



NETcall
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Speaker: Eric Foley, Mission Increase Foundation
Topic: Getting the Most from your Year-End Appeal

Mission Increase Foundation

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YPN launches NETcall

YPN is very excited to launch this first NETcall resource to our national network of ministry partners.

We have had great success with our conference calls with the White House Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives with Director Jay Hein in the past and plan to do more of these calls with the White House, Mission Increase and other resources in 2008.

Watch for our NETworks email resource as these opportunities will be highlighted in those quarterly issues.

YPN meets Mission Increase Foundation

Dean introduced Eric Foley and Suzanne Dubois of Mission Increase Foundation.

About one and a half years ago, YPN connected with MIF after they opened their office in Colorado. MIF is a national granting and training foundation that seeks to transform lives for Christ through effective giving and training. They were looking for ministries in Denver to connect with and started with our Denver Network of ministry partners. In addition to providing FREE fundraising workshops in Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo, they have provided funding for several of our local ministry partners.

MIF has been a blessing to the ministries on the front range and we were very excited when they agreed to provide their fundraising workshops to our national network of ministry partners through our NETcall resource.

MIF Background

Suzanne commented that MIF is not a best practice foundation rather they start with scripture and help ministries build their capacity using biblical principles.

MIF started in Portland, OR and now has offices in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Denver. They are moving into San Francisco and are hoping to expand to San Diego and Phoenix in the near future, with long term plans for the east coast.

Currently their workshops and funding are for ministries in the vicinity of their offices as they are encouraged to attend the free training before they approve any funding requests. So if you are located in Portland, Los Angeles, Seattle or Denver/front range, contact their local office to start taking advantage of their free training!

Suzanne prayed.

Eric Foley Background

Eric has been a pastor for 21 years with a focus on inner-city ministries. He developed many concerns as a pastor about non-profits and fundraising and realized if you base fundraising on biblical practice, you will be more successful and enjoy it more. For ministries, fundraising is a necessary evil but he will share some new and possibly startling ideas with you to increase your effectiveness with fundraising!

Fundraising

Statistics show that 60% of donations come in the last quarter of the year.

Statistics also show that 40% of giving now comes online making this no longer an option but a necessity to your fundraising strategy.

Eric asked the callers to share their plans for taking advantage of this time of year.

Dustee Hullinger | Gifted Hands | New York

Year-end appeal letter

2 fundraising events (1 dinner and 1 showcase)

Electronic newsletter with product development piece

Mike Rueffert | Youth For Christ Southern Colorado | Colorado Springs

Newsletter

Phone calls (both to capitalize on a matching grant they received)

Getting the Most from your Year-End Appeal Letter

Consider the following to get the most from your year-end appeal letter:

- When If sending one letter, best time is immediately following Thanksgiving
- If sending two letters, first letter goes out immediately following Thanksgiving
second letter goes out December 10th to capture interest for year-end giving
- Mid-November to Thanksgiving is lost time!!
- For year-round direct mail, time it so they receive it on the 25th of the month
for the highest chance they will open it
- What If sending one mailing, mail a letter not a newsletter
- If sending two mailings, mail a letter first and a newsletter next

Question: Since 40% of donations are online, do you mail a letter or email a letter?
Robert Nobile | Chosen Kingdom Generation | Chicago, IL

Answer: Both. You can do email only but at this point in time, you need both email and mail to capture everyone.

Question: They are getting ready to launch their website mid December. How can they use their year-end appeal letter to promote their website at the same time?
Lauren Dillon | Sunshine Gospel Ministries | Chicago, IL

Answer: The website for a NPO supports their email program. Your direct mail and emails should refer to your website using specific links to your campaign activity or something you are asking them to do to get involved today. You will get a better response using specific links.

Purpose Most important part of a year-end appeal is not fundraising. The most important goal is to set up a type of communication that entices them to stay in touch, get involved the other eleven months of the year.

Forward thinking. You need to approach donors in a way that sets the stage for the rest of the year.

Example: Dare2Share last year changed from maximum income to developing a desire for their donors to interact and be involved in their mission. They asked their donors to participate by stating that December is the highest month for teen suicides. Then they asked the donors to give the card, provided by D2S, to one teen they knew. Not only did they maintain their average donation level for the month of December, but they had a 15 fold increase from their appeal letter in January. This happened because people became involved which increases their interest in donating.

Think about the theme and approach so they will stay in touch over the next several months.

Envelope Important part of the year-end appeal that most overlook

People open their mail over the trash, especially at the end of the year. The envelope needs to capture their attention so they open it. You are competing with Christmas cards (bright colors, unique sizes) and catalogs and mass amounts of mail they receive at this time of year. How do you make your letter stand out?

Use a unique size envelope

Use color envelopes

Hand address (proven to be opened more)

Avoid using labels
(this is the lowest form of response and states “not personal”)

Heavier stock envelopes are also opened more

Question: Does the post office allow die cut envelopes where part of the letter shows through?
Dean Cowles | YPN | Denver, CO

Answer: Die cuts are allowed as long as they do not jamb their machines. Placement of bar code is also important, need 1” at the bottom. You can always bring the sample down to the bulk rate office and have them review and approve before you do your mailing. Die cuts are not necessary, non-standard size and color is all that is needed.

Question: How effective is using photographs on the envelope?
Ken Bontrager | Camp Deerpark | Westbrookville, NY

Answer: If the photo is compelling then it works well.

Question: What about return envelopes?

Answer: Absolutely include a return envelope. However, do not place a stamp on it. This has been proven to be offensive to some donors. He doesn’t even recommend using BRE or prepaid postage. Best option is to use CRE or “courtesy return envelope” which includes the address but no postage.

Exercise: Eric recommends taking your daily mail and placing your standard appeal envelope in it. What do you think?

Postage Another important feature to consider

Bulk rate imprints and bulk rate stamps reduce the rate of opening

Use first class stamps (costs more but will get opened more)

If you cannot afford to use first class stamps, reduce your list and use first class stamps. The goal is to get it opened, not how many you send.

First class stamps differentiate you from all of the other bulk mail they receive

Bulk rate also means that the post office does not send in 3-5 days like with first class stamps. They send bulk rate when the postal carrier has space in their bag and we know how busy the postman is at Christmas time!

Timing is important and you control the time with first class stamps

First class stamps also allow you to put the name of the director on the return address in lieu of the ministry name which gives the message that this is a special piece of mail.

If donors question your use of first class stamps, explain you reduced your mailing list down so your cost did not go up but you increased the number who read it and remained involved in your ministry, most will understand.

Choose decorative stamps in lieu of the standard first class stamps. In a few years ministries may be able to order custom stamps for not much more money. For now select decorate stamps that stand out more.

Question: Does it help to use bulk rate stamps in lieu of the imprint?

Alan Pearson | Rehoboth Christian School | Rehoboth, NM

Answer: Bulk rate stamps are better than using the bulk rate imprint but neither are as effective as using first class stamps. Shorten your list and use first class stamps.

Name Make sure you get the donor's name correct on the envelope and letter.

As soon as you receive a donation, call and thank the donor and ask them how they would like to be addressed. It is not always the way it is shown on the check or credit card.

Make sure it goes to the husband and wife if that is what they wish, do not forget to list both of them, even if their check only lists one name.

It is more effective to spend your time calling your donors and asking how to address them than time on your letter.

Then don't forget to contact them on a regular basis and continue to check. People get divorced and occasionally die and this is the best way to keep informed.

Teasers Statistics show that using teasers on the envelope does not increase or decrease the opening rate.

He recommends not using teasers because the intent of the teaser is not always correctly perceived.

Stating “urgent” on the envelope has the opposite effect – don’t use.

Overall Mail better, mail less and you will get a better response.

Spend more money on stamps, envelopes (weight, size, color) and send to fewer people and you will get a better response.

Length The best way to draw response and increase rate of the letter being opened is to write a longer letter.

Typically the more pages in the envelope increases the chance of it being opening.

Fewer people read long letters but you increase the chance of it being opened which is the first goal.

Format Personalize the letter is crucial.

Printing the letter is okay but sign it personally.

Typically you should only send out the amount of letters you can stamp and personalize. If you typically print the signature, sign as many as you can and track the difference it makes.

Always use 12 pt font (never smaller)

Use 1.5 or double spacing so it is easier to read

Courier, Times New Roman and Book Antiqua are most readable fonts

Never use Arial, cursive or wing ding fonts

Use short paragraphs, no more than 3-4 sentences per paragraph

Use white space which anchors the eyes on the page

Use lines between sentences

Use short sentences, 1 word sentences

Content This letter is not about you or your ministry, it is about the donor and the cause they are supporting

Encourage the donor to get involved with your cause, not your organization

Connect them to your cause, not your organization
The first paragraph is the most important

Using “I” or “we” or stating your need in the first paragraph is wrong

Stating “we need your help” is the least compelling reason to give

Statistics now show that people need to feel connected to a cause

Example: D2S used statement about teen suicide (cause and hook). Then they asked them to get involved by giving an included card to a teen they knew (involvement). Then you can ask for a gift. Once they connect with a cause and get involved, they are more likely to donate.

Dear Larry, = salutation is the most read part of a letter so make sure you get their name correct and don't use “dear friends”

Donor address = this is the second most read part of a letter, they like to see their own address in print

PS... = this is the third most read part of a letter and should simply restate the content and cause

Use your year-end letter to tie in your website. Share a testimony in the letter with a link to the website for the full story. Or link donors to your website for a downloadable tool to help your cause (like D2S using cards for teens).

If your letter references a specific need like “give to kids before Christmas” you can ask your donors to give right away on your secure website, then link them directly to the donor page.

Question: If it is better to have a long appeal letter should we single side or double side the letter?

Answer: Multiple pages gets the enveloped opened more frequently but donors do not want you to be wasteful so it is best to double-side your year-end appeal letter. So double-side the letter, make it long by using lots of space and formatting techniques, photos, testimonials. Four to six pages total printed on 2-3 pages is good.

Remember all of these tips are for the year-end appeal letter, not the thank you letters.

Questions: Do you request a specific amount?
Dr. Martin | Feed My Lambs | Colorado Springs, CO

Answer: Reply cards! What you ask for you get. If you ask for \$20, you get \$20 even if your donors can do more. On the other hand, if you list \$50, \$100, \$500 and the amounts are too high, it makes donors wanting to give a smaller gift uncomfortable. One option would be to use two reply cards, one with lower amounts and one with higher amounts and select based on the donors giving record. Or if you prefer to use only one reply card, make sure you cover the range. List 4-5 specific amounts and in lieu of stating “other” as another option, use “I'd like to make a major gift of _____”. Remember to print your reply cards on heavy stock.

Email If you use a year-end email in addition to your letter, keep it 10 lines or less for Blackberry users

Use a call to action in the subject line

Make it brief and direct

Include a link to your online donation page, make sure to state it is secure

It is good to explain the process for your online donation, especially if using PayPal etc, or explain on your online donation page so can keep the email about the cause

Closing offer from Mission Increase Foundation!!

If you use these strategies in your year-end appeal letter, you can email it to Suzanne and Eric to review for FREE! Please do not send your letter until you have applied these strategies.
sdubois@missionincrease.org