



CRAFTING CONTENT THAT COUNTS

How to create great content for your donors to break up the barrage of constant appeals.





INTRODUCTION

As fundraisers, we spend our professional lives asking for money.

And for those familiar with direct mail, it's for a very good reason: each appeal costs money – to design, produce, and mail. So, to offset the high cost of direct mail, each piece must have an ask. Yet, when donors are bombarded with too many appeals, they start to feel like ATMs instead of valued contributors, even when those appeals provide valuable information on your organization and its mission. What if there were a way to easily communicate with donors – to share valuable information they care about – and do it at a cost low enough so you don't have to ask for money each time? The following whitepaper explains just that: how to break the cycle of constant appeals and deliver real value to your donors using relevant, third-party content.

THINK LONG TERM

Continuous appeals are notorious for making donors feel annoyed, tired of giving, or, worse...unappreciated. None of these emotions are associated with long-term fundraising success. Complicating things further is that this “appeal-only” mentality of fundraising then leaves relationship cultivation up to the nonprofit's other departments, which are often just as short-staffed and lacking in the resources needed for donor engagement.

Luckily, direct marketing can easily escape the “solicit, solicit, and solicit again” trap and deliver donors a better experience that grows revenue rather than driving away donors. And it's easier to do than most direct marketers realize. The first step is to stop thinking only as far as





each appeal and begin to look at the long term. Whether attracting new leads, fostering engagement with a cause, or driving new revenue, it's critical to think about the long-term value of a supporter. Our data show that adopting a longer view of donor support will yield strong results across the board.

USEFUL & INSPIRING

One of the most effective ways to foster long-term support is by delivering content that not only aligns with what a donor cares about but also solves a problem or inspires them. For example, if your organization's cause is animal-related, you can deliver content that helps supporters learn about training a new puppy. If your organization helps kids, you can share an inspiring story about a child the organization helped. Or, find a story that's funny and entertaining – success stories don't always have to be serious. Over time, giving people more value in the form of content creates greater fundraising results.

With a long-term view of the types of content donors want, it's now time to deliver, and this is where many organizations struggle. While nonprofits can often generate plenty of ideas for donor-centric content, bringing a well-polished piece to life can be a challenge.

The best place to look is creative reuse – or upcycling. Upcycling content can take many forms, but at its heart lies a simple concept: Create as many variations on a topic as you can. For example, if someone in your

organization writes a blog post, you could upcycle that information into a how-to guide, or (with a little more work) a mini-whitepaper. Upcycling also works in the other direction: If you have the time to write a case study, you could break it into 3 to 5 blog posts or even more social media posts. A good place for organizations to start is to review their current content and see which pieces can be dusted off, reworked, and polished into seemingly brand-new pieces.

CURATE CONTENT

But what if your organization isn't writing a blog and has virtually no original content? Some of our clients have found themselves in the same position, and here's how we're solving it for them. We've built a network of leading engagement community and advocacy platforms to license their content for direct response programs, a service we pass on to clients. With this arrangement, we can select articles created by our network's award-winning staff and repurpose them into cultivation content. Of course, not all content is 100% mission-focused, but that's okay. It's important to not get too focused on providing content that is completely aligned with an organization. After all, donors are human beings with diverse interests and lifestyles. The content you deliver (as long as it's not misaligned with your organization's mission) need not be strictly limited to the work your organization has done – information on similar issues will still add value.





CONTENT CURATION IN ACTION

By working with content partners, you can more quickly develop blog posts, email messages, and organic social posts. Some examples of this idea in action are below:



CLIMATE CAUSE

Example Content:

- Share a quirky story with content that most people will find relevant, such as “Climate change is helping ticks expand their reach. And, a new tick-borne disease is making people hate meat.” Use the content of [this article](#) for an email, blog post, and social posts.
- Connect back to cause-related work with a soft donation ask or encourage people to sign a pledge at the end of the email and in the blog post.



VETERANS GROUP

Example Content:

- Provide an interesting story about how surprising therapies help veterans deal with stress, as in [this article](#) about fly fishing therapy. Segue into talking about how “your membership/annual contribution” helps.
- Create a blog post, email, and social posts. Ask people to comment on the social posts with what they do to relieve their stress. Do they fish? Play music? Walk their neighborhood?
- Include a soft ask for donation or membership renewal in the email and blog post.



CATHOLIC MISSION

Example Content:

- [This article](#) describes a recent HUD-directed rent increase for the poor. You could package the article as, “Read how this new bill could impact the less fortunate in your area. Please reach out to your representatives and voice your concerns. And in the meantime, let us keep the families most affected by this in our thoughts and prayers.”
- Create multiple social posts using excerpts from the article.
- Share the article link via email with “urgent alert” in the subject field.

CONCLUSION

Escaping the continuous appeal trap isn’t difficult once you decide your organization is ready to break free of this cycle. By looking well beyond the next appeal and developing a long-term view of donor cultivation connected to an increase in lifetime value, your organization can start to see what will keep supporters engaged for years to come and devote resources to the task. Armed with this philosophy and the right content, you can begin to create a more valuable experience for supporters, differentiate from other organizations, and keep donors excited and energized about giving.

MAY WE BUY YOU A CUP OF COFFEE?

Let's chat about how we can custom-tailor strategies and solutions to help you meet your organization's most pressing goals. We cordially invite you to a **Coffee & Conversation** where we'll analyze any area of your direct response you'd like and share our recommendations in a complimentary 30-minute consultation and a one-page report that will help you take confident next steps.

Here are some popular Coffee & Conversation topics, but we're open to evaluate any area of your program. Let's chat!

Campaign Review

Give us your best, your worst, or your most challenging fundraising campaign along with your results report and/or audience insights and we'll provide actionable suggestions on ways to enhance your results.

Data Review

Let us uncover the hidden trends and takeaways from your program reports. We'll share our high-level insights on your trends (good and not so good) so you can make better-informed decisions.

Website Review

Are your site visitors taking the desired next steps? Pick our brains to explore how to best optimize your site, increase engagement and help you meet your goals online.

Production Review

Deadlines, set-ups, papers, lettershop and all things mail production. Let's explore where you can gain efficiencies and savings with your direct mail and print production.



Schedule **Coffee & Conversation** with us [here](#) or scan the QR code. We'll send you a virtual cup of coffee to enjoy – on us!

ABOUT CONCORD DIRECT

Great listeners. Great strategists. Great implementors.

Nonprofits rely on Concord Direct to advance their missions by building and activating audiences across direct mail, email, websites, online advertising and social media. Our data-driven strategies, expert creative, and efficient execution means that the investment you make in fundraising will deliver measurable impact.



To learn more, maximize engagement, and start reaching your goals, visit us at concorddirect.com.

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