



MULTIPLY 417

Passion: The Bridge between People and Purpose

Weekly Tip May 29, 2023

Reminder: Tips for Fundraising Letters



Greetings!

I receive and faithfully read, quite a few emails and monthly print newsletters from faith-based non-profits around the country, certainly including YFC chapters.

During my 31-year tenure as an Executive Director and previous 9 years on staff with Campus Crusade, I must have written close to 600 newsletters and fundraising appeal letters. I was always fascinated by the balancing act of science and "art" that needed to come together to craft a good letter.

So I thought I'd pass on some of the things I learned over the years or have read about from real experts in marketing, especially as it relates to the "science" of strong request letters. Here are some simple reminders to help you continue to make your's the best it can be.

Reminder 1 – Use “I” and “you” (but mostly “you”).

In fact, “you” should be the word you use most frequently in your fundraising letters. Your appeal is a letter from one individual to another individual. You aren't writing a press release, a position paper, or a brochure.

Flesch's studies on readability supply the fundamental reason the words “you” and “I” are important: they provide “human interest.” Stories, anecdotes, and common names (and capitalized words in general) have some of the same effects — but the most powerful way to engage the reader is by appealing directly to him or her: use the word “you.”

Reminder 2 – Appeal on the basis of benefits and impact. Don't exclude needs, but understand most partners give money because they get something in return. Spiritual obedience, a sense of being a part, fulfillment of a desire to be generous, provide for a better world, a sense of giving back. To access their generosity, describe what they'll receive in return for their money.

I know some will struggle with this reminder/tip. It sounds "off" or maybe even "wrong". I get it. Call (209) 541-5720 or [email me](#) and let's talk through it.

Reminder 3 - Always use captions on your photos.

You may think that the photo right next to the text about a student and a staff is self-evident. But why make me guess or assume I know what the photo is telling me? Put it in a caption, further strengthening the human element of your story.

Reminder 4 - Create a package, not just a letter.

Too many times we miss out on providing our readers with further (perhaps, more subtle) encouragement, motivation, information, and opportunity. Don't neglect to think through your outer piece (#10?), return envelope (#9?), and response card or response piece. You may have additional collateral to go with a mailing, but (if the piece we are talking about here is being delivered by postal), make sure it has a print version of your response card. QR codes are great, but many folks stay aligned in their channel usage. So if I said I want my newsletter in the mail, there is a high(er) probability I will respond with a check and the mail. Offer me the digital mechanisms, of course, but don't rob me of my preferred channel, which means a response piece and return envelope.

Reminder 5 - Don't hide the ask.

I know this can be tough for us in our desire to be gracious and spiritually sensitive. But, ASK. At some point in the letter, you've got to ask them to give you money! You can use other words, fine, but don't bury your point. There is nothing biblically inappropriate about asking for money.

Oh, and don't ask just once in a letter. A bit hard to explain in this kind of piece, but your 1.5-page letter (just assuming) should include at least two places in the letter with an ask. The first (or more, depending on the length of the letter) can be as simple as a hyperlinked giving button or box (email channel obviously). In a snail mail format, you've got to give a bit more space, take a pause in the letter, and ask mid-stream...

"You Can Give Now!" by...and then give them very quick instructions on how.

Of course, your final ask in the piece, can provide all the details you want, giving options, etc., if you choose, but some folks will actually be motivated (or in a hurry) to give sooner than the end of the letter. Don't force them, or bully them into doing that, but certainly give them the option to do so, if that is their style!

4 more reminders next week.

Blessings,

Rick



On a personal note: Marian and I head out to see my Oncologist in Phoenix on Wednesday. At this point, it will be anti-climatic since my local GP had me do a PSA test (the main one for prostate cancer) and it came back .03. This is outstanding and is almost viewed as undetectable. So, I just keep that number in place for 4 years and I'm all set! PTL for his mercy and healing.

Check out my website for
more helpful ideas!



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