



The Online Fundraiser's Checklist

A free eGuide from your friends at [Network for Good](http://www.networkforgood.org)



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Introduction: How Do You Ensure Fundraising Success This Year?

Use this handy eGuide, *The Online Fundraiser's Checklist*, to ensure you don't miss a thing.

We've got six checklists that cover the essential basics of online fundraising: your website home page, donation form, writing style, email lists, email campaigns and thank-you programs.

Check the boxes on these six worksheets and if you don't score well, use the helpful (and free!) resources listed on the bottom of each page to improve your online fundraising practices.

Here's to big success in the months ahead!

Are these lists scaring you?

Maybe you don't have an **online donation processing tool** or **email campaign tool**!

Get one here: www.networkforgood.org/npo.

Maybe you've never conducted an online campaign! Read our free eBook, *Fundraising Campaign in a Box*, available at

<http://www.fundraising123.org/files/FundraisingCampaigninaBox.pdf>



Checklist 1: Website Home Page

- Can a stranger identify what you do and why they should care within two seconds? Make sure you have a VERY brief way to convey what you do.
- Do you have a big, emotionally affecting image or statement on the home page that connects on a personal level?
- Can you find your donate button in 1-2 seconds?
- Is your donation button above the fold, big and colorful?
- Is your donate button framed in a compelling way? What personally relevant, tangible change will result if someone gives now?
- Is it clear where the money goes? To directly which activities or people?
- Is there a sense of immediacy around your donate button? A reason to give right now?
- Do you have links to events and other opportunities for engagement?
- Do you have clear third-party endorsement on the page? (For example: ratings from GuideStar and Charity Navigator, or a testimonial from someone else regarding your nonprofit's services (a volunteer, a beneficiary, etc.).)
- Does your website give you and your potential donor the opportunity to take the first step in forming a relationship with you if they aren't ready to give now (for example, email signup)?



- ❑ Do you make it easy to share? (For example, do you have social network sharing links, widgets, etc.? Do you list where else donors can find you online like Twitter and Facebook?)
- ❑ Are you sure you don't have too much? Is the page clean, simple and easy to use? That means intuitive navigation that even Aunt Pearl can handle.

SCORE YOURSELF

10-12: You've made the Dean's List of online fundraising website basics. Kudos!

6-9: You just missed making the Honor Roll but you're on your way to straight A's with a few minor changes.

0-5: We might need to call home about this...

WANT TO BOOST YOUR SCORE? Take advantage of these resources:

Nonprofit 911® Teleconference Materials:

- **Digital Facelift: Tips for Taking Your Website from Blah "Before" to Amazing "After"**
- **Website 101 for Fundraisers**

Quick Tips and Learning Center Articles:

- **How to Ask for Donations on Your Website**
- **Five "Don'ts" of Nonprofit Web Design**
- **Donation Usability: Increasing Online Giving to Non-Profits and Charities**



Checklist 2: Donation Form and Tools

Look over your donation form and make sure it's the best it can be! Do you have the following?

- An easy way to get to the form: a big donate button that is colorful
- One clear call to action on your donate form (Donate! Or, become a member!)
- Compelling yet brief copy on the donation form that emphasizes your mission is critical
- Copy is in a font size that is easy for people over 50 to read
- A look consistent with your brand
- Short donation forms – the more fields to fill out, the higher the abandon rate
- One-page donation forms (not multiple pages!)
- Limited navigation -- avoids giving users lots of ways to easily detour from the page before completing the action
- Automatic email tax receipts once the gift is made
- Opt-in for hearing from you again/email sign-up
- The ability to configure your form – so you can test different versions



- The ability to place web analytics on your form so you know what people do when they're there
- The ability to set and test different donation amounts
- The ability to offer thank-you gifts
- Options to accept recurring gifts
- The ability to make the donation in someone's name

Did you make the grade? For each check, give yourself one point.

A: 15-16 points

B: 13-14 points

F: fewer than 13 points ☹

Anything less than 13 points is a failing grade because you're losing donors on your page!

Sign up for a small group webinar on how to upgrade your page with Network for Good:

<http://www1.networkforgood.org/free-weekly-online-fundraising-webinars>



Checklist 3: Online Outreach Writing

Before you send or post anything, ask yourself the following!

THE BASICS

- Is it clear who the audience for your text is?
- Is all of your online outreach consistent in terms of tone and style?

QUALITY CONTROL

- Have you checked spelling and grammar?
- Is your text readable? (Hint: White text on a color background and small font size are not easy on the eyes.)
- Have you checked for wordiness? (i.e. Have you whittled down as much as possible?)
- Did you print out your text and read it aloud? *All of it?*
- When you want to make edits, do you keep all changes in one tracked-changes document for easy updating?

HEADINGS

- Do you limit your use of italics to captions or phrases?
- For longer pieces of writing, do you use sub-headings?
- Are all (or most) of your headings links?

READABILITY

- Are blocks of text broken into bulleted lists?
- Is the text written in “inverted-pyramid” style?
- Are all paragraphs limited to *one* idea per paragraph?



DESIGN

- Does your writing incorporate graphics?
- Do you use sans serif fonts? (Ex: Arial, Verdana versus Times New Roman, Georgia)
- Is all of your text at least 10-point type?
- Is there negative (white) space?

SCORE YOURSELF

13-17: Have you considered a career in Web writing?

8-12: Maybe it's time to dust off a copy of *Writing Copy for Dummies*.

0-7: Are you doing any online outreach? ("Friending" your college roommate on Facebook doesn't count – sorry.)

Need help getting your writing and strategy up to snuff?

- Read how to send great email (content and design):
Free eBook here:
<http://web.networkforgood.org/email-fundraising-guide/>
- Listen again to this training:
Create Copy that Shines, Sings and Brings in the Bucks: Tips for Writing for the Web



Checklist 4: Building an Email List

How are you doing on growing your email list?

WEBSITE

- Is the sign-up form “above the fold”?
- Can people sign up on any page on your website?
- Is there an immediate offering of what they’ll get in return?
- Does your sign-up form and the text around it make a promise about what to expect (frequency, privacy, etc.)?
- Have you thought about whether you should use a single- or double-opt-in policy?

EMAIL MARKETING

- Is “Forward to a Friend” in every message?
- Have you reviewed your content to make it worth sharing?
- Is there a link to the sign-up form in your personal email signature?

SOCIAL NETWORKING

- Does your organization’s social networking presence encourage “friends” and “followers” to visit your home page and/or sign-up form?
- Do your promotional mentions show exclusivity? (i.e. If I Tweet about joining our newsletter list, have I clearly shown why that’s special?)

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

- Have you tried sending click-throughs to a sign-up form (rather than your home page or an event page)?



- Have you signed up for keywords related to your topic and the content your organization can provide via email?

OFFLINE CAPTURE

- Have all people who answer the phone been instructed to ask for email addresses?
- Do you promote e-newsletters and online content in your print newsletters?
- Do you promote e-newsletters and online content in your direct mail?
- Have you begun to request opt-ins at all events?
- Will you mention our online communications in the next media mention you have?

Email Capture Fortune:

14-17: You're on your way to a large and happy email list.

10-13: You will find opportunities and ideas to increase your list below.

9 or fewer: Your contact list has much potential. Now is the time to take advantage of new ideas.

How did you fare? Is your list still smaller than you'd like? Check out these additional resources for more tips:

- [It's All about the List! How to Grow and Cultivate Your Most Valuable Online Asset](#)
- [Capture an Email Address, Start a Relationship: 4 Tips for Getting Proactive about Building Your House File](#)
- [Quick Tips for Building a Clean Email List](#)
- [What's an Email Address Worth?](#)



Checklist 5: Email

Getting ready to hit send on your latest email marketing masterpiece?

Here are nine points to review before you do:

- Does your subject line entice readers to open?**
They're the most important 8-10 words in your campaign. Make sure yours is a clear, concise introduction that entices your readers to take a look inside.
- Are you making the most of the preview pane?**
At first glance, many of your recipients will see just the first few inches of your campaign, so make your point - and your brand - stand out there.
- Is your email easy on the eyes?**
With simple, intentional font and style choices, you'll help grab and keep your readers' attention.
- Does the message come through, even if the images don't?**
Since many email clients don't automatically display images, balance yours with text that will help you make your point in any display possibility.
- Does this email have a personal touch?**
Whether it's with a personalized greeting, warm tone or specialized content, make sure your email feels like a conversation with people who know you, not a "blast" to a list.
- Are you being CAN-SPAM compliant?**
It's important to manage your online reputation by following best practices (and, you know, the law). Follow the basics by including your physical address at the bottom of your emails, including a one-click opt-out option and sending from an email address that you



monitor and from which you'll respond. (Those "donotreply@soandso.org" addresses are a no-no!)

- **Do you have permission to email everyone on your contact list?**
Permission-based email outreach is the way to stay in your supporters' good graces. Having "permission" means someone on your list is a member or subscriber of your organization, has signed up or otherwise asked to receive your emails or has participated (perhaps donated or attended a special event) in your organization within the past 18 months.
- **Are you incorporating what you learned from your last email campaign?**
There's no such thing as a perfect email, but you can certainly work to improve open, click-through and response rates by paying attention to the results of your previous campaign(s).
- **Have you tested any part of your email message?**
It might not be realistic to test your subject line (i.e. send out a couple of versions of your campaign prior to the larger send to see which performs better) or lead article every time you send a message, but even an informal poll around the office may give you perspective on what will be most effective.

Email Campaign Pre-send Test Score:

7-9: You're ready to roll—send, send, send!

4-6: It's a good time to check over your campaign(s) again before pulling the trigger. No one likes an unhappy subscriber list.

0-3: Now's a good time to *delay* hitting the Send It button. Please. Think of the subscribers.

Need some more tips and tricks?

- Bring Your e-Newsletter from Snoring to Soaring
- 7 Steps to Better Email Fundraising & Communications
- Four Principles for Making Your Newsletter a Powerful Fundraising Tool



Checklist 6: Thanking Donors

This is the most important list in this entire eGuide, because thanking your donors early and often is essential to keeping donors and ensuring future fundraising success!

- Do you send receipts and a personalized thank you immediately upon receiving a donation?
- Do you send thank donors again later in the year, reporting on the impact of their donation?
- Do you thank three times for every one time you ask for more money?
- Do you give the donors the credit for the impact? (Remember, it's about what the donor achieved, not just how great you are!)
- Do you personalize your thank yous with a least the donor name and a signature of someone at your organization?
- When thanking donors, do you tie the gift back to the appeal – thanking the donor for the specific reason you asked for money?
- Do you experiment with occasional handwritten notes, phone calls, children's drawings, volunteer-written letters or other "wow" factor notes from time to time?
- Do you make it extremely clear to donors what you're doing with their investments?



- In your thank-yous, do you tell one specific story of how your donor's gift is making a difference?
- Do you let your volunteers, service recipients, other donors speak for you? Don't be the only one thanking your donors!

And the award for Best Show of Gratitude by a Nonprofit goes to...

- **You!** (if you checked between 8-10 boxes above)
- **The judges are still out on this one.** You may get an honorable mention (if you checked 5-7 boxes above)
- **Another charity** (if you scored 4 or fewer checks above)...
It's an honor to be nominated, right?

Here are a few additional resources to further polish your thank-you practices:

- Thanks a Million: How to Thank Your Donors So They'll Come Back and Give More
 - The Number One Reason Donors Stop Giving



About Network for Good

The Home of Easy & Affordable Online Fundraising

At Network for Good, we don't just give you a DonateNow button--we help you make sure people click on it. And we don't just give you an email tool--we help you run a great campaign. We help you become an online fundraising and marketing superhero without superhuman effort or a big budget.

Here is a few of the ways how we can help nonprofits success online:

1. Easy, affordable fundraising solutions: Get donations on your website with [DonateNow](#)
2. Email campaign and newsletter tools: [EmailNow](#) for sending and tracking mass emails that also tells you what messages work best
3. Free weekly fundraising and marketing tips: [Sign up here](#) for great advice in your inbox each week
4. [Fundraising123.org](#): Our free online learning center is filled with ideas and best practices on what it takes to be an online fundraising superhero

We're biased, but we think there are many good reasons to work with us:

- Kinship. We understand you because we're a nonprofit too
- Value. We handle the tough parts of fundraising for you
- ROI. Our customers raise \$25 for every dollar they spend
- Support. We provide lots of training and support via phone, email and chat



We can't wait to help you fundraise online, and we'd love to talk to you about that important topic. Network for Good has a team of online fundraising experts ready to discuss how Network for Good can help your organization raise money online. Feel free to give us a call at 888.284.7978 or email us at fundraising123@networkforgood.org. We will be happy to contact you to schedule a personal demonstration of what Network for Good's online fundraising services can do for your organization.

We are pleased to have you join the thousands of fundraisers who rely on Network for Good to help them become online fundraising superheroes. We look forward to speaking with you soon!



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