

HOW TO GUIDE

FIA

TOP TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR BEST END-OF-YEAR APPEAL YET

End-of-year appeals are often one of the most important annual fundraising activities for nonprofits but it's a crowded time of year with many worthy charities competing for gifts from the same donor. Dataro's own fundraising expert Lauren Deeney shares her top tips for planning your most successful end-of-year appeal yet.

Lauren Deeney is an experienced fundraiser, having delivered many successful direct mail appeals during her seven years with the Shepherd Centre – an Australian charity that helps give deaf children a voice.

TIP 1 - NOW 'TIS THE SEASON TO START PLANNING

Lauren's #1 tip for delivering a successful end-of-year appeal – start early! While you won't send your first wave of direct mail until November, your planning really should start in September (or earlier). With a longer lead time you give your team the best chance of success, with plenty of time for brainstorming, problem solving and iterating on your strategy and appeal activities.

Your first step when planning your end-of-year strategy should be to define your objectives and goals. Don't forget to review your previous campaigns for key insights and learnings that can help you improve your results this year.

With your goals clear, it's time to develop a strategic roadmap that timelines your key steps, activities and communications. This will ensure everyone has a clear understanding of what needs to happen and by when.

TIP 2 - DEVELOP A COMPELLING STORY WITH A SINGLE CALL TO ACTION

Being clear on what you are raising funds for will help you to create a compelling narrative that your donors can believe in and support your cause with a donation.

By clearly articulating your goal and fundraising target you can give supporters clarity on why their gift matters and bring them closer to your cause by giving them ownership of your mission. Knowing your why and clearly explaining the need (or what you are trying to achieve) is key and should be reflected in all communications.

Lauren says every communication touchpoint should emphasise the need and show how the donor can be the hero by making a donation! Case studies can help bring your appeal statistics to life and create a human connection that evokes emotion in the donor which will encourage them to also be a part of the solution

TIP 3 - MAP OUT A DETAILED COMMUNICATIONS PLAN EARLY

Being clear on when your appeal communications will be sent for each channel and how they will align is another critical planning step. And being ahead of the game on this will help you to be more prepared with your exclusions lists. This will also help you improve efficiency and reduce wastage in your campaign.

An example Lauren gives is sending a mail pack to a donor who may donate earlier to an email ask – you could save time and cost if you knew their preferred giving channel. So if a supporter has given via email in the past, you may want to target them via email before the first wave of direct mail is sent and suppress them from mail if they respond online.

Dataro's new channel recommendation feature can help fundraisers identify or predict a donor's preferred communication channel to help improve targeting and reduce campaign wastage.

TIP 4 - IMPROVE YOUR CAMPAIGN TARGETING TO REDUCE DM COSTS

Many charities end up having large appeal wastage costs using segmentations that are too broad and lumping diverse groups of donors together. This often leads to a nonprofit mailing many donors who are very unlikely to give. With inflation and fundraising costs on the rise, one of Lauren's most important tips is to identify those donors who are the most likely to give and target your appeal to them only. This will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of your campaign targeting, resulting in a higher ROI.

Using donor propensity models like Dataro's Appeals module, fundraisers can improve their campaign targeting and reduce direct mail costs. Using Dataro's suggested mailing amounts fundraisers can further fine-tune their lists to select supporters most likely to give to the current appeal. Doing this will save time, costs and reduce wastage by excluding those donors who are unlikely to give.

Visit Dataro's website (case studies) to see how [Save the Children \(AU\)](#), [Canteen \(AU\)](#) and [St Helena Hospice \(UK\)](#) used Dataro's predictive scores and ranks to raise more while targeting less donors and reducing mail costs in their 2021 Christmas appeals.

TIP 5 - TAILOR YOUR DONORS' EMAIL JOURNEY

Your most efficient appeal channel is undoubtedly email. Email is a fantastic way to deliver fresh and varied content that will keep the donor engaged – this includes short videos from your appeal case study or other in-market updates. Remember that your donors likely receive multiple emails a day, and you probably won't be the only charity landing in their inbox come December. Lauren says the key to a successful email is an enticing subject line with several call to action buttons strategically based in the body of the email. Research has also shown that linking emotional words within the body copy to your donation pages can help to drive click through rates.

When planning your email journeys be sure to consider how they align with your appeal mailing dates. To reduce mailing volume, can you use email more effectively to capture donations early in the campaign? Lauren also recommends looking back on previous campaigns and analysing your email open rates and clicks and reviewing your most successful emails to understand what worked (and what didn't) and then applying learnings to your end-of-year email strategy.

TIP 6 - PERSONALISE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Lauren says personalisation in your appeals is key! Using variable copy to identify the type of donor and speaking to them in the most relevant way shows that you know your donors on a personal level and can meet them where they are at in their donor journey. For example if a donor is new, welcome them to your community or for long-time donors they should be acknowledged for their ongoing support.

Most donors will understand they aren't the only ones receiving your appeal communications, but personalising your emails and letters shows that you value your donors and will make it easier for them to connect with your mission and what your appeal is trying to achieve. Lauren has also had success with including personalised QR codes in direct mailing packs – she suggests working with your mailhouse to create PURLS (personalised URLs) and knows many charities having increased giving through QR codes.

TIP 7 - MAKE DIGITAL GIVING EASY WITH PRE-FILL DONATION FORMS

Another easy and effective way to improve the likelihood of a gift is to use pre-fill links in emails so when a donor lands on your donation page all that is left to do is confirm and make the donation. Lauren suggests using flexible online payments options such as paypal or Apple wallet.

TIP 8 - ASK YOUR DONORS TO SHARE ONLINE

Asking a small favour can go a long way to increasing awareness of your appeal and possibly introducing new donors to your cause. If a donor has committed to make a donation they are connected to your cause and care that your appeal raises the funds you need to help your beneficiaries. Lauren says giving donors an option to share the appeal or the fact that they have just donated to your appeal on socials can help you raise more funds. You can implement sharing buttons on your thank you page or include a “p.s.” in an email asking for support in letting more people know about the important work your organisation does.

TIP 9 - PLAN YOUR DONOR THANKING NOW

Thanking your donors for their support goes a long way and will help with donor retention. Because fundraisers are time poor, this step can sometimes get missed as they move on to planning their next fundraising activity. So Lauren's tip is to plan your post-campaign communications activity and donor thanking before you launch your appeal.

Lauren suggests a post-appeal thank you email to donors is a simple way to communicate the impact of their donation and show your appreciation for their gift. Incorporating a short thank you video on your donation thank you page and in your follow up emails will go a long way and will help keep donors close to your cause. Thank you calls are another effective tactic, especially for first time donors and will give you a chance to update any donors while on the phone.

ABOUT DATARO

Dataro is the AI-powered donor scoring software built exclusively for nonprofits. Dataro's software allows for-purpose organisations to take advantage of game-changing machine learning technology across their fundraising campaigns, helping them to raise more funds and have a greater impact.

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