

50 DIRECT MAIL
& EMAIL

HACKS

TO IMPROVE ANNUAL GIVING

Delivered to you by Gary Henricksen
President, Five Maples



ABOUT FIVE MAPLES

Five Maples is committed to helping nonprofit organizations improve their communities—and the world—by helping you use development communications to achieve your mission.

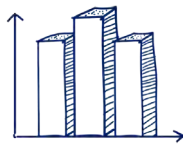
We do so by recognizing that direct mail is not a one-size-fits-all package or program. We bring our team of specialists together and listen to the specific needs of your organization to decide what will work best for you.

Five Maples provides experienced guidance in communicating with your donor community. We'll help you plan, write, design and print each project. But we won't stop there. Partnering with Five Maples gives you access to our expert consultants, who also help you measure and respond to your project's results.

Five Maples helps fundraisers **save time, raise more money, and enjoy doing it!** Our team offers:



Detailed
segmentation
& variable
data printing



Analysis of
donor data
to improve
results



Expert
fundraising
design &
copywriting



Personalizing,
deduping,
match inserting
& mailing

ABOUT GARY *President, Owner, Consultant*

For the last 10 years I've been teaching nonprofits how to raise money through direct mail and email. As board chair for the Keene, NH YMCA I led a \$10 million campaign to build a new Y. I'm the Treasurer for AFP-NNE. I've served as Vice Chair of the Grace Cottage Hospital Foundation and now help Land for Good as a member of the Board of Advisors. I started my career as an engineer in Silicon Valley and then spent 25 years marketing technology companies. I love working with fundraisers and speaking at conferences on fundraising. Contact me at garyh@fivemaples.com.



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[fivemaples.com/blog](https://www.fivemaples.com/blog)

HACK

/ˈhæk/

Wikipedia defines a hack as an *inelegant but effective solution* to a problem. I've called these 50 pointers on how to raise more money *hacks* because while some of them seem inelegant, they are proven to work.

Why inelegant? We've been trained by schools and employers to project a certain image when we communicate—so best direct mail practice often seems, well, a little hokey or aggressive. But those direct mail practices are based on psychology, neuroscience, and years of testing.

They work.

Let's get started!



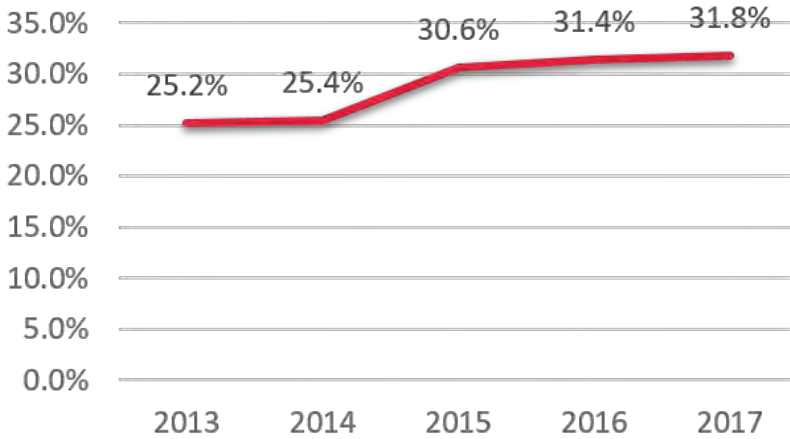
HAVE THE RIGHT ANNUAL FUND METRICS & PLAN AHEAD

Focusing just on the total amount raised hides trends in your program that are preventing you from achieving the success you deserve. To quote Penelope Burk ***“donor attrition is the #1 problem in fundraising today.”***

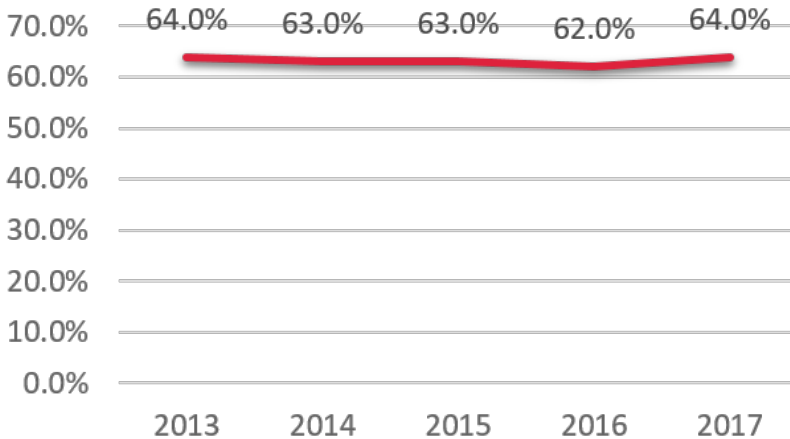
1. MEASURE NEW DONOR RETENTION & REPEAT DONOR RETENTION

Here's the 2017 US averages per the AFP-Fundraising Effectiveness Project. Are you better or worse than average? Many of the tips we recommend are specifically to improve retention.

New Donor Retention



Donor Retention

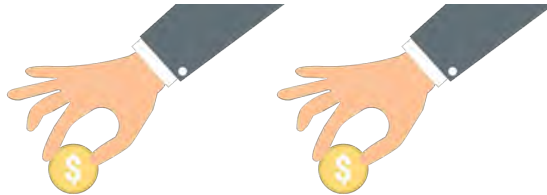


2. MEASURE HOW MANY SECOND AND THIRD GIFTS YOU RECEIVE

Even if a donor just responded to the most recent appeal, if you ask them to give again:

10 percent

of donors will
give **twice**



5 percent

of donors give **three
or more times**



3. MEASURE HOW FAR BACK YOU SHOULD SOLICIT LAPSED DONORS

We usually find it is 5 or 6 years. Try going back 10 or more years in the End of Year appeal to see what you find. [Here's a table](#) of response by year of last gift for a 2017 End of Year mailing for an educational non-profit that reached deep into their lapsed donor pool. The results were surprising.

Last Gift Year	Number of Last Gifts	Number of Gifts	Gift Amount	Response Rate
1998	2			
1999	123	1	\$100	0.81%
2000	104			
2001	145	4	\$521	2.76%
2002	121	1	\$250	0.83%
2003	88			
2004	64			
2005	59			
2006	57			
2007	67	2	\$200	2.99%
2008	58	4	\$1,584	6.90%
2009	69	6	\$900	8.70%
2010	62	4	\$400	6.45%
2011	69	4	\$1,525	5.80%
2012	79	5	\$360	6.33%
2013	77	8	\$1,500	10.39%
2014	93	13	\$2,050	13.98%
2015	106	24	\$4,530	22.64%
2016	491	297	\$94,479	60.49%
2017	304	102	\$16,020	33.55%
Grand Total	2,238	560	\$134,919	25.02%

4. INCLUDE MORE SOLICITATIONS IN YOUR PLAN

- If you only solicit by mail once per year, add a spring mailing. Typically, a spring mailing brings in about half of what the end of year mailing brings, as illustrated by the following chart from one of our customers.

Mailing (Current + Lapsed Donors)	Number Mailed	# of Last Gifts	# of Gifts	Gift Amount	Response Rate	Average Gift
End of Year 2017	1,146	1,146	449	\$118,939	39.18%	\$265
Spring 2018	1,289	1,289	236	\$54,463	18.31%	\$231
Grand Total	2,435	2,435	685	\$173,402		\$253

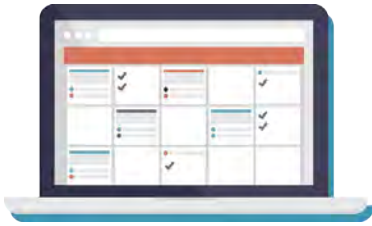
- If you only solicit by mail twice per year, add one or two more solicitation mailings. The following chart from one of our clients illustrates the effect this has – with each mailing adding up to additional net income. Note that the mailings are reinforced by two donor-centric newsletters with reply envelopes included. They communicate what the donor is accomplishing, which improves giving, and they give an additional “soft” opportunity to give because of the enclosed reply envelope.

Campaign	Number Mailed	Count of Gifts	Response Rate	Revenue	% of Revenue	Cost	Net Income
Late Winter Appeal	7,219	345	5.0%	\$32,425	13.2%	\$7,645	\$24,780
Spring Newsletter	36,728	73	0.2%	\$9,395	3.8%	\$22,767	(\$13,372)
Spring Renewal	6,969	98	1.4%	\$7,833	3.2%	\$6,318	\$1,515
Fall Appeal	8,501	734	8.6%	\$70,131	28.6%	\$6,893	\$63,238
Fall Newsletter	24,275	212	0.9%	\$23,023	9.4%	\$19,071	\$3,952
Holiday Card, no reply device	22,263	4	0.0%	\$625	0.3%	\$11,268	(\$10,643)
End of Year Appeal	5,654	737	13.0%	\$101,646	41.5%	\$5,473	\$96,173
Total	111,609	2,203		\$ 245,078	100%	\$ 79,435	\$ 165,643

- Some Development Directors worry about so-called *donor fatigue*. They worry: “My donors might not like it if I ask them too many times.” Four times in a year is not too many times. We have clients that ask six times with no push-back. Lose your fear of asking! Your cause is too important to be shy.
- Many will say, “We don’t have the budget.” To quote AFP’s Fundraising Effectiveness Project: “Nonprofits raise more money by investing more money in growth-oriented fundraising strategies that both increase gains and reduce losses.” Once you show your boss that adding a solicitation will pay for itself, that budget may be easier to get.

5. CREATE AN EDITORIAL CALENDAR FOR THE YEAR

You probably already plan which events and solicitations you intend to do during the year. You should add to that plan the content you will need, including the theme of each appeal, the stories, testimonials, photos, videos, and numbers you need to collect for your communications plan. Then you won't be scrambling at the last second to figure out *"What should we talk about this time?"*



EDITORIAL CALENDAR MUST-HAVES

- stories & testimonials
- photos / videos
- dates
- audience
- channels

6. COLLECT STORIES AND TESTIMONIALS ALL YEAR

Don't go looking for a story when your letter draft is due tomorrow. Have staff and volunteers be on the lookout for stories throughout the year. If someone writes or calls to say thank you, ask them for their story. Write up a testimonial and send it back to them asking for approval to use it.



WRITE & DESIGN AN EFFECTIVE FUNDRAISING LETTER

7. KNOW YOUR DONOR BENEFIT

Know your **donor benefit** (in marketing terms: value proposition, unique selling proposition). This is what you and the donor share, and why they give. Always include it in your communications. Here's a good example:

*Something else you and I share in common—we both recognize our world today needs people of honor. Our world needs more people who embrace the core values of *Honor, Respect, Community, Personal Growth and Challenge*.*


*That's what we do at Worcester Academy. It's right there in the school's mission statement: **Worcester Academy exists to instill in its students the desire to learn throughout life, to engage passionately with the world around them, and to be honorable persons of strong and resourceful character.***

8. USE A CREATIVE BRIEF

Every agency uses them, and you can too. It forces you to answer these essential questions before you start writing.

- Will the appeal be story-based? Mission-based? Testimonial-based? Project-based? Challenge-based?
- What is the problem or opportunity specific to this appeal?
- How will the donor's contribution help the organization solve the problem or meet the opportunity with a specific call to action?
- Why should the recipient respond now?

Below is an example of the creative brief that Five Maples uses. Go ahead and adopt it for your work.

 **FIVE MAPLES**
Development Communications

CREATIVE BRIEF

Client: _____ Project: _____ Date: _____

Client Background / Notes:

Campaign / Message Integration:

Appeal Type (indicate one or more):

Story based Mission based Testimonial based Project based Challenge based

Key Messaging & Donor Value Proposition:

Specifically,

(1) *What is the problem or opportunity specific to this appeal?*

(2) *How will the donor's contribution help the organization solve the problem or meet the opportunity with a specific call to action?*

(3) *Why should the recipient respond now?*

9. APPEAL TO EMOTIONS VIA NARRATIVE

Stories are how we find meaning in life. In a letter, a story can be told in one page or even in one paragraph, as this excerpt shows:

Unexpected financial challenges can permanently derail a writer's work. When serious needs arise, *DGF Emergency Grants* help restore a sense of hope and normalcy. Just ask Rachel Jendrzejewski—

“ At age 35, **I was diagnosed with Stage 2b breast cancer**. When my doctor said I needed five months of chemotherapy in addition to surgery and radiation, I was stunned. I had no idea how I would stay afloat financially. **I turned to DGF.** ”

Instead of overloading your fundraising letter or email with facts about your organization, use a story that *demonstrates why these facts matter*. Make the donor's impact tangible, personal, and emotional.

Example: If you've written “Last year, we provided food, shelter, and hope to over 1200 members of our community...” instead try “After losing his job and his home, Bob had given up hope—until he felt true compassion from *neighbors like you* who provided him with food, shelter, and the courage to get back on his feet.”

10. USE THE PROBLEM-SOLUTION METHOD OF WRITING

This one is easy to accomplish... make the **donor the solution**.

Problem

Dear Mr. Donor,

Family farms are part of the fabric of the Monadnock Region's communities and have been for centuries. Yet too many towns have lost their farms – losing a part of their identity in the process.

Now we have an opportunity **to protect one of Greenfield's historic farms**, and we're asking for your help.

Solution

The Monadnock Conservancy has agreed to help protect this farm because *we want your children and mine* to be able to hike, ski, and cut Christmas trees in this special place forever, just as we can today. **Together we can make this happen.**

11. USE A LIMITED VOCABULARY, SHORT SENTENCES, AND SHORT (EVEN ONE-LINE) PARAGRAPHS

Edit out extra adjectives or adverbs, verbal crutches, circumlocutions.

While it may seem that removing all these words is “dumbing the letter down,” remember that your donors are *busy* and donors are *letter scanners*. Even the most educated of readers will appreciate a letter that doesn’t take long to read and gets to the point. Write in a conversational style. Your fundraising letter can still motivate donors to action without those eloquent adjectives and corporate mumbo-jumbo.

12. ASK THREE TIMES, FOR A SPECIFIC AMOUNT RIGHT NOW, NOT JUST FOR “SUPPORT”

Let’s be honest. It’s an appeal letter. Your readers *know* you’re asking them for money, so there is no need to dance around the ask with phrases like “we hope you will continue your support.” The call to action must be direct to ensure that the donor *does* take action.

When you use a specific ask with a dollar amount, you take the guess work out of donating—and by asking for it **today**, you create a sense of urgency.

Vary the phrasing of the ask each time, some times very direct, sometimes less direct. Here are four ways of asking interspersed throughout a letter.

1. *I’m writing to ask for your help in....Will you send a generous gift of \$100 today to....*
2. *....your gift will be doubled. Please take a moment and send a gift right now.*
3. *Thank you for giving generously to make this new program a reality.*
4. *P.S. Please take advantage of the dollar for dollar match. Your gift will be put to work immediately....*

13. USE A CHALLENGE MATCH

Do this once per year, generally around a project or an urgent need. When you do have a match, make a big deal out of it. Put it in the letter, in the P.S., on the reply card, in an email, on social media and on your home page.

Match at a two-times rate so you can proclaim: **“Your gift will be doubled!”**
Saying “Your gift will be matched by half” just doesn’t have the same impact.

 **YES!** Double our gift with the Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation match!

14. CREDIT THE DONOR, NOT YOUR ORGANIZATION

When discussing the word “because” in his classic book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, pg 4-5, behavioral psychologist Robert Cialdini shows that it triggers an automatic compliance response. Use these phrases:

Because of you...

Thanks to you....

Because of your gift...

But without you.....

Give now because without you....

“ I didn’t want to give up doing what I love because of vision loss. Thanks to you, I don’t have to.”

15. USE THESE FIVE WORDS

**I
You
Give
Thank You
+ the donor's first name**

In business we are taught to write “we” not “I” and rightfully so. Fundraising is person to person and we say “I thank you” and “I ask you to give,” not “we.”

The five words are simple words, but it's so easy to write a donation request letter and not use them. So, go back through your letter draft and check for these five words. It's an easy way to improve your solicitation letter, thank you note, or donor update.

16. SHORTER IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER

One page letters are not better than two page letters, but interesting letters are better than boring letters. If you include a paragraph or two of story, a testimonial, the problem you are addressing and the solution, a photo with a caption, three ways of asking, and a P.S., you can't keep your letter to one page, but again you will raise more money.

Readers scan anyway, and generally turn over the letter to see if something is on the back side.

17. VISUALIZE YOUR DONOR WHEN YOU WRITE

You are not writing for your staff or your board. You will not be graded by an English teacher. If you write for them, your writing will be boring and ineffective.

Your donor is most likely a female in her 50's to 80's: write for her. That means you have to talk about results in the lives of real people—*not platitudes and numbers*—in a simple and clear way. Write in sentences that are clean, clear, simple and direct.



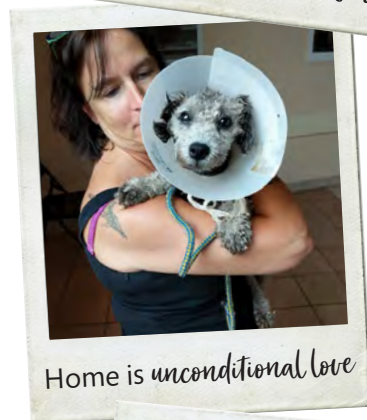
18. USE **BIG TYPE** AND LOTS OF LEADING

Small type and crowded lines reduce readership. Your typical donor's vision is not as good as your designer's vision so don't crowd your letter text. Use at least 12 point type and never use gray-scale type even though your designer loves it. Solid black always!

19. SHOW A PHOTO OF THE PROBLEM, *NOT THE SOLUTION*

Showing sad people is a high hurdle for many charities; they want to show the happy result, not the disturbing problem, even though the problem photo raises more money.

Here is a successful example of both the problem and solution.



20. ALWAYS PUT A CAPTION ON PHOTOS

Captions get noticed and read. The caption should relate the photo to the story or proposition of the letter. The best captions give the reason for giving in one sentence. If the photo doesn't lend itself to that, then maybe you've got the wrong photo.



From discovering the perfect equipment for me, to the financial aid to help pay for it—this is how your gift to The Iris Network changed my vision.



Your gift today will help ensure the next generation of Worcester Academy students are prepared to Achieve the Honorable.

21. GET THE LETTER SALUTATION RIGHT

Few things put a donor off more than an incorrect letter salutation. Review your list before you export it for a mailing. Look for problems like:

- **Empty salutation field.**
Dear {blank}, doesn't work.
- **One or two initials in the field unless that is really what they go by.**
Dear E., doesn't work.
- **Don't use a formal name when you call them something else.**
Mr. Robert Smith doesn't feel right when you know them as Bob.
- **Make sure you send the letter to the right person.**
Mr. Smith, when in fact it is Ms. Smith who sends in the gift.

22. INCLUDE A P.S. IN YOUR APPEAL LETTER

“ ***Over 90 percent of readers read the P.S. before the letter. It is the first paragraph, not the last.*** ”

So found Professor Siegfried Voegele in his famous studies of direct mail response (Voegele, *Handbook of Direct Mail*, pg 202).

You might think including a P.S. is trite or corny. The gurus of direct mail fundraising don't think so. They always include a P.S. because they know it delivers. Put the main reason for giving and the ask in the P.S.

23. WRITE PERSONAL NOTES ON LETTERS TO YOUR BEST DONORS & PROSPECTS

Have your mail house return to you 100 or more letters of the best donors/prospects so you/your board/your ED can write personal notes on them. Mail them first class from your office. Response always improves.

24. PLACE A PHOTO OF THE SIGNER NEXT TO THE SIGNATURE

As we've previously said, people give to people. But often the letter signer (your executive director for example) is just a name and not a person to your donor. Adding her photo next to the signature makes her come alive.

25. PRINT A HANDWRITTEN BUT DIGITIZED P.S. FOR EVERYONE ELSE

In testing we've seen it increases response rates for current and lapsed donors. But you need a high quality scan and a good commercial printer to make it look real. It works best if the signer is someone they recognize.

24



Sincerely,

Hershel Shanks

Hershel Shanks
Founder and Editor

25

*P.S. Support BAR and be part
of these essential programs and
scholarships. Please reach for
your checkbook today and
send us a gift!
Many thanks.
Hershel*

26. WRITE FOR SCANNERS

The majority of readers scan. You must **bold**, **highlight**, callout, caption, P.S. or otherwise call attention to these key phrases in the letter:

- what the problem is
- how only the donor can solve it
- the call to give now

27. SEGMENT

Professor Adrian Sargeant shows that segmenting donors and interacting with them based on their behaviors creates more effective donor communication. Understanding and addressing your donor's unique preferences will in turn increase donor satisfaction, and *their loyalty*.

We have advice on choosing which segments are the most effective on our website. The easiest way to segment is to address them as a prospect, first-time donor, or a lapsed donor.

Prospect: *“Because of generous gifts from people like you, we are able to...”*

First-time donor: *“Thank you so much for becoming a donor! Your generous gift helps us... Will you join us in giving again this spring?”*

Lapsed donor: *“Thank you so much for your previous generous gift. Will you join us again?”*

28. USE A CHECKLIST

Many professions use checklists to ensure quality work. You wouldn't want your pilot to skip his pre-flight checklist would you? Or your surgeon skip her pre-op checklist? You too can work like a professional. Write your letter, then use our “Better Letter Checklist” (Go to fivemaples.com and search for “Checklist”) when you edit it to be sure you've written a letter that raises more money.



DESIGN A DONOR-CENTRIC REPLY CARD

The reader has scanned the letter. They are now primed to give. The reply card makes the transaction as easy as possible with these key elements.

29. VARIABLE AFFIRMATION SENTENCE

A variable affirmation sentence is a great way to add personalization. You can include variables like different verbiage for first-time donors and continued donors (“I want to renew my support” vs. “I want to support”).

PROSPECTS

YES, Tom, I want to join Rutland’s Life Saving Team!

PREVIOUS DONORS

YES, Tom, I want to continue my support!

30. LAST GIFT ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A last gift acknowledgment should include the amount and date of the donor’s previous gift. You appreciate their prior giving—show them you remember! Most donors forget when and how much they gave previously. They appreciate it if you help them out, and you also set a giving benchmark for the donor to meet or exceed.

YES, Tom, I want to continue my support!

My previous annual fund gift was \$350 in August of 2017.

31. VARIABLE ASK STRING

Using a static ask string—*the same for everyone*—can have a negative effect on your appeal for a few reasons:

- You may be setting the bar too low, and donors who could give more are thus primed to donate at a lower amount.
- Smaller donors could be scared away by your largest ask amount (\$5000 or \$1000).

A variable ask string based on the donor’s giving history is proven to help match or upgrade their last gift. In fact, a person who is provided with choices is more likely to make a decision to donate. Download “How Ask Strings Work” to learn more (Go to fivemaples.com and search for “Ask String”).

**Yes, I want to renew my support and help meet
The Mellon Foundation Challenge grant.**

My previous gift was \$250 in December of 2015.

ENCLOSED IS MY GIFT OF

\$500 \$300 \$250 Other \$ _____

USE LAST
GIFT TO
KEY ASK
STRINGS

32. SHOW THE DONOR THEIR GIVING HISTORY

Adding this check box section on the reply form shows you know and value your donor's faithfulness. They'll want to be sure those boxes are all checked.

RECENT GIFTS TO THE NORWICH FUND:

<input type="checkbox"/> FY2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FY2016
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FY2018	<input type="checkbox"/> FY2015
<input type="checkbox"/> FY2017	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FY2014

The data above was compiled on August 3, 2018
Norwich University's fiscal year is June 1 - May 31
If your gift and this letter have crossed paths, thank you!

33. PRE-POPULATED DONOR INFORMATION

Variable fields can conveniently pre-populate the donor's **name**, **address**, **phone** and **email** (if you have it). Include enough space for the donor to make corrections or additions. It's one reason why a variable response card beats a remit envelope with no personalization.

Please update your contact information:

Jane Q. Donor
78 River Road South
Putney, VT 05346
Phone: 802-387-5157
Email: jane@fivemaples.com

- My contact information is correct as listed.*
- Please update my information as indicated above.*

34. MONTHLY GIVING OPTION

In addition to a one-time gift, offer an option to convert to monthly giving. Monthly donors have the highest renewal rates—generally over 80%. Visit our reply card design gallery for more examples and further explanations (Go to fivemaples.com and search for “Reply Card”).

MONTHLY GIVING

Monthly giving is a convenient way to donate with impact. When you become a Sustaining Donor, you will join a committed community that provides ongoing support for ACLS.

I will become a Sustaining Donor. Please charge my credit card the following amount every month:

\$50 \$30 \$25 Other \$_____

Note for monthly donors: You may change your plan or opt out at any time.

35. USE THIS PLANNED GIVING LANGUAGE

Over 80% of legacy gifts are simple bequests. Show donors how easy it is. Even if few people check the box to let you know they are interested in a legacy gift, you are building awareness of this option for supporting your charity. Use this planned giving language on your reply form:

Leave a legacy

One sentence in your will can make a lifetime of difference. To leave a gift in your will, simply share this sentence with your attorney or financial planner:

*“I bequeath \$_____ or _____% of my estate
to [Org Name] at [Address].”*

- I/we have included [Org] in my/our estate plan.
- I/we would like to learn more about special giving options to [Org].

36. USE THE BACK OF THE REPLY CARD
TO DELIVER THE DONOR BENEFIT...
IN THE LIVES OF REAL PEOPLE



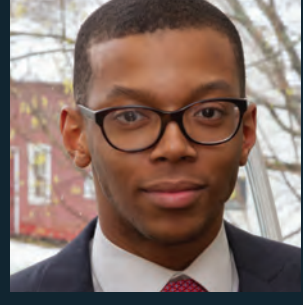
**Student and Vermont
Law School Trustee**

Ensuring institutional
success through represen-
tation, organizational and
fiduciary management.



**Student and Founder of
SPEAK Vermont Prison
Debate Initiative**

Providing public speak-
ing and debate training
programs to inmates at
Vermont correctional
facilities.



**Student and Creator of
Cell Phone Legal
Applications**

Reconstructing the law
through technological
applications to increase
access to justice.

Your philanthropy enables an education that changes lives.
Your support enables students to build careers out of
passion, and to make their mark in the world.

#COUNTMEIN

37. REINFORCE DIRECT MAIL WITH EMAIL & VICE VERSA

Try this schedule:

- Send two follow up emails, one hitting about 1 week after the mailing date and one 2 weeks after.
- Send an appeal email the day after Christmas and on New Year's Eve.

Here's an example schedule based on a drop date of November 27:

NOVEMBER 2019						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	DROP DATE	28	29	30

DECEMBER 2019						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	EMAIL #1	5	6	7
8	9	10	EMAIL #2	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	EOY EMAIL	27	28
29	30	EOY EMAIL				



DESIGN AN EFFECTIVE OUTER ENVELOPE

38. DON'T LET YOUR ENVELOPE BE MISTAKEN FOR JUNK MAIL OR ADVERTISING

- To stand out in a sea of mail, nonprofit organizations often try to differentiate themselves by including a photo or tagline on the outer envelope. This sounds great in theory, but it can actually backfire.
- Direct mail fundraising guru Jeff Brooks noted that “in direct testing, an envelope with no image and no teaser outperforms one with a teaser about 75 percent of the time.”
- In fact, the more plain your envelope, the more mysterious its contents and the greater chance the donor will open it.
- We find the most effective and easiest-to-produce outer envelope is most often one that includes a printed signature of the letter signer above or below the return address.



BUT...

as we all know, sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. If you have a photo that can truly evoke a unique, targeted emotional reaction in your recipient, use it! Think about **identity**, **concern**, **compassion**, even **nostalgia**—these are the emotions that inspire action.





STEWARD YOUR DONORS

Most small non-profits underperform on retention. Be sure to put in practice the following donor retention hacks to steward your donors and keep them coming back.

39. SEND A THANK YOU CARD OR LETTER IN 48 HOURS

Penelope Burk reports that a thank you card or letter sent right away influences retention. It's hard to find the time to do it every day, but it shouldn't drop through the cracks. Make sure someone is assigned this as a priority, or use a thank you letter service like the one Five Maples offers.

40. WRITE A BETTER THANK YOU LETTER

Your thank you letters will be more effective with these elements:

- Thank the donor sincerely and profusely. Let the donor know about the impact made possible by their donations.

Thank you so much for your recent gift of \$100.00. Our school—a laboratory for creative thinking and hands-on learning—is sustained and strengthened because of you and your generous support.

- Include a testimonial.

"I feel incredibly lucky to do this work, kick-started by my time at Yestermorrow."
- Matt Wolpe, co-owner of Just Fine Design/Build, Oakland, CA.

"...it is at Yestermorrow that I first began to articulate the curiosities that are still motivating me today."
- Max Piana, Rutgers University doctoral student in urban restoration ecology.

- Reaffirm your organization's mission.
- Put the gift receipt info and tax deductibility statement in a sentence at the bottom of the page, not in the text of the letter.
- Most importantly: don't use the same letter text over and over. Vary it from time to time, for example, each time you have a new direct mail or email solicitation campaign.

41. SEND A THANK YOU EMAIL

The more ways you say thank you, the better. Here are a few tips:

- If you only get a few gifts per day, have a scripted email ready to go in your email exchange (Outlook, Gmail, Hotmail, etc.)
- If you get hundreds per week, consider a daily or weekly personalized email blast using email marketing software (Mailchimp, Constant Contact, etc.)
- Don't use the same email text over and over. Vary it from time to time, for example, each time you have a new direct mail or email solicitation campaign.

42. MAKE THANK YOU PHONE CALLS

As Penelope Burk and others have shown, thank you calls have a big influence on donor renewals. Donors, suspicious at first, are delighted when they realize staff or a volunteer has called just to thank them.

True, you won't have phone numbers for a lot of your donors, but call those for whom you do.

It doesn't take much time if you keep up with it every day, especially since four out of five times you'll be leaving a voicemail.

It doesn't matter who does it, from the board chair to your favorite volunteer. Just make sure they like talking to people and give them a script like the one that we suggest on our website (Go to fivemaples.com and search for "Script").



43. SEND A DONOR IMPACT NEWSLETTER WITH A REPLY ENVELOPE

If your only communication with your donors is solicitation for gifts, then you have some work to do! Your donors need—and want—to hear from you. Enter your highly anticipated, must-read, *donor-centric newsletter*.

Think of it as a two- to six-page opportunity to give your donors an insider's view of your organization and show that they are part of your team, all while generating unsolicited donations.

To do so, make sure that at the core of every headline, article, and photo you show gratitude, cultivate good feelings, and demonstrate donor impact.

Network for Good really hammers it home: “the key is to make sure your newsletter *builds donor loyalty*. Loyal donors will give more, stay with you longer, and be your best advocates.”

When all you do is boast about the great things you accomplish and all the lives you change, the donor doesn't feel needed. It must be made consistently clear that what you do is only possible because of their generous gift. And by “make it clear” we mean include this sentiment in every headline, call-out box, and photo caption of your newsletter/impact report, as well as the articles. If you can't easily spot grateful verbiage in these places, rewrite them.

For examples, read **our blog on donor-centric newsletters** (Go to *fivemaples.com* and search for “newsletter”) and get Tom Ahern's book *Making Money with Donor Newsletters*.



Royal River Conservation Trust
Donor Impact Report | Spring 2018

Thank You

I'M GRATEFUL for you and your commitment to conserve land, farms, and trails in the Royal River watershed and along Casco Bay.

I know you'll be encouraged to see where your contributions are having an impact. In just this past year, your generous gifts have helped expand many of our preserves and continue to create additional open spaces. You've helped ensure our trails, greenways, programs and events remain free and open to the public. Thank you.

As we strive to protect the natural, scenic, recreational, agricultural, and historic resources of the Royal River region, you play a crucial role. The health of ecosystems and waterways depend on us working together to preserve and protect them. We cannot do this without you.

Thank you for your devotion to our community, its beauty, ecology and people.

ALAN STEARNS
Executive Director

YOUR IMPACT

Saving Our Precious Lands, Habitats, & Ecosystems

Forest Waterhouse was born in the farmhouse on his family's property in 1920. He passed away 96 years later in the same house. The Waterhouse Farm operated for many years as a dairy and transitioned to a beef cattle operation in the 1970s. Your donations helped RRCT secure an agricultural easement working closely with Maine Farmland Trust, fulfilling Forest Waterhouse's desire—ensuring the property will always remain as a farm.

See IMPACT on page 3

“

Meaningful information on their gifts at work is key to donors' repeat and increased giving. Fundraising under-performance, therefore, is actually a failure to communicate.

—Penelope Burk
in *Donor Centric Fundraising*

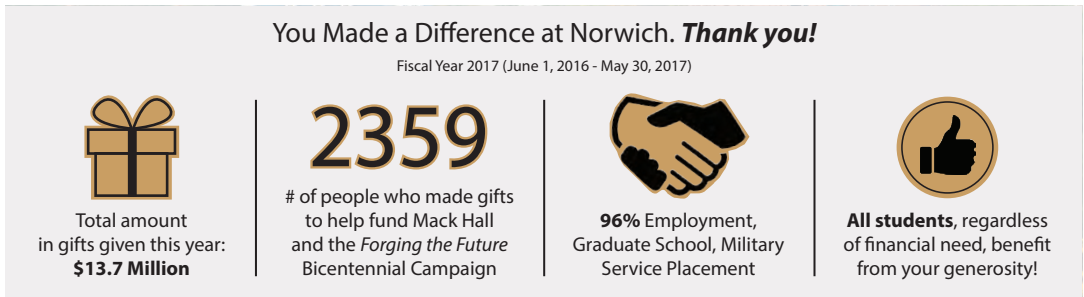
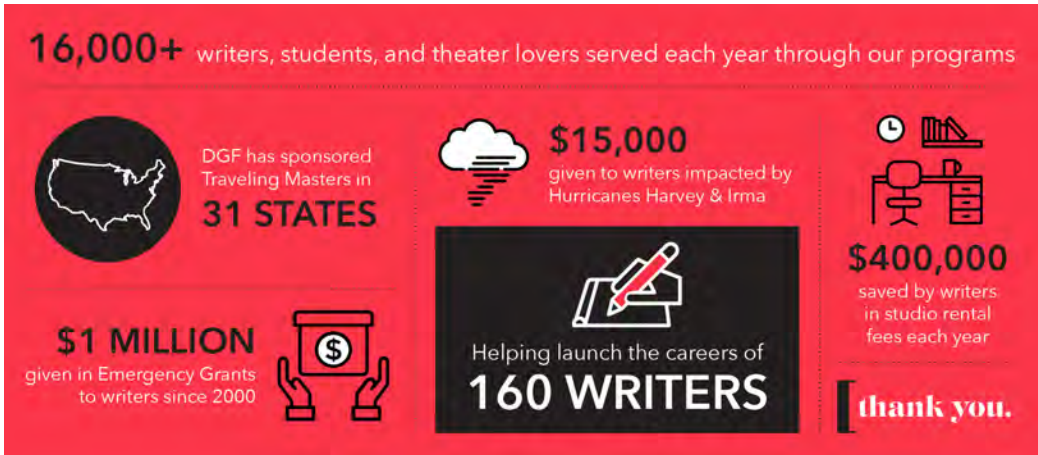
“

In my experience, the most overlooked and underutilized vehicle for conveying stories and the vitality of your organization's mission is the simple four-page newsletter.

—Roger Craver
in *Retention Fundraising*

44. USE INFOGRAPHICS RATHER THAN TEXT TO TALK ABOUT NUMBERS

Careful with that infographic—don't over complicate it or squeeze in too much. The whole idea is to make the numbers accessible and vivid. Keep it simple.



45. SEND AN IMPACT POSTCARD USING STORIES & INFOGRAPHICS

Thank you!

YOUR GIFT IN 2017 SUPPORTED:

-  **2,531** adult lives impacted
- 108** children
- 9,961** hours spent transforming lives

YOUR GIVING, BY THE NUMBERS:

-  **\$1,162,816** given by 2,359 donors
-  **237** donors made a first time
-  **more than half** of the clients you help live below poverty
-  **27 YEARS** longest consecutive giving



**FUTURE
IN SIGHT**

Future In Sight | NH Association for the Blind
25 Walker Street, Concord, NH 03301

 **FUTURE
IN SIGHT** | Your support transforms lives!


Josey has been blind since birth. Just like so many other visually impaired teens, Josey has faced many obstacles. Today, Josey is an honor roll, college-bound 10th grader. She recently went on a school trip to Disney World. Josey is a self-taught musician who loves to play her ukulele and compose songs. Thanks to Future in Sight, Josey now holds the keys to a successful and fulfilling life inside—and outside—of the classroom.


Joan has been independent her entire life. And she was determined to continue that despite her deteriorating vision. Joan quickly realized that she couldn't do it on her own. With help from Future In Sight's vision rehabilitation specialists and monthly peer support groups, she built the confidence she thought she lost. Joan learned that even with blindness she can adapt and continue living independently.

Last year, **3,255** gifts were made to Future in Sight!
Thank you for helping make a difference!



For more success stories
visit futureinsight.org

46. BREAK UP YOUR NEWSLETTER INTO SHORT EMAILS

Break your donor-centric newsletter into short email news and story blasts that can be sent out monthly or even more frequently. Effusive thanks followed by a brief affirmation of what the donor's gift has helped accomplish is really the heart of this digital touch.

THANK YOU and appealing graphic



reaffirming mission through donor-centric language



pull out testimonial



47. ASK FOR A SECOND GIFT WITHIN 60-90 DAYS

The donor *feels good* when they make a gift to your cause. They *feel appreciated* and proud when they receive a thank you showing the specific impact of their gift. When given another opportunity to affect the issue that concerns them, they are *connected* and *inspired* to give again, knowing their impact the first time.





BOOST YOUR
END-OF-YEAR GIVING



48. SEND YEAR END EMAIL REMINDERS

Set up 3-4 **email reminders** for those who received your most recent appeal and haven't responded. Schedule the emails between early December and New Years. The first blast would coincide with the end-of-year appeal's in-home date, with the others staggered until year's end.



49. CALL KEY LAPSED DONORS

Sort them by importance and then reach out to as many as possible with a **personal phone call** in the remaining days.



50. REACH OUT

Contact those with **more than 5 years of giving** who are lapsed more than one year. Send **emails** letting them know they have been missed and with specific encouragement to return. If you finish calls to the first group, **call people** in this group.

BONUS HACK!

Give one to your boss as well. It's quick but essential and will change how you write.

The Fundraiser's Guide to Irresistible Communications
by Jeff Brooks





78 River Road South, Putney, VT 05346



800.437.7780



fivemaples.com/blog