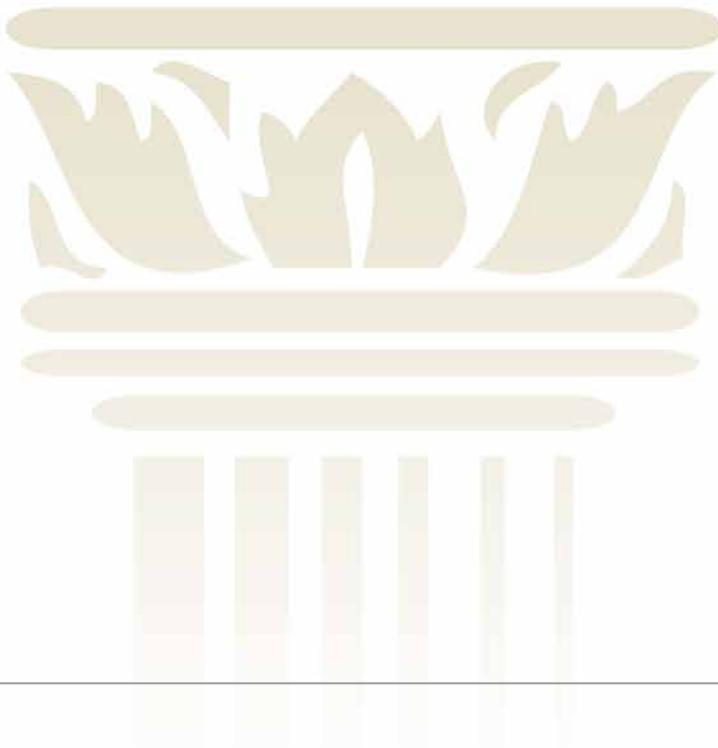


# ***Energize Your Fundraising:***

***3 Keys to Record-Breaking Results***



## ENERGIZE YOUR FUNDRAISING: 3 KEYS TO RECORD-BREAKING RESULTS

Fundraisers today face many challenges. Declining government support, if any, combined with increases in the costs of doing business make philanthropy more important than ever to maintain excellence and provide for those we serve. Yet reservations following recovery from the recent recession, continuing uncertainty in the economy and unprecedented competition for philanthropic dollars threaten to crush efforts to secure future funds. Fundraising as usual is a recipe for failure. Here's the blueprint for success: proactive strategies using highly targeted, multi-channel marketing to generate record-breaking campaign results.

What is the key to a successful fundraising campaign? **RELEVANCY**

A relevant marketing piece requires three critical components:

- **THE RIGHT MESSAGE** - The message must be about a cause that the recipient believes in.
- **AT THE RIGHT TIME** - The marketing piece must be received at a time that the recipient is ready to receive it.
- **THROUGH THE RIGHT CHANNEL** - The marketing piece must be delivered through a marketing channel that the recipient acknowledges.

**RELEVANCY = RIGHT MESSAGE +  
RIGHT TIME + RIGHT CHANNEL**

### THE RIGHT MESSAGE

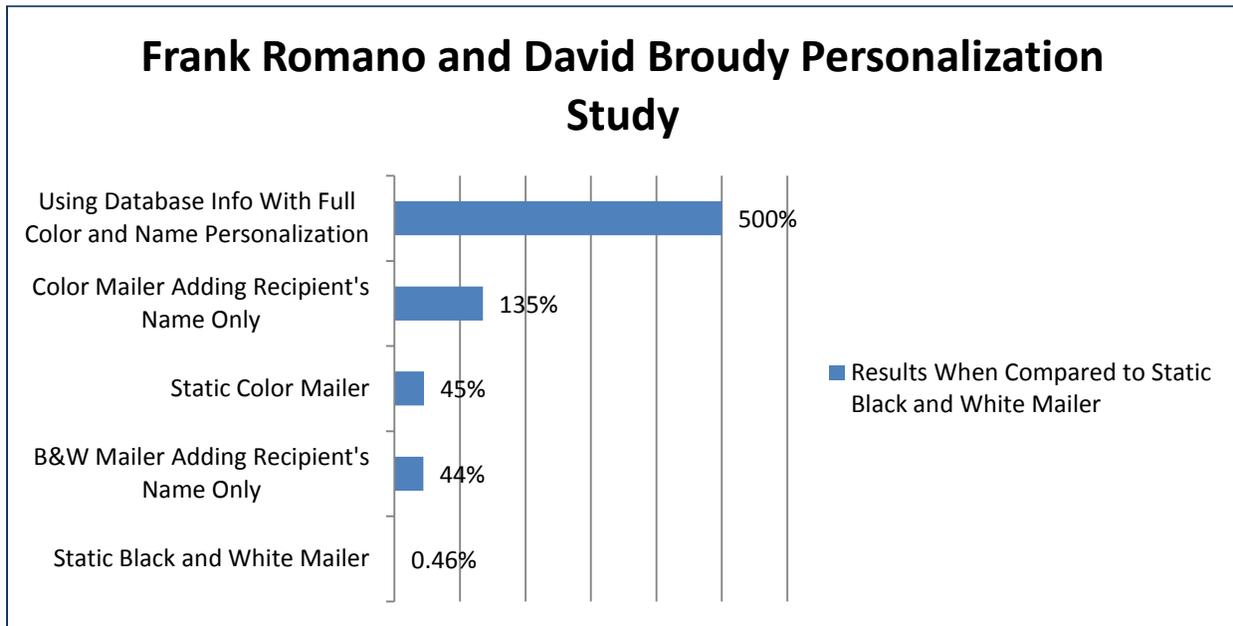
The Direct Marketing Association reports that the average consumer receives 24.7 pieces of mail every week and that approximately one-third of all USPS mail is sent from nonprofits. The average number of emails received per day is 74 and climbing. Consumers receive solicitations and advertisements on their phones, in their cars, in the newspaper and QR codes on billboards. It is more important than ever to create a marketing campaign that will stand out from the rest and command attention.

How do you command the attention of your recipients? Whether you are stewarding new donors, inviting donors and prospects to a major event, or soliciting funds for your annual campaign, you will receive much better results if you appeal to the emotions of your target audience. Use imagery, colors, fonts and words that evoke an emotional response. Especially in times of economic downturn, donors continue to give when they connect with a cause at an emotional level.

In order to appeal to your audience, pull at the heart strings, evoke pride, excite, or even develop curiosity, you must first get to know those in your audience. The first step is to evaluate your data. What do you know about persons in your database? Some items to consider might include:

- Giving history
- Affiliations with the organization
- Volunteer involvement
- Preference for specific areas served

This information can be used to personalize your marketing pieces to more effectively engage recipients and encourage them to follow your call to action. A study by Frank Romano and David Broudy for the Digital Printing Council illustrates the effectiveness of personalization.



Can you imagine a 500% increase in your response rates just from capitalizing on information that you already know about your audience? It can happen and it is not as difficult as you might think. Here's an example of how Emporia State University worked with The Lexinet Corporation to personalize their campaign and see an increase in response rates.

**Name –**  
The recipient's name was used throughout the piece.

**Decade Graduated –**  
Throughout the self-mailer, images, colors, text, etc. were changed based on the decade of graduation.

**College Affiliation –**  
The letter was signed by a representative of the program that the student graduated from. For example: The School of Business.

**Donor History –**  
Ask amount for each recipient based on the amount given in prior years.

Despite the outstanding increases in response rates, there are typically a few common concerns when an institution begins considering adding personalization to their marketing campaigns.

***Isn't creating a variable campaign expensive?***

There is a misconception that creating a variable data campaign is cost prohibitive. That might be true if you are planning to develop an internal staff of programmers, data analysts and production staff along with purchasing variable production equipment to produce in-house. However, if you work with a reputable, successful marketing solutions provider with experience in variable print campaigns, you are able to benefit from their highly skilled team and efficient digital work flows. Excellent marketing solutions providers can save you time and money. In addition, you will no longer have the expense and concern of pre-printed inventories allowing for updates and changes quickly and easily. Variable data printing is also more eco-friendly as outdated pre-printed inventories are no longer wasted.

Many times, one of the cost savings with variable data print is realized by mailing fewer pieces to highly targeted recipients. You are no longer operating under a "mail to the masses" mentality. Instead, send fewer, more highly targeted communications that generate greater response rates and results.

When measuring the cost of a campaign, it is important to think in terms of cost per new donor, cost per dollars raised and cost per information collected. While personalized communications can be (but are not always) more expensive on a cost-per-piece basis than static, off-set print, once you begin to calculate the cost per new donor or dollar raised, those numbers suddenly stand out. Not only can the cost be comparable to static campaign, they can sometimes be even better. When adding in higher response rates, new data collected, recipient loyalty, and the lifetime value of the donor, there is no comparison at all to a static mailing.

***We add the recipient name in the salutation line of our marketing letters. Isn't that enough?***

The results of the Romano/Broudy study say the answer is no. Maximum response rates can only be achieved when you incorporate database information and create an emotional response with your recipient.

Personalization for the sake of personalization is not enough. Personalization should be purposeful and relevant. The recipient should feel valued and as if they've received correspondence from someone that they know and that knows them.

In addition, all response mechanisms should be pre-filled as much as possible to eliminate the responder having to enter the information. Do as much of the work for your responders as possible to make the process of responding quick and easy.

***We want to respect our donor's privacy. Personalized communications can be a little creepy making you question how the sender knows so much about you.***

There is a difference between creating a custom, personalized communication and sending a marketing piece that makes your recipients feel that "Big Brother" is watching them. The degree in which you use the information that you know about your recipient to craft a customized message that grabs the recipient's attention should be tailored to your market and to the sensitivity level of the data that you're using.

## **THE RIGHT TIME**

On average, once a mail piece is collected from the mailbox, the recipient takes less than 3 seconds to decide if they're going to open it or if it's headed straight to the recycle bin according to a report by Keith Thirgood. If the recipient does decide to open it they'll spend an average of 9 seconds reading the contents. According to Thirgood, the recipient scans the response device, the letter, a brochure and the response device again. If they're not intrigued at that point, all contents are deposited in the nearest trash receptacle. Even more concerning, a 2010 ICOM study reports that 53% of responders say they pay closer attention to information they receive by postal mail, compared to email. A carefully crafted, attention grabbing message can help your marketing materials survive the 3 second review period, but if they receive that message at the right time, you have much greater odds.

Just as the right message requires knowing your target audience, so does determining what the right time is to send your communications. Your ultimate goal is to reach your target audience at the point that they are open and ready to make a decision.

The information that you have in your database can help you determine the most effective time for communicating with specific donor segments. For example, donors with an affinity for a particular program or event will be more likely to respond to campaigns scheduled around that event or program. In a university example, donors with an affinity for the football team should be solicited during the season. By utilizing personalized marketing programs, donor groups can be split into smaller segments to better engage recipients and create an emotional connection and response.

What if you get it wrong? It is important to measure and analyze trends in your marketing campaigns. The timing of those campaigns is a key metric to measure. If a mid-December marketing mailing does not generate the results you had hoped for, consider moving the mailing back to late-November. Perhaps your recipients were too wrapped up in year-end and the holiday season to devote enough time to respond.

## **THE RIGHT CHANNEL**

Finding the right marketing channel is the final piece to the relevancy puzzle. If the right message at the right time is sent via email to a group of donors that do not respond to email appeals, the time and money invested in the campaign will be lost.

There are many types of direct marketing channels that exist today. In addition to direct mail, donors can be communicated with via email, social marketing platforms, text message, web appeals and other traditional forms of marketing such as newspaper ads and TV and radio advertising. Each has benefits, but which is right for your target audience?

Typically, there is no one right answer. For most campaigns, a multi-channel approach is the most effective. Such a campaign can be best illustrated by an example of a successful campaign:

Rosemont College is a private liberal arts college located in Philadelphia with an enrollment of approximately 900 students. Rosemont College wanted to launch their new Rosemont Experience Fund, which is part of a five year comprehensive fundraising campaign. Rosemont College utilized multiple points of contact (direct mail, email, Web, and social media) to connect with and draw donations from alumni, parents, and friends of the College. The program included four phases that lasted from October 2009 – June 2010 and worked in conjunction with the comprehensive campaign launched several months prior.

Phase One – The Reconnect Phase was aimed at engaging alumni who had not previously connected with the institution. This phase highlighted current students who were benefitting from the Rosemont Experience Fund. The featured students varied based upon the data available on the recipients (major, extracurricular, etc). The goal was to make an emotional connection between giving, and the benefits provided to students who held similar interests as the prospective donor. Direct mail and email were used to draw recipients to a Personalized URL where they could read about current students, complete an online survey about what they have been doing since graduation, connect with Rosemont’s Facebook page and ultimately make a gift to the Rosemont Experience Fund.

Alumni who had already connected with Rosemont College during the previous year’s campaign received a thank you email. They were encouraged to visit their Personalized URL for more information on the Rosemont Experience Fund.

Phase Two – Two months after the Reconnect Phase, a second round of communications was sent to all alumni and parents, except for those that had donated in Phase One. A letter was sent explaining the Fund and encouraging recipients to visit their Personalized URL to make a donation or to return a donation in an enclosed Business Reply Envelope (BRE).

A series of emails were also sent which highlighted the benefit of making a tax deductible donation before the end of the year. Three versions of this email with different subject lines and copy points were sent at random to the prospects. Response rates were tracked to compare the results of the A/B/C emails. This information was used throughout the remainder of the campaign to drive participation rates.

As a good will gesture and due to the timing of Phase Two, an interactive holiday e-card was sent from the President of Rosemont College.

Phases Three and Four – These phases involved communications highlighting specific examples of how a donation to the Rosemont Experience Fund could benefit students. A combination of direct mail and email were used to reach prospects. Segments were created based upon the recipient’s involvement at the college and donor history.

Two versions of the direct mail were used in these phases – a solicitation letter delivered in an envelope and a 4-color self-mailer. The self-mailer was sent to donors from the prior year and to young alumni. The letter was sent to older alumni based upon feedback from this audience that they preferred this format. Both versions gave instructions to visit a Personalized URL to make an online donation or to use the enclosed reply form to mail in a donation. The reply form was variable based upon past gift amounts and current contact information.

The results of the four phase campaign were impressive. Rosemont College successfully connected with alumni and parents to grow the Rosemont Experience Fund.

- 29% of recipients (2,361 individuals) visited their Personalized URL in response to either email or direct mail
- Over \$1,700,000 was raised in donations from 1,123 alumni and parents
  - 24.4% of gifts were received via online donations
  - 56.7% of gifts were received via a business reply envelope
  - Remaining gifts were received at events
- Average gift amount was \$1,184.55
- Majority of donors either increased the amount of their donation or kept it consistent with the previous year's giving level
  - 29% of donors increased their gift size
  - 36% of donors gave at the same level
  - 7% of donors were first time givers

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As illustrated in the Rosemont College example, not only should your communications with your donors and potential donors be made through multiple marketing channels, you should allow your donors to respond and communicate with you through the channel of their preference as well. The method in which you communicate with a donor or prospect should not have to be the method that they in turn respond. "A National Survey of the Impact of Office Communications on Online Donations" by Dunham+Company uncovered several key findings about donor behavior:

- 37% of respondents said that they respond using the organization's website when they receive a fundraising appeal in the mail
- 53% said they respond via mail to requests made through the mail
- 6% of those surveyed report donating online as the result of an email request
- 14% report donating online in response to a mail piece appeal

Fundraising as usual is a sure recipe for unfulfilled expectations and huge disconnects between your prospective donors and the institution they care about and support. You can find opportunity in a challenging economic environment by committing to RELEVANCY in your fundraising efforts. By making a compelling case for support, presenting your message when donors are open to receiving it and delivering it via multiple channels to ensure connections, you, too, can achieve record-breaking results. The actions and initiatives you take will determine the level of success you achieve, starting with connecting with a reputable marketing solutions provider who can implement a proactive philanthropic agenda for your institution.