



A NEWSLETTER THAT TIES IT ALL TOGETHER 11 Tips to Maximize Your Nonprofit Newsletter

A couple of weeks ago I opened a newsletter from a young nonprofit organization. With barely three years in operation, it is well along in its fundraising efforts to build and equip a green animal sanctuary, impressive for this economy. This nonprofit has no paid staff and its volunteers hold varying amounts of nonprofit management experience. Little if any budget is available for training and conferences. Undeterred by the economy, this ambitious group is steadily growing. Its newsletter is a powerful tool and they are making the most of it.

By taking a comprehensive approach with the newsletter, the only mass produced piece they have, this nonprofit effectively shares with an expanding audience the excitement of all the good things happening. Short-term cash for the annual fund, will provisions and retirement plans for later, in-kind donations, memorials, and honorariums – are all part of the stories in the newsletter.

While some nonprofits have resources to invest in staff training and specially designed planned giving materials, it's not necessary. What matters is sharing information in a way that inspires people to contribute.

In this simple newsletter that is fun and engaging, the reader gains a clear understanding of how the whole organization fits together and the variety of gift options available. It's all wrapped up in one exciting newsletter that people actually read!



This nonprofit's newsletter describes the *possibilities* springing from actual gifts, rather than tax strategies of generic gifts and, they're inspiring all different sorts of gifts.

For tying messages together in a coherent stream nothing beats the effectiveness of a newsletter. It's a question of doing it in a way that inspires donors, with enthusiasm and creativity rather than technical knowledge and dry descriptions of generic gift strategies.

Reading that newsletter was reminiscent of an old fashioned barn-raising or quilting bee, where everyone has a role and is focused on a shared vision.

Here's what I like about the newsletter:

- Gift options are described as action steps already taken by donors. Prospective donors easily gain a sense of excitement as well as ideas about the resources needed. The newsletter communicates in a practical, straight-forward way and focuses on what the gifts enable, rather than gift strategies used. Information is presented as stories not as technical articles. Donors are inspired to join the action!
- All types of gifts are mentioned, current AND deferred, in-kind and cash, short-term and long-term, giving a clear sense of all the types of gifts that are needed, from school-children recycling cans, to individuals and memorial gifts, corporate generosity and foundation gifts. Photos keep it real.
- It gives readers ideas of how deferred funds may be used while allowing flexibility for the future. For example, one purpose for bequest funds is to support animals whose owners can no longer take care of them – an open-ended



flexible fund definition. The story focuses on animals and people – not on writing a will.

- It is saturated with photos of people of all ages doing all sorts of things, conveying a sense of deep community support.
- Ownership is shared. The size of any one gift seems almost irrelevant because the simple concept of giving is highlighted.
- It overflows with gratitude and the joy of building something meaningful, together, for the good of the community. High energy and enthusiasm, passion and commitment are *investment worthy* and encourage people to think about the bigger vision and ways, in addition to cash, to realize the vision.
- People of all ages are reading this newsletter....think of all the seeds being planted for future gifts! Reading the newsletter gives me a good feeling. Isn't that what donors want?
- The mission and how it spends money are about as clear as it gets. This gives planned gift prospects a sense of trust in management.
- The newsletter is written by volunteers. It's not perfect.
- For prospective donors, the newsletter conveys the persuasive qualities of determination and focus, creativity, impact, and fun.
- Every issue contributes to exponential growth because it ties it all together in a simple, compelling story making big impact.



By following these tips, a budget-conscious nonprofit can integrate its messages about current and long-term resources and do it in a readable and enthusiastic way that educates and unites its constituency. You've already got everything you need to start.

If you're thinking that planned giving should be held separate from conversations about the annual fund, and if you're wondering how to set up that special conversation with a donor about a will provision, you'll want to find the article on my "Free Resources" page entitled, "If You Think of Planned Gifts As Separate, So Will Your Donors."