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FundRaising Success

Church Fundraising: 8 Ways to Turn Contribution Statements Into More Donor Dollars

By Ben Stroup

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It's time to send out quarterly contribution statements. You have a decision to make. Will you choose to simply print a line-item record of people's gifts, or will you use it as an opportunity to communicate the impact those contributions are having?

Here are eight ways you can turn contribution statements into dollars.

1. Personalize the address.

Any piece addressed to "Member" doesn't work. Printing technology has advanced to the point that variable data printing is cost-effective even for small churches. People want to read something with their names on it.

2. Give me a reason to open the envelope.

Direct-mail fundraising still produces the highest return on investment. The same rules apply to contribution statements. If you don't give me a reason to open the envelope, then I'll never see what's inside. You could be creative or boring. Any copy on the outer envelope will achieve higher "open" rates than blank ones. Even adding "Please verify our records are correct for tax purposes" is better than a plain outer or carrier envelope.

3. Design matters.

Make sure the mail piece AND the contribution statement are appealing to the eye. If it looks like a tax return, I won't read it. If I've opened the envelope, then you've overcome the most difficult obstacle. Don't fumble the ball when you are on a touchdown run with no opponents chasing you.

4. Tell me a story.

Very few people are motivated by financial reports. I've met those people before. There is a glimmer in their eye when they are flooded with data and numbers. Guess what? Those people are weird and not normal. The person opening the envelope wants to hear a story. Do more with this mail piece than just offer a standard, record-based printout.

5. Leverage the letter.

Use a cover letter as an opportunity for the pastor to retell the story of the church over the previous quarter, especially highlighting measurable moments of ministry impact. Then, close the letter with your dream of what God is going to do over the next 90 or 180 days. Most people never see the "big picture" like the pastor and staff do. Help them see and feel what you see and feel on a daily basis. (Note: The letter isn't restricted to one page in length. As long as you provide great content, people will read it.)

6. Include a comparison to previous-year giving to date.

People like to keep score. Even my preschooler, who participates in a soccer program that doesn't declare a winner or loser after each game, knows if his team won the game or not. The people in the pews are no different. It's easy to forget to tithe when you are traveling on business or vacation. Seeing my current-year giving next to my previous-year giving becomes

a subtle reminder to be faithful with what God has freely given them.

7. Ask me to do something.

At the end of the letter, tell me exactly what you want me to do. You want each member to review the information, submit any necessary changes and/or make a gift. You can even include a statement on the reply envelope that indicates additional giving options such as online giving. (Note: You can add a sense of urgency to the reply envelope by printing a message like: "Please process this piece immediately." or "Immediate Attention Required.")

8. Include a postage-paid response envelope.

Include an already addressed reply envelope. For even better results, make sure the reply envelope is postage-free for the member. When I don't have to search for a stamp, it becomes an easy, quick decision. You don't want the mail piece to get shuffled into a pile where it will be lost forever. You want the member to act instantly without hesitation.

Ben Stroup is chief broker of opportunity at [Generis](#) and author of the [Church Giving Matters](#) blog, where this article first appeared.