the ways that you need to do that is with photographs. I’m astounded by how many websites I check out in the nonprofit sector that have very small photos or no photos at all.

Photos are a fantastic way to tell your story in just one image. You need to try to have a very large, prominent image on your home page. If you don’t already, please think about doing that. Then, put really interesting information on your home page that people might want to go explore if they’re in the second group.

On the Monterey Bay Aquarium page, they have rare jellyfish. That was the first thing I clicked on because I was dying to know what a rare jellyfish looked like. They have cool pictures and links. Even if you don’t have cute animals to put on your home page, there are definitely ways you can do that.

If you’re an advocacy organization perhaps, for illegal immigrants or something like that, you could have updates on what’s going on with immigration policy. Think about what are things that would really engage someone and make them start to see the value in your organization? The last group of people are people who are just coming to you as an information resource.

They’re not ever really necessarily going to be donors. They might be coming because they’re a graduate student doing research. They might be someone trying to check out the hours you’re open if you’re some kind of arts organization, or performance times. You want to be sure in the navigation, it’s easy for them to find what they need.

The last tip on this welcome mat theory, your navigation shouldn’t be the departments of your organization, or how your organization is structured. It should be the top things that people coming to your site are looking for. That’s a very important thing. If I’m that third group, and I’m just coming to explore, the way that I think about the issue, the navigation is reflective of that, and it’s easy to find what I need.

I want to answer the rest of Karen’s question. She asked lots of ideas about existing donors and new donors. They have a lot of large donors now, donors making large gifts, but she might want to encourage some smaller gifts. How does she do that without alienating and what should she do with that?

Part of it is she should definitely segment her list. She should be talking to her large donors and small donors differently. She should also experiment putting on her home page and her email outreach to new donors, some smaller level gifts. She should also try testing a couple versions of her donate page, one version with a smaller amount added in, and one with higher amounts, and see what happens.

You can guess and make assumptions until the end of the day, but it's always surprising when you start testing what actually happens. I'd encourage her to test, test, test. Another thing to think about is if she's trying to attract younger donors with smaller gifts, to turn to some of her larger donors who are very dedicated, and ask them to reach out to their friends and family members to help fundraise on behalf of the organization.

We've had great fortune with that here at Network for Good, great results with friends to friends fundraising. You can do that by asking someone to forward an email. You can do that by building a fundraising widget at [SixDegrees.org](http://SixDegrees.org), which is a site that we run here at Network for Good. The last point I want to make before I go to some more of the questions after the welcome mat point is to really encourage you to be inspirational, not just need-based.

I'm going to talk about that quite a bit. I find a lot of email appeals particularly say, "We need the money. Please help us." Maybe there's a human interest story in there. The problem with that is there are 1.5 million nonprofits in the U.S. alone, and all of them need money. Everyone needs money, and saying to a donor or potential donor, "We need money," really isn't enough.

That doesn't differentiate you from anyone else who's knocking on the door, sending appeals or calling people at dinner hour. You need to step back and think, "We can still need, but we also need to put out something that aspirational, inspirational and shows what will happen if people take action.

I have a slide in here from [MalariaNoMore.org](http://MalariaNoMore.org), for those of you who don't have the slides in front of you. They do a wonderful job. Their home page changes all the time, although you don't have to do that. National Geographic did a big story on malaria this month. They have a giant mosquito on their home page.

It says, "Help stop malarial mosquitoes. Donate bed nets." When you click on the buttons, \$10 will buy you a bed net. You're confronted with a problem, and then you're immediately given a way to solve the problem. That's how I feel about gloom and doom marketing. It's okay to hold out

consequences, and a scenario of what will happen if no action is taken, only if you have an immediate way for people to prevent that from happening.

Some environmental organizations fall down on this. They talk a lot about apocalyptic future we have because of global warming, and it paralyzes people, because they don't believe that their small action will make a difference. You get into big numbers. People don't feel that their action will make a difference.

It's a strange paradox. The bigger the problem you describe the less likely someone is going to think that they can make a difference. How can you boil down what you're doing and demonstrate your need in very human, individual, small terms, and then show that a donation will make a difference on that tangible, small problem that people can relate to?

I don't mean that you should diminish the scope of what you're dealing with, but you boil it down into human faces and stories that people can actually relate to. People can't relate to gigantic numbers. An example I put her in my slides, if you backtrack and go to slide number 10, is a campaign I saw that I liked, except for I thought that they missed the inspiration point.

What it is is a magazine spread that the ILO did, that's the International Labor Organization. It's two hands that are shackled. One hand is on one side of the magazine spread, and one hand is on the other. They're tied together by actual strips of paper that are a chain. When you fully open the magazine, the chain breaks, and there's the message.

It's very cool and very gripping. It's very attention getting and interesting. It's a great thing you could think of copying for your own cause, even if you're not dealing with human slavery. There are different ways to play off this idea. Where it falls down is, once you do that, underneath it says, "Ending human slavery is not this easy."

Up in the corner, it says, "Visit the site [TakeAction.org](http://TakeAction.org)." This is a great example of too much need and not enough inspiration. I look at that, and I think, "Wow. They say it's hard to end human slavery. What am I supposed to do?" What that should have said was, "You just took the first step to ending human slavery. Go to [ILO.org](http://ILO.org), and take the next step," or something like that.

Then they somewhat feel that they actually have already done something, that they can do something, and that they can make a difference. I attached another slide I rather liked from [WorldWildlifeFund.org](http://WorldWildlifeFund.org), which is slide 11. It's a picture of the African savanna, and there's a giraffe made out of

coins standing in the middle of it.

The idea of it is that underneath it says, “Save the world with a few coins,” and it has their website address. Again, this is a good way of figuratively showing and talking. This might be a good bet for those of you who do things that aren’t quite as tangible. This is a way of implying that even small donations lead to something good and contribute towards something that’s really going to make a difference.

I want to spend a couple minutes. A lot of questions are coming in about email. I want to spend a few minutes answering some of those, and then I’m going to start turning to some of the questions that have come in during the call. Here are a couple of thoughts about email. I started out in the beginning and I said, “One of the problems that you might be having is your message isn’t getting out there enough.”

It’s not enough to have a donate button on your website. I want to talk a little bit about what are some common email problems, and answer some of your questions on that. Particularly, Jeannie, had asked some questions about this. Jeannie, I’m sorry I was saying your name wrong. First of all, let me say that email is a great way to fundraise.

It has really nice response rates. A good response rate for an email campaign is five to fifteen percent. That is way higher than direct mail, which can be only half to five percent. It’s relatively inexpensive. It’s a way for someone to take action right away. Eighty percent of people who are going to respond, are going to respond within 48 hours of the email campaign.

For a fund raiser, that’s very nice. The problem is, as you know, we all get too much email, so you’re competing with a lot of other messages. People are a little bit sick of spam, to say the least, and some of you asked what to do about getting around spam filters, so I’m going to talk about that. It’s also pretty easy to delete emails.

It’s also pretty easy to delete email if someone’s asking you for money for the third time in a row without having sent you other things, so don’t forget what I told you about those ratios of email. Here are a couple thoughts on email strategy. One is that you need to build a permission-based email list.

This is the key thing for dealing with spam and complaints, and increasing your response rates. It’s really not worth it to buy someone else’s list and hit them up if people have not asked to hear from you. You want to use your website to gather email addresses. You want to collect from offerings. When you do different events, do you carry around a sign up

sheet?

If you're canvassing a neighborhood and people don't want to take action, you could say, "Would you be willing to give us your email address so that we can keep you updated about what we do?" I was out bicycling the other weekend in Washington, and there was the Save the Bike Trail organization out on the bike trail. They were collecting email addresses.

You want to find people who are willing to hear from you. As I said earlier, when you do get their email addresses, you should write them and ask what they're interested in hearing about if you don't already have that information. That will lower spam complaints, and increase open rates, and people will be that much happier.

You want to contact those people and cultivate them, not just ask for money as I said, and you want to segment that list as much as you can. I talked a lot about segmentation earlier and I just wanted to hit that again and remind you how important that is. If you're sending your emails out from Outlook, that's very bad. Please don't do that.

You will probably end up on black lists for doing that, which means you won't be able to do it in the future. Please go through some carrier or service like Network for Good powered by Groundspring's Email Now service, Constant Contact, or Vertical Response, which we offer through Network for Good powered by Groundspring.

Use someone who manages their email products on white lists, and understands how that works. They're going to have better deliverability rates, and they're going to be sure that you stay on the white lists. They're going to ensure that you have unsubscribe links on the bottom of your emails and they have best practices that will ensure that people continue to want to hear from you.

Another thing Kathy had asked me was what do you do with people who are always moving? How do you encourage them to update their contact information? I had two thoughts on that. One was don't forget that everything we're talking about today doesn't exist in a vacuum. Just because someone gave their first donation online doesn't mean they might not give a donation through the mail in the future.

You need to think about contacting people in different ways. Ask them how they want to be contact and do think about cross-channel promotion. One of the thing you could do is if you're getting some email bounces, try direct mail to those people, and invite them to get back on the email list, and try them that way.

Think cross-channel promotions if some email addresses have gone bad. I don't know about you, but I do change email addresses from time to time and I tell my family, "The last thing I'm going to do is sign up again with Expedia, Netflix or all these other places, and ask to get back on their email list."

It's the same with charities, unfortunately, so try the cross-channel approach. Also, don't be afraid of putting messages on the bottom of your outreach all the time, like, "Moving? Changing email addresses? Don't forget to update us." Feel free to invite people to do that. I have a couple more thoughts on email here.

I mentioned testing. Email is such an easy way to test. We do a couple versions of a lot of the different emails we send out, and you can try testing different messages or different images. Try different times, days of the week and hours of the day. I'll give you a little tip on that. Most people donate to charity during the week between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM.

You're going to be better off sending during the week than on the weekends. Whenever I ask people to guess, they would think it's like in the evening, but actually, it's during the business day, so you might want to think about that. Try because maybe your donors are night owls. Do some testing. Try and see if you offer a different day or time, if that makes a significant difference.

Try different email types. Email newsletters, something that looks like a bulletin, something that's short, or something that's a little longer. Someone had asked me the difference between print outreach and email outreach. Both of them need to have solid messaging. Emails need to have that message said in a much more economical format.

People will not want to read a long email. People spend a second or two glancing at emails and deciding if they're going to read on. You need to be very succinct in your emails. In fact, it's great to have a format where you have some text or some story, but wrapped around it, a very big headline so that someone may only read that, and they can take action based on that.

You can also test different segments or different geography. We just encourage you to get on to do that. You can do that with Network for Good's tools. You can do that with other tools. It's really important to do that so you can figure out what are good results.

Jono: That's great. We've been receiving literally quite a few questions coming across. We're still happy to receive some more. If we don't have time to address them all in the call today, we'll certainly try to get back to you.

The email address again is [Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org](mailto:Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org). I'm going to start with a question from Marie, with Feline Rescue.

Marie is using Network for Good's basic DonateNow service, our free service to collect online donations. She said the money is tight due to purchases and renovations to the buildings, so there's a reluctance to pay a monthly fee or set up fee for an online fundraising service that charges, yet she wants to really expand her fundraising options, membership fees, memorials, sponsorships, capital campaigns, etc.

These are the types of features that come with Custom DonateNow. She's asking, "How do organizations who run an extremely tight budget justify making an investment, albeit a small investment sometimes, in online fundraising services?"

Katya: Okay, I'm happy to take a crack at that. Results are the best argument for that, Marie. This isn't a sales call, but really briefly, at Network for Good, we have a free product you get. It's just the Donate button that goes through Network for Good. You can also pay \$29 a month, and get a product where we set up a web page that looks exactly like your website.

It allows you to do all the things that she's talking about in her questions like memorial giving. It allows you to set donation amounts. It allows you to play with the messaging that's on that page. It allows you much more. You can do testing, which you can't do with the free product. It's really useful.

Our average customer on that program makes significantly more in donations than the other customer. It's significant. I believe it's about five times higher for the paid service, because again, it's one-page check out. It's your brand. It's your messages, et cetera. In terms of online fundraising, if you're having someone say, "We don't want to pay for a service," our average customer, for every dollar they invest in our services, they get six dollars back online.

Yes, it is an investment, but as any marketer knows, if you invest in online marketing, you're going to see virtually nothing coming in. Those are some basic results we can give you. Actually, we will send you an entire list that compares the free and paid services, with all the reasons you might want to upgrade. I'm going to move on to the next question, but I hope that helps.

This is Tonya Lee. She says, "We're a small nonprofit. How do we draw people to even go to our website? Do you have resources of web developers who can help us improve our site? On a different note, how do I approach colleagues and corporations to introduce the company? I find

people don't return my calls when I try to speak to them, because they know I'm going to talk about it."

To answer the first one, how do you get people to your site? This goes back to the field of dreams problem. I would say that what you need to do is you need to find the passionate constituencies out there that already exist, and pull them to your website. How do you do that? I hope everyone on the phone has a Google alert set up for their organization and their issues.

If you don't, go to Google. Hit More. Find Google Alerts. You type the name of your organization in quotations. You type in some key words of your organization like, "feline rescue," or "cat rescue," for example, from the previous question, and Google will send you an email every time you're mentioned anywhere online.

Go to [Technorati.com](http://Technorati.com), which is a directory of blogs. Type in your issues. Type in your organization needs. Look at all the conversations that are going on out there. Type in your issue. You're going to find bloggers probably devoted just to your issue. If you're a tiny nonprofit, this costs nothing to do, and you can very efficiently locate all the people out there who are already passionate about your issue.

Start a conversation with them about your organization, and encourage them to visit the site, but also comment on the blogs and start to raise awareness by going out to people who already care about your issue. The online world gives us a fantastic opportunity to begin to do this. I always put up the slide for the Medieval Pottery Research Group when I do workshops because it's like, "Wow. There's a group out there that's thinking about that."

There's definitely a group out there thinking about your issue. The other question was about free web resources. There are usually some hungry graphics students at the local university or college who are looking for some experience. There are also larger firms who often have pro bono projects. Here, I will also announce something really fun that we're doing at Network for Good. We want to offer two opportunities to just the people on the phone today.

One is we are going to go an extreme nonprofit makeover for a small nonprofit. If your nonprofit has a website that is doing very poorly, if you're not getting very many donations and you think it looks pretty bad or doesn't do any of the things we did today, send us an email to [Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org](mailto:Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org), give us the link to your site and in one paragraph, tell us why you are the best candidate for an extreme nonprofit makeover.

We will help you do that. We will also be putting it up on our learning center, which we're launching in a couple of months, as a case study. Also, we found a lot of you struggling with part of your stories, and we'll get to the third questions of that list there about partners and how to get people to take your call.

One of the things that you need to do is be good at telling your story. I know that's hard for a lot of us, because we're very close to our issue. We have brought on a writer for *People* magazine. She also writes for *USA Today*, and her specialty is what she calls angel stories. She's the one who pens a lot of the angel stories you read in *People* magazine about various nonprofits.

For those of you who use Custom DonateNow, Network for Good's service, we would like to pick three of you and have this journalist work with you to develop some human interest stories. If you agree, we would like to use them as templates and examples, and send them out to the rest of you on the call to help you tell a better story.

Those are two things we encourage you to do. Write us back, and we will get some of those people signed up. Even if you aren't chosen, we're going to be sending out those examples and case studies of how we revamped human interest stories and websites, so that hopefully, it can benefit everyone.

Someone says, "Will the second session for the conference call be a recorded repeat of the call today?" We're going to be covering the same territory in the next session, but the questions may be different that come in during that. It might be slightly different, but there's going to be a significant amount of overlap to the two additional sessions next week.

The next question is, "Will written notes of this call be available?" Yes, we will be sending out written notes for sure. In addition, if you're not already on our list, you are now by signing up for the call. We send out great weekly and biweekly tips that cover the kinds of things today, and those are totally free. We will get you on that list as well.

Someone said, "I'm with Friends in Need Foundation. We run weekly feeding programs in New York City. We hand out sandwiches and juice. Do you have any ideas on how to maximize monthly pledges as opposed to sporadic donations?" That is a fantastic question. One of the best things you could possibly do is to get people to sign up for monthly giving.

You should not ask for money without asking for them to make it a monthly gift. At Network for Good, if you use any of our services, that's

built in, even with our free service. We're finding 30% to 40% of our donation volume right now is recurring gifts. If you're a marketer, that's the best thing you could possibly imagine.

All you're going to be doing is thanking those people all the time, because they're making a monthly gift. We find the average monthly gift is about \$65, so that's quite wonderfully. What do you do to encourage it? I encourage you to go to Mercy Corps because they do a phenomenal job of pushing monthly giving.

They call it super sizing. Would you like fries with that? Throughout your entire donation checkout process, they're urging you to make monthly gifts, and I have a lot of questions to cover here, so I encourage you to go there. The keys are putting the possibility in front of people immediately, right when they gift, and making it built right into your donation flow. That's very important.

Second, you need to do all the things we talked about today. If you make a monthly gift, why is that so much better for the organization? Why would they get better results? What would happen with the monthly gift? Are there really neat ways you can package the monthly gift so that you can have a special name of the fund or a special name you give the donor for being a monthly giver?

I was a supporter of [YouFaith.com](http://YouFaith.com), and they called me an ambassador because I gave monthly gifts. I only gave \$10 a month, but I got the title of ambassador, which is pretty nice. Someone asked that I repeat the Technorati link. It's Technorati.com, and it's a very cool site that has 70 million blogs on there and you can go see what bloggers are saying about you.

You can go make a blog if you don't already have one, if there are already bloggers talking about your issue that you can engage with. Jack just founded this charity, and he says the problem is huge that he's dealing with. He says he's bettering the lives of children in Africa. That is a big topic, and he said I talked about boiling down the problem. What additional ideas might be helpful other than pictures to boil down the problem?

I think storytelling is great for boiling down the problem. There was a really great post from a donor power blog. I have a blog, [NonprofitMarketingBlog.com](http://NonprofitMarketingBlog.com). Another fantastic blog you can get to from my blog is Donor Power Blog, and he talks about puppies versus Darfur, which is kind of tactless name, but a wonderful post about boiling it down, and why one puppy outperforms a billion people in Africa.

That shifts entirely if you can talk entirely if you can talk about individual people in Africa. I encourage you to look at Care's website. Go to [Care.org](http://Care.org), and look at what they've done to boil down the problem of women in poverty. They have individual pictures of women, and they talk about how the donor can feel powerful by helping another woman feel powerful.

Also, go to [Kiva.org](http://Kiva.org) and look at the wonderful job they do talking about people who can benefit from micro enterprise loans around the world. It's a really nice job making it very individual. Steven asks, "Should one send both printed and email newsletters with the same information to the same people?"

I wouldn't send the exact same thing out, no. First of all, the printed newsletter and the email newsletter had better look different, because what works in print and what works online are very different email newsletters should be a lot shorter. It should have a lot easier ways to take action. You should be able to skim them quickly.

Also, keep in mind the issue of preview panes. A lot of people take out artwork. A lot of programs do. My Outlook certainly does. Make sure that your email kind of makes sense and looks nice even when the photos come out versus a print where you can be sure your photos are on display, and you can have a nice, big splash photo in there with a lot more detail.

Why would you send the same thing to someone twice? I would really encourage you to not only use the different format, but do a different message and see what happens. Maybe you'll find that one message performs better than the other, but you need to draw some kind of distinction. You don't want to be lengthening out the same people with the same message.

The second question is, "What advice can you give about creating a website that can be changed for small organizations? What do you think about Template's Basic Designer? Is it worth investing in a PR firm?" I think what you want is probably a content management system, and you can find some pretty inexpensive ones out there.

I think that's completely worth doing. Get someone to help you set up templates. This is what we're doing here at Network for Good. We were founded by AOL Yahoo, and all these technology giants, and here we are. We have no content management system. When I want to change something on our website, I have to go through several people.

That's a problem, a pain that I can share with you as a small organization. What you want is a system that gives you templates for certain pages that

you can go in and change so that as opportunities arise, and you get learning from your marketing materials, you can be changing what people are seeing on your site. That's very important to do.

Someone asked me if I could review the five steps from the call. Since we're winding up here in a second, I'll try to do a couple more. The five things that I covered today are make your campaigns more donor-centric. Answer the question, "Why me?" Number two is to bring a sense of urgency to your campaign. Answer the question, "Why now?" for the donor.

Number three is make your campaign more tangible. What are they for? What happens if the person takes action? Fighting poverty isn't tangible. What exactly will happen? How are you going to be a good steward of their money? How will their money make a difference? Number four is you need to make it easy.

Have a really big donation button on everything you send out. Make sure that you don't have an onerous donation process that takes as little time as possible, and make it easy for everyone to find what they're looking for on your website. That's the three welcome mats that I talked about. These are people who are ready to give, people you need to make a case for, and people who are just looking for information.

The last point I made was look at your communications and see if they are just need based. In other words, are they just, "Help us. Help us. Help us. Problems, problems, problems." See if you can inject some more inspirational tones into your communications. Those were the five points that I covered.

Jennifer asked about best practices for following up on an email appeal. I know that most individuals that will respond during the first 48 hours, but should we be reminding those who do not respond? I think it would be very interesting to look at who's not responding. If they did not open the email, you may want to write them back and this is a great testing opportunity.

Completely change the subject line and content, and see what happens. I think it is worth following up. Again, particularly at the end of the year, I think that's when it's very appropriate to do an appeal like that. Also, during a crisis it would be good. If there's no immediacy around it, I probably wouldn't go back to someone and ask them again.

If you didn't do a good job answering, "Why me?" "Why now?" "What for?" they probably didn't open or respond since it didn't resonate with them. Sending them the same message again is not going to make them

happy. When I talked about segmentation, Mercy Corps really segments by people who didn't respond to the last couple of appeals, people who didn't open them, and people who did open them but didn't give.

They all get treated differently. This might be an opportunity for you to have some of that segmentation. FiFi says, "Thanks for answering the question about monthly pledges. What was the website that does such a great job of that?" It's [MercyCorps.org](http://MercyCorps.org). They are the best at getting monthly gifts that I've seen.

Tonya Lee asked one more question. "What do you think about sending media kits to the video organizations? Is this effective or should I just email the media kit with the video?" I guess she's talking about news organizations. I have a couple thoughts about this. I used to be a journalist, and most of the PR folks that dealt with me drove me crazy.

I'll be totally honest with you. I don't know that I would send a big, expensive video to media, unless it's really useful for them as B-roll. For those of you who don't know, B-roll is for stock video that news organizations can use when they're doing stories. I'll give you an example.

If you see a news story now of prescription drugs, sometimes they'll show a factory and pills going into a bottle, for example, in the background, while they have a graphic over it. That's B-roll. The company probably provided that to them as B-roll, saying, "If you ever need shots from this, here you go."

Most news organizations aren't going to run your video as it is. If you have an incredibly moving video you think will get their attention, you could try that, but I think you need to back up and try to explain why you're a worthy story to cover, rather than giving them a prepackaged story they're probably not going to be able to use.

For journalists, here's the trick for PR. If you do this, you will get great results. I've been on the other side of the fence, and no one does this, particularly in the nonprofit sector. "Why me?" "Why now?" and "What for?" Answer those for the journalists. Why should my magazine or TV station cover this? Why would my viewership care?

Why is this great? Is this a fabulous photo you're giving the newspaper to put on the front page? Is it a local angle on an international story? That's a great thing to do. Most news organizations are dying to find a local angle on international stories. Do you have a great story about a local immigrant for someone who has to cover the big immigration debate in Washington for the local paper?

That kind of thing is good. Why now? There are a lot of news stories competing for time. Why is what you have time sensitive or important to cover now? What for? What will the journalist get if they cover it? Are you giving them the story first? Are you giving them really great B-roll, facts and statistics they can tuck away?

One of the great things you can do is approach a journalist before you need something. Take them out to lunch. Take your local health reporter out to lunch if you're the kidney foundation, and say, "If you ever do a story on kidney disease, here's a whole bunch of evergreen statistics you can keep in your file."

Do things that make life easier for journalists. They're very, very busy people, very competitive, very short on time. Think about your pitches in a way that solves them time. Speaking of time, we're very short on time right now. I will be doing a couple things. One is that I will be reviewing questions that I did not get covered on this call.

I promise that I will respond to you, and I may even do some blog posting on some of your questions. We will get back to each and every one of you if we didn't cover what you were asking during this call. Also, I look forward to putting our fantastic *People* magazine reporter up with three of you. Don't forget, for those of you who are using our Custom DonateNow for this, write us and we will get a reporter to tell your story.

Lastly, if you're feeling in really dire straights even after this call, you could always go for an extreme nonprofit makeover, and we will be happy to help you with that. Write us about that as well. I'm going to turn it over to Jono just to say goodbye.

Jono: That's great. Thanks, Katya, and thanks, everyone for calling in today. There are just a couple of points. We will be doing an audio and a written transcript of today's call. We will be getting it out to everybody, probably within 10 days. We will certainly be answering all the remaining questions that have been coming in during the call.

If you want to contact us, the email is [Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org](mailto:Fundraising123@NetworkforGood.org). You can call us at (415)561-7833. That is the number to call if you have questions about our services, DonateNow or Email Now. You can always go to our website at [NetworkforGood.org/NPO](http://NetworkforGood.org/NPO). Again, the call will be repeated next Wednesday and Friday.

It will be a new call, so we're not just rerunning, but Katya will go through the presentation again and take a new set of questions. If you have

friends or colleagues who might be interested in attending, please have them go to [Fundraising123.org](http://Fundraising123.org) to register for next week's calls. Again, thanks everyone for your enthusiasm today, your great questions, and for spending an hour of the day with us, whether you're in Washington, DC or Paris. Thanks, and have a great day.

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