

Grassroots Fundraising Strategy Chart

by Mimi Ho

Adapted from “Choosing the Right Fundraising Strategy,” by Kim Klein & Stephanie Roth, *Grassroots Fundraising Journal*, Vol. 18, no 3, June 1999

Here is a tool to help develop your fundraising plan for the new year. By understanding which strategies are good for what purposes, you can make sure you’re using the strategy that is effective for your purpose—not just what you are used to doing. Knowing what kind of response rates to expect can help you more accurately predict how many people you need to ask to reach your goal. For an even higher response, consider combining strategies.

Strategies Requiring Some Personal Knowledge of the Prospect by the Solicitor

What It Is	Expected Response	Best Use	Comments
<p>Personal Face-to-face Solicitation</p> <p>Meet with a prospective donor by pre-arranged appointment & ask for a contribution</p> <p>Prospect has ABC: Ability to give in the range you’re asking for, Belief in the cause Contact with the organization or person asking (that is, the solicitor and the prospect know each other)</p>	<p>50% say yes</p> <p>50% of those agreeing will give less than the amount you asked for</p>	<p>Upgrade donors</p> <p>Bring in large gifts from qualified prospects</p> <p>Raise large amounts of money quickly</p>	<p>Start with people you know, at whatever level of giving is appropriate for them</p>
<p>Personal Phone Call</p> <p>Caller knows the prospect, makes call, & asks for contribution over the phone</p>	<p>20–25%</p>	<p>Upgrade donors to a higher gift, especially people giving more than \$100 but less than your group’s definition of a major gift</p> <p>Raise large amounts of money quickly</p>	<p>Use with major donors who can’t be visited easily</p> <p>For donors unwilling to schedule a face-to-face meeting, phone contact is second choice</p>
<p>Personal letter or Email</p> <p>Key difference from direct mail: there is a relationship between the person writing and the prospect</p>	<p>10–20%</p>	<p>Low-key way for board, staff, & volunteers to ask friends & colleagues for gifts</p> <p>Get donors already known to people in the organization to renew their gift</p> <p>Sometimes useful for upgrading gifts</p>	<p>Usually good to have more personal contact with donors after letter, either by phone or in a meeting, but letter alone can also generate money</p> <p>Email only gets this kind of response if the person asking knows the prospect personally</p>

Strategies Not Requiring Personal Knowledge of the Prospect

What It Is	Expected Response	Best Use	Comments
<p>Door-to-door Canvass</p> <p>Volunteers or paid canvassers go door-to-door in designated neighborhoods, asking residents to become a member or give a contribution</p>	10–15%	<p>In combination with an organizing drive in which people are asked to sign a petition or express an opinion as well as join the group and give money</p>	<p>Solicitors usually don't know the prospects, so response may be low</p> <p>A certain percentage will answer the door, so solicitors can engage face-to-face in a deeper way than writing or phoning those people</p> <p>Gifts are often small, and it's hard to get donors to repeat them, other than through further door-to-door contact</p>
<p>Phone-a-thon</p> <p>A group of people are recruited (or hired) to come together over one or more evenings to call a list of prospective donors who may be interested in the organization's work; sometimes used with current donors who give smaller amounts or whose membership has lapsed</p>	5% 15% if current donors	<p>Reach large numbers of people with a message they can respond to immediately</p> <p>Bring in a large number of small and medium-sized gifts quickly</p>	<p>Good initial training for volunteers in how to ask for money from people they probably do not know</p> <p>Works best when donations by credit card accepted</p>
<p>Direct Mail</p> <p>An identical letter (not personalized) is sent by bulk mail to a list of 200 or more people who haven't given (or sometimes to lapsed donors), but who have shown some interest in your or similar issue</p>	.5–1% 10% if current donors	<p>Acquire new donors</p> <p>Reach people you have no other way to contact</p>	<p>Can often cost as much as or more than it brings in, so important to follow up with getting these donors to make renewed gifts</p>
<p>Email (to new prospects)</p> <p>Email blast to a list of people who have never given to the organization</p>	.5–1%	<p>Acquire new donors</p> <p>Good when this is the only contact information you have for someone</p> <p>Best way to drive traffic to your website</p>	<p>More cost effective than direct mail (though there are technology costs to be able to send bulk email)</p>
<p>Special Event</p> <p>Gathers a group of people to do something fun, entertaining, and/or educational</p>	Varies by event	<p>Strengthen relationships with donors</p> <p>Raise money from sources you might not otherwise have access to, for example, small businesses</p> <p>Good for goals that are not strictly financial, including: To build sense of community in the organization To introduce new people to your work To gain publicity for your organization</p>	<p>Most successful events combine strategies for acquisition, retention, or upgrading of donors</p> <p>Very labor-intensive, may not be best for small organizations</p> <p>House parties are a good variation—require less time, labor and up-front costs</p>