



2009 HOLIDAY GIVING GUIDE

Don't leave your year-end campaign
to chance — get it wrapped early



If you're like most nonprofits, you'll probably see an increase in online giving starting in November and extending through the end of December.

Some of this giving may be direct-mail related or the result of free media or publicity. Even so, that doesn't mean that you should leave your year-end fundraising to chance. Now is the time to think strategically about your holiday giving campaign to maximize your online results. And, the first rule of fundraising applies both online and off: if you want to raise more funds, you have to ask.

THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

Not convinced you need to make online planning central to your overall year-end fundraising strategy? Consider the following statistics:

- 89.5 million US consumers planned to give \$3 billion to nonprofit organizations in the holiday season of 2008. Despite changing economic conditions, you can expect the same this year too.¹
- 35-42 percent of online giving happens in November and December each year.²
- The average online gift during the year is \$67.47.³ (See Figure 1)
- The average online gift during the final quarter of the year (October – December) is \$84.51.⁴
- The average dollars raised online based on only the usable email addresses is \$13.96.⁵

These numbers speak for themselves — you can't afford to delay your holiday campaign planning, and it's too important to wait around just hoping the donations will come in.

Integrating the online channel should be a priority for your year-end appeals, particularly if you're scaling back your offline efforts because of budget cuts. Email is a cost-effective and efficient way to reach out to your donors and track their responsiveness (e.g., open rates, click-through rates, response rates). With more information about each of your online supporters, you can create targeted and personalized year-end messages that are more likely to resonate and raise more funds.

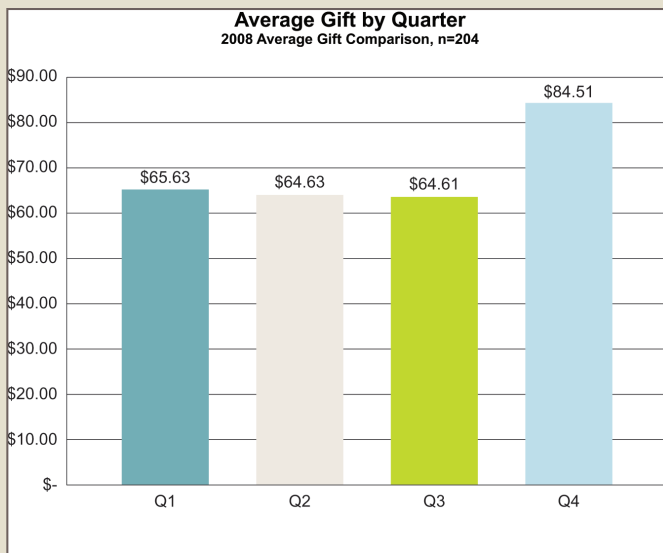


Figure 1

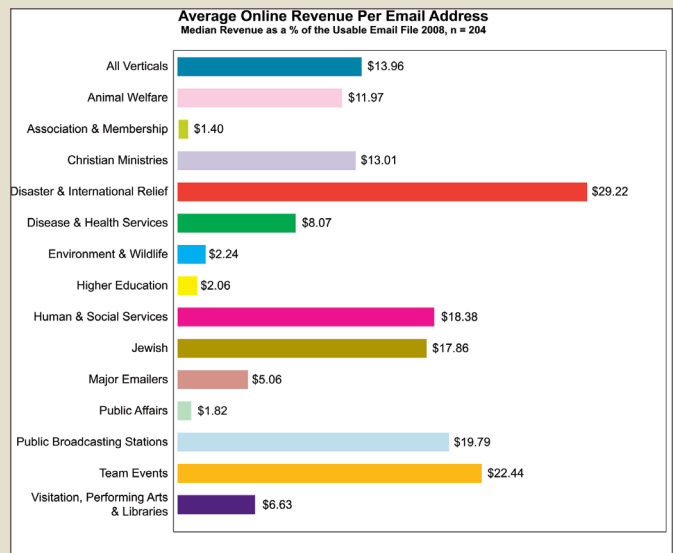


Figure 2

1,2. Holiday Giving Guide: \$3 Billion is a click away | Download the complete guide at www.convio.com/holidayguide08

3, 4, 5 The 2009 Convio Online Marketing Nonprofit Benchmark™ Study | Download the complete study at www.convio.com/fullbenchmarkstudy2009

BRING IN THE DOLLARS, ONE BEST PRACTICE AT A TIME

Even though there's plenty of work to do to prepare your year-end campaign kickoff, the best, most successful plans begin by starting early and following methods that are tried and true.

To ensure that you're strategic at each stage of your holiday campaign, the following seven “do's and don'ts” will help you maximize results and continue to build a solid base of loyal supporters.

1. DO – Grow your email list.

The average dollars raised online based on only the usable email addresses is \$13.96.⁵ (See Figure 2) There is a direct correlation between the size of a nonprofit's email list and the potential dollars raised. So starting right now, make a concerted effort to grow your email list year-round by using a combination of offline marketing tactics like direct mail integration, list swaps, list appends, and event canvassing/sign-up and online marketing tactics, such as search engine marketing, viral campaigns and site opt-ins. By boosting the number of usable email addresses in your housefile, you can expect to maximize fundraising success.

2. DON'T – Wait until the end of the year.

Whether a donor is relatively new or has supported your organization for years, don't let your year-end solicitations be the only time they hear from you. You know how the conversation goes: “Oh, it's the end of the year... we'd better send out an email appeal.” This is one sure way to alienate your donors and cause supporters to unsubscribe from your list. Avoid this scenario by cultivating your donor relationships in the months leading up to year-end giving. This nurturing approach will set the stage for successful year-end fundraising, both online and offline.

For those individuals who have recently joined your list, you should use a series of welcome messages that speak to the initial point of contact and connect to your mission. This welcome series can be sent automatically according to a pre-determined schedule. For example, after the individual signs up for your email newsletter, they should receive an auto-responder message from your Executive Director that personally thanks them for their interest in your organization.

Next, after a week has passed, you can send an email that describes other ways for the new supporter to become involved with your organization (e.g., volunteer opportunities, events, advocacy campaigns). After this cultivation email, the constituent can graduate to the regular communication flow intended for all list members. Make sure that your ongoing communications highlight specific goals, recent successes, and inspirational stories which will make a positive and lasting impression.



3. DON'T – Wing it.

Create a calendar and timeline for a multi-part holiday giving campaign. There are several important dates — Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Year's — that you'll need to keep in mind as you develop a detailed calendar. Create an outline of your outbound communications, both online and offline, to constituents during your holiday giving campaign.

When it comes to your online outreach, opt for a multi-part campaign with messages that are timed around your direct mail drops. Start by writing down the dates for each of your direct mail drops, and then create an online strategy that complements and reinforces your offline efforts. Not doing any direct mail this year? Then the timing of your email messages should be around any special holiday events that you have planned.

PLAN AHEAD

Starting in early November and continuing into the early part of January, your multi-part online campaign should include:

- **Pre-holiday cultivation** – Thanksgiving is a great time to remind your donors and supporters just how thankful you are for their ongoing support. Think of this first communication as a way to “set the stage” for your year-end appeals without an explicit ask.
- **A main ask** – In early December, kick off the online portion of your end-of-year campaign with a direct appeal for support. Be sure to make the need as tangible and specific as possible.
- **A stewardship message (i.e., an ecard)** – This is a great way to share a warm holiday greeting and to acknowledge your appreciation for the individual's support.
- **A last chance email sent on December 31st** – This last email of the year targets those individuals who haven't given yet and may be motivated by the last chance to make a tax-deductible gift. Motivate people to give by providing real-time information about progress against your fundraising goal and, if you have a matching program, then promote it in this final email of the year. The call-to-action should drive donors to your website to donate online (or at the very least, write a check).

	August	September	October	November	December	January
Online Priority	• Housefile building	• Housefile building	• Stewardship	• Stewardship	• Fundraising	• Fundraising
Key Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways to build your email list • Create end-of-year communications calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute list-building activities • Plan your end-of-year campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways to cultivate your email list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute stewardship activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute end-of-year fundraising campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank year-end donors • Lay foundation to acquire a 2nd gift
Supporting Activities	• Online newsletter	• Fall direct mail drop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall print newsletter • Fall gala event 	• End-of-year direct mail drop	• Volunteer events	• Online newsletter

4. DO – Re-use and Recycle.

Leverage all of your hard work from your offline appeal to create your online campaign by reusing and re-purposing the content, creative and themes from your offline appeals. This strategy will ensure that you don't reinvent the wheel, while also ensuring that branding consistency reinforces your messaging across both channels. By getting organized early in the season, you can include your donation URL in your direct mail pieces to encourage recipients to give online.

5. DO – Test, test, and test again.

The best way to maximize results is to optimize all aspects of your campaign. With this in mind, test content, subject lines, and images. You can examine the results of your various test emails to determine how constituents respond to different messaging, images, and content, and then adapt your future communications accordingly. You can also test gift levels on your donation form and, last, but certainly not least, make certain you complete all the steps required to make a donation to ensure that everything on the form works exactly as it should.

6. DO – Measure and track results.

If you track the results of your annual year-end campaign, you will be able to use these benchmarks to measure and predict success for years to come. But there are a few factors to keep in mind as you measure the success of your holiday giving campaign:

- Key indicators for emails — such as open rates, response rates, and click-through rates — will vary based on audience segment. You can expect those list members who have donated in the past to give again, but non-donors might not respond to your appeal.
- Although an average online gift is \$67.47, this number can vary significantly across organizations. Look at your own data from past email appeals to develop benchmarks that make sense for your organization.

Equipped with valuable data that reflects your organization's situation, you can continually refine your tactics to improve the effectiveness of your online initiatives not only during your holiday giving campaign, but throughout the calendar year.

7. DON'T – Forget to follow-up in the New Year.

On the heels of a successful year-end campaign, many organizations forget about what they should be doing in January to nurture donor relationships and promote ongoing engagement. Don't go silent on your newest or repeat donors! Make a strategic push to continue online communications in January when your nonprofit is still top of mind. The most obvious email message is a thank you or receipt to your donors, which can include details about how much was raised through your holiday giving campaign and what the funds will support in the New Year. Your supporters will appreciate that you are closing the loop, acknowledging their generosity, and reassuring them that their donations will be put to good use.

Next, you can shift back to nurturing communications, such as email newsletters and program updates, which will engage supporters going into 2010. Share your hopes and dreams for the upcoming year and, if you haven't already done so, launch a monthly giving program to encourage regular donations.



SO, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

It's never too early to start planning for your holiday giving campaign. Successful campaigns depend on staying organized and thinking strategically. By starting now, you can grow your email list, cultivate your relationships, coordinate your offline and online messaging, and optimize your email communications in a way that will take your fundraising results and constituent relationships to new – and greater – levels.

ABOUT CONVIO

Convio is the leading provider of on-demand constituent relationship management (CRM) software and services that give nonprofit organizations a better way to inspire and mobilize people to support their organization. Convio Online Marketing, the company's online marketing suite, offers integrated software for fundraising, advocacy, events, email marketing and web content management, and its Convio Common Ground™ CRM system helps organizations efficiently track and manage all interactions with supporters. All Convio products are delivered through the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model and are backed by a portfolio of best-in-class consulting and support services and a network of partners who provide value-added services and applications focused on the unique needs of nonprofit organizations. For more information, please visit www.convio.com.

Austin | Berkeley | Washington, DC
888-528-9501 | 512-652-2600 | info@convio.com
www.convio.com



©Convio, Inc. All rights reserved. Convio, the Convio logo, TeamRaiser, Constituent360, Go! and Common Ground are trademarks or registered trademarks of Convio, Inc. All other names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. V07.10.09