

The Nonprofit End-of-Year Resource Guide

From #GivingTuesday until New Year's Eve, the end of the year is busy for nonprofits, and for good reason. On average, [30% of annual giving occurs in December, and 10% of annual giving occurs in the last 3 days of the year](#). To help you get the most out of this festive and generous month, we've compiled our favorite end-of-year campaign guides and resources into one handy bundle. Plus we've added some extra checklists and tips in there as a treat.

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Fundraising Tools

There are a lot of fundraising websites out there. In the time it took me to type that previous sentence, a new one probably just launched. With so much to choose from, it can be hard to tell where to start.

We've [looked at some donation platforms in the past](#), specifically as part of our recommendations for nonprofits looking to keep that steady drumbeat of on-site contributions. And we're still big fans of those platforms — but for fundraising websites, we wanted to look at those instances where you have a specific niche to fill. In many cases, these complement a more robust [CRM strategy](#).

What type of fundraising website do I need?

The answer to this depends on what you need from your online fundraising tools — you wouldn't hire a major gifts officer to be your volunteer coordinator. Consider your digital tools for the specific “job description” they need to fill. Are you looking for a new donation platform to handle all incoming donations made via your website? ([If you are, check this out.](#)) Or do you need something for a seasonal campaign? Are you launching a new project that needs specific funding, or do you not even need money at this point so much as you need stuff?

Once you've determined the specific use for your fundraising website or tool, then you can get to the fun part: a competitive analysis.

What to consider when choosing a fundraising website

Before we get into our picks for fundraising sites, we should note that our recommendations are just that — recommendations. Your mileage may vary with whatever tool you pick, so it's good to consider your more specific needs beyond the general type of fundraising website. At Whole Whale, some of the criteria we consider include:

- Does the fundraising platform cover donations, crowdfunding, or both?
- How are funds released?
- What is the fee structure?
- Does the platform integrate well with your website's CMS?
- Can you host the fundraising website's URL on your own organization domain?

- Can it be tracked through Google Analytics?
- Can we customize the donation page?

Fire up your Excel or Google Sheets and start shopping with these considerations in mind — as well as any other questions that may come up specifically within your team.

Our favorite fundraising websites

What follows here are 13 fundraising websites to consider, along with the specific functionalities for each one. Check them out and weigh their pros and cons against your own matrix of considerations for you, your organization, and your team. It's also a great idea to check out their competition to see if there's one that works even better. And if you have any suggestions, please tweet them to us at [@WholeWhale!](https://twitter.com/WholeWhale)

1. If you care about design and integration capabilities... [Classy](#)

Classy lives up to its name — and has a price tag to go with it. That said, it has a high number of design and integration capabilities, including the ability to seamlessly customize the design to match your branding and hosting its URLs on your own domain. [We're also fans of their blog.](#)

2. If you have a great project idea and your supporters don't need the write-off... [Kickstarter](#)

In less than 10 years, Kickstarter has become so interchangeable with crowdfunding that it's up there with Band-Aid and Kleenex in terms of brand-name–product synonymousness. While nonprofits are welcome to launch projects on Kickstarter, it does have rules (in addition to the standard all-or-nothing funding principle): Your campaign has to be centered on a project (versus general fundraising for a charity or cause), and there's no write-off for backers. That said, if you're a nonprofit or a for-benefit organization with a solid initiative, you would be tapping into a network of committed givers: In 2016, the Opera di Firenze brought in over [€322,000 to fund its "Opera for Everybody" project.](#)

3. If you're a college or university... [Funderful](#)

Founded in 2012 to help colleges and universities “break through the noise and engage their communities...in an age of declining email open rates,” Funderful leverages chatbot innovations to tap into preexisting alumni networks on Facebook. They boast 80% open rates for Facebook messenger campaigns and also integrate paid social advertising into the mix. Their international client list includes the Rhodes Trust, London Business School, the American University, Wolfson College at the University of Oxford, and the University of Graz, Austria.

4. If you're a startup and need white-glove service... [Fundable](#)

This fundraising website is for all of our friends working in the social-impact and for-benefit sectors: Fundable is a resource for getting the capital you need to launch your business with a very involved team that will hold your hand from start to finish, with options for both reward and equity-based crowdfunding. Their pricing structure reflects the tailoring of services with a monthly fee instead of a percentage of donations.

5. If you need to raise funds for disaster relief... [GoFundMe](#)

For the immediate, boots-on-the-ground approach to raising cash, GoFundMe is one of the most trusted and ubiquitous fundraising websites. GoFundMe campaigns are often seen in the wake of natural and man-made disasters, either to help a larger victims' fund or to support individuals in need of extra help after a major life event. The Kickstarter-like aspect of their pages allow for easy updates and social sharing, too.

6. If you're fine on cash but need stuff... [Amazon Wish List](#)

In addition to the [AmazonSmile](#) program which allows customers to shop on behalf of a cause (0.5% of their eligible purchases go to the cause of their choice), Amazon Wish Lists have risen in popularity to give material goods over monetary contributions. While many nonprofits get better rates on buying items in bulk through other vendors, [CNN's Heather Kelly notes](#) that the uptick in organizations using Wish Lists stems from giving supporters a chance to feel like they're contributing something concrete, thereby making impact more tangible.

7. If you're raising funds in the health/science/medicine field... [Experiment](#)

Maybe your fundraising needs are specific. Like, "using seaweed to assess nitrogen pollution levels around the coast of northern England and Scotland" specific. Individuals and institutions (including the Universities of Washington and South Carolina, UC Berkeley, and UNC – Chapel Hill) have been using Experiment to fund their scientific research. So far, over \$7.7million has been pledged to 768 funded projects by 41,575 backers, with several projects receiving additional grants from Experiment itself. A few recent campaigns ranged from questioning whether music could influence the longevity of human blood cells to early detection of pancreatic cancer.

8. If you're looking specifically for equity... [AngelList](#)

AngelList's crowdfunding component plays crowdfunding matchmaker for angel investors and startups at an average valuation of \$4.1million. They also work with a more traditional platform allowing Venture Capitalists to find specific projects to build out their portfolio. It's one of the longest-running equity websites, having launched in 2010 to democratize the investment process. They even have a section for job searchers and recruiters.

9. If your supporters want to raise funds on your behalf... [CrowdRise](#)

There are plenty of crowdfunding platforms, but one thing we love about CrowdRise is the ability for supporters to crowdfund on behalf of your organization. It can create a chain effect of fundraisers rallying around key giving periods such as awareness months or the holiday season. Corporations can launch campaigns to engage and encourage [workplace giving](#), and it's also a [platform used by celebrities](#) to leverage their fans to support a cause of their choice (you can even offer [Kickstarter-style incentives for different levels of giving](#)).

10. If you're looking to fund ongoing content projects... [Patreon](#)

The website of choice for artists looking to receive compensation for their output, Patreon takes its name from the old-school patronage system in the days of the Renaissance. Creatives and



creators use the platform to receive regular donations from their fans in exchange for tiered incentives (such as exclusive access to content or a say in what they make next). If you're looking to fund [ongoing podcasts](#), a [theater season](#), or even [TED-Ed videos](#), you'll find a home of like-minded creators for good on Patreon.

11. If you want to keep your fee structure low... [Flipcause](#)

Flipcause is a donation website designed to work with a range of operating budgets. Their Starter model applies to organizations with revenue of \$100,000 or under in the last year and runs \$100 per month (paid annually). At the highest end of the spectrum is their Standard package, which applies to total revenue of \$2million to \$5million and starts at \$250 per month (paid annually). Their rates for web payments are the lowest in the industry as well, capped off at 1.5%. If you use Salesforce, this won't be your top pick for integration, but if you're pinching every penny and looking for the cheapest-yet-still-reliable option, this is it.

12. If you're a female-led organization looking for serious dollars... [Plum Alley](#)

Because the future is female. Plum Alley connects individuals and institutions looking to invest in private companies that are led by female founders or feature gender diverse teams. This next-level crowdfunding website grew from being essentially the Indiegogo of female entrepreneurship to being a partner to both investors and business owners, as well as managing more significant deals than your average Kickstarter (their average minimum investment is \$10,000). Plum Alley makes investments via syndicate and hosts quarterly showcase events to give startups more face-time with their potential investors.

13. If you want [Design Whaler Ann's](#) favorite pick... [Donorbox](#)

A simple-yet-elegant solution, this is our own design and CRM guru Ann Nguyen's favorite fundraising website and software. In 15 minutes you can seamlessly embed Donorbox onto your website (or use their popup widget), accept monthly recurring donations, and accept payments via credit card, Apple Pay, bank transfer, and PayPal. They also play well with a number of integrations, including WordPress, Squarespace, Stripe, MailChimp, and Salesforce.

BONUS! If you have some amazing experiences to auction off... [Charitybuzz](#) + [Prizeo](#)

We're a little biased as we've worked with both [Charitybuzz](#) and [Prizeo](#) in the past, however, these two fundraising websites — hosted under the Charity Network — allow nonprofits to auction off once-in-a-lifetime experiences to benefit their cause.

Charitybuzz is the more traditional auction format, with users bidding on lots including walk-on roles on popular TV shows, concert tickets followed by meet-and-greets with the performers, and weeklong stays at private villas.

Prizeo, on the other hand, operates on a sweepstakes level with automatic entry available at a starting level of \$10 — the more money you contribute, the more entries you can buy for experiences like tickets to *Hamilton* and the chance to play football with Tom Brady.



Bonus: Check out our tips on [crowdfunding best practices](#) and [Facebook fundraising do's and don'ts](#) to make the most of some of the above platforms.

Fundraising Email Best Practices and Templates

When giving season comes around, nonprofits are in overdrive, working to increase donations so that meaningful work can be done in the new year. It's exciting! And stressful!

In that moment, nothing sounds better than just sending out some automated, one-size-fits-all fundraising emails. Especially since [email accounted for more than 26% of online revenue for nonprofits in 2016](#). Automating the process sounds like easy money, right?

Not exactly. Email has proven to be really valuable, but only when done right. Yes, you are typing words on a machine and sending those words to another person's machine. But the keyword there is person.

Remember that you're engaging with human beings — and very different ones at that. You wouldn't send your mom the same gift you'd send your nephew. You don't call your friends just to ask for a favor (and when you do, you don't ask every friend for the same favor or in the same way). You [tailor your gifts and your appeals](#) based on the person and on your relationship.

To really connect with your supporters — and drive them to donate — consider running a [highly segmented email campaign](#) this giving season. Divide your list based on donation amount or donation behavior. For each type, your segments could be the following:

Donation amount

- 0
- \$
- \$\$
- \$\$\$
- \$\$\$\$

Donation behavior

- Users: Have never donated
- Lapsed donors: Haven't donated in 1 or more years
- Active donors: Donated in last year



- Repeat donors: Have donated multiple years in a row or to more than one campaign
- Top donors: \$\$\$\$ or more donors

Some of you may be thinking, “Why don’t I just reach out to my top donors for the big bucks and save myself time to catch up on my Netflix (or sleep)?” I feel you. As valuable as those top donors are, a lot of small donations can add up! Plus, it helps to remind your supporters of your amazing work, and unite them towards driving real impact. Best case scenario: Motivated supporters become repeat donors, which is [one of your most valuable segments](#) in the long term.

Now, dividing your list into these donor segments requires some work, but it will pay off (#kaching) in the end. To help you out on the writing side, we’ve created templates for the different donor audiences, plus a little description about the content choices we made. For all these emails, remember to always, always include plenty of links to your donate page, visual content (images and/or videos), and a clear call to action at the end.

Keep reading for our templates designed for each donor segment:

For \$0 donors or Users

These are your contacts who have not donated in the past; use this list to turn contacts into first time donors.

This list calls for less personalized messaging and lighter asks than the other segments. Contacts may be less familiar with your organization than donors, so take time to tell them about the amazing things you do and what their contribution will help you accomplish. Ask for a small donation amount or offer a smaller range of donation amounts to ease them into it.

View this email in your browser



Hi <First Name>,

[Narrative about your organization. Tell a story that humanizes what your organization does. Try to do it in 3 sentences or less.]

Our goal is to **[insert goal]**. Help us to **[what you will do with the donations]** by donating to our **[name of campaign, hyperlinked to your site]** this year.

Just **[small donation amount]** can help us to **[do something awesome!]**.

When we all contribute just a little, we can do a lot. **[or your own tagline]**.

Donate

For the \$-\$\$ donors

This list is your smaller and/or newer donor pool. These people have expressed interest and engaged with your organization by giving in the past, but are not among your “all star” donors (yet).

Thank this list for their past donation and support, and ask for a donation amount or range that is just slightly above what they donated before. Consider adding a list of programs/items that can be paid for with even the smallest donation. [An example from UNICEF:](#)



Super Hero Pack

\$80.78

This gift bundle defends the lives of young children through 100 vaccines, 1 vaccine carrier and 10 mosquito net.



Mosquito Nets

\$40.80

This gift provides 10 nets to defend families from deadly malaria.

Or our template (on the next page) that includes 3 donation levels to anchor donation level. [Studies show](#) donors will be more likely to choose the middle option.



Hi <First Name>,

[Narrative about your organization. Tell a story that humanizes what your organization does. Try to do it in 3 sentences or less.]

Our goal is to **[insert goal]**. Help us to **[what you will do with the donations]** by donating to our **[name of campaign, hyperlinked to your site]** this year.

Just **[small donation amount]** can help us to **[do something awesome!]**.

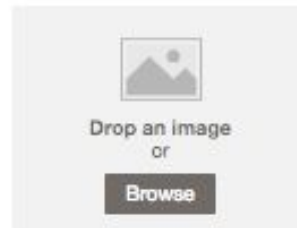
Just **[\$\$ donation amount]** can help us to **[do something awesome, with photograph to illustrate]**.



Just **[\$\$\$ donation amount]** can help us to **[do something awesome, with photograph to illustrate]**.



Just **[\$\$\$\$ donation amount]** can help us to **[do something awesome, with photograph to illustrate]**.



When we all contribute just a little, we can do a lot. **[or your own tagline]**.

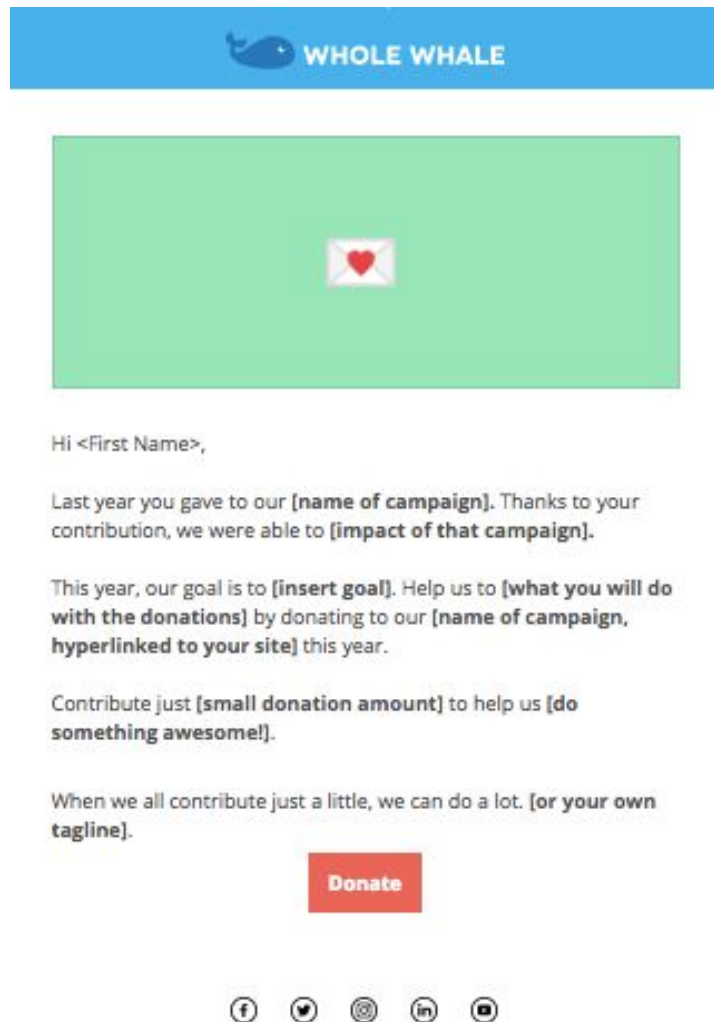
Donate

For the Donors from Last Year

These people engaged with your organization's campaign in the last year. Specifically reference that campaign in your communication to tell donors that you remember and appreciate their gifts.

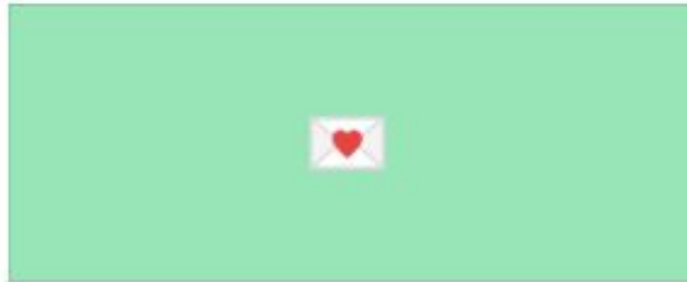


Show them what you were able to accomplish with the money donated from that campaign, and share your goals for this year.



For the Lapsed Donors

These individuals donated in the past, but haven't donated in the last year or two. Thank them for being a part of your community and donating in the past, and remind them why they donated either to your cause in general or a specific campaign. Tell them all that you were able to do with the past donations, and outline your goals for this year.



Hi <First Name>,

[Narrative about the work your organization does in 2 sentences or less]. Thanks to your contribution, we were able to **[impact of that campaign]**. But there is still more we can do.

This year, our goal is to **[insert goal]**. Help us to **[what you will do with the donations]** by donating to our **[name of campaign, hyperlinked to your site]** this year.

Contribute just **[small donation amount]** to help us **[do something awesome!]**.

When we all contribute just a little, we can do a lot. **[or your own tagline]**.

Donate



For the Repeat Donors

Send to the top accounts who have repeatedly donated over time. These donors have shown high engagement with the organization. Contact each of these donors with personalized messaging. Send a direct ask, don't be shy! Notice this email is not sent from an email platform, but from an individual's email account.

[Name of campaign]

Recipients

[Name of campaign]

Hi <First Name>,

[Narrative about what you do and how it helps real people/animals/other]. You have been one of our most loyal supporters, without you we would not have been able to [do something awesome].

This year, our goal is to [do something else that is awesome]. With your help, we can make it happen. When you donate just [donation amount], we can [do that something else that is awesome].

Every year, we do more and more. We appreciate having you on our side [or a creative, brand-appropriate metaphor].

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Name

Title

Website

Phone Number

For the Top Donors

Send individual emails to the top 25 single value donations. Each of these accounts will have made a large donation (determine your exact \$ amount range based on your past individual donations) within the last 5 years.

Contact each of these donors with personalized messaging to appeal for high value gifts. Remind them why they donated before, whether it was at an event, to support a specific campaign, or just to your cause in general, and ask them to contribute to your goal.

If they have a personal connection to a particular employee at your organization, have that person reach out to them individually. Some of your top donors may be on your board: if your organization has set (or previously communicated) expectations for donors, then send an email announcing the campaign and reminding them of the board's goals. If your organization does not have set or clear expectations from donors, send individual emails thanking them for being on the board, outlining your fundraising goals, and asking them to contribute.

Don't be shy, and say those numbers. Like repeat donors, this email is not sent from an email platform, but from an individual's email account.

<First Name>, Help us with [Name of campaign]



Recipients

<First Name>, Help us with [Name of campaign]

Hi <First Name>,

[Narrative about what you do and how it helps real people/animals/other]. You first became a supporter from an event, from one of our [programs or campaigns], or you or a loved one [connection to your organization]. Since then, you have been one of our most loyal supporters, and without you we would not have been able to [do something super awesome].

This year, our goal is to [reach a certain donation amount] in order to [do something else that is awesome]. With your help, we can make it happen. With your contribution, we can [do that something else that is awesome, rephrased].

Every year, we do more and more. We appreciate having you on our side [or a creative, brand-appropriate metaphor].

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Name

Title

Website

Phone Number

Festive Ideas for Fundraising Emails

Theoretically, the holidays should be all sugar plums, Love Actually, and full cashmere getups. In reality, it's often snow-sludge, end-of-year work stress, and family tension.

Wouldn't it be nice if you could not only find a fun and festive escape in your inbox, but also if you could give that to your constituents? Santa (or [Hanukkah Harry](#)) would be so proud. And with a few easy and creative changes to your typical newsletter, even the elves will be proud of your efficiency. Get in the spirit with these ideas for making your email campaigns merry and bright this holiday season.

1. Gift Guides

Who doesn't love a bundle? Turn your organization's content or donation page into a gift guide. For content, send an email with 3 to 5 articles to "Share with your family and friends this season" or to "Spark conversation at Thanksgiving dinner."

For donations, tie dollar amounts to services or impact, and make donating in a person's name the gift of the year. The [Selamta Family Project](#) breaks down each monthly giving amount so your donation feels tangible. Giving Mom the gift of providing a student with free medical care for a year? Talk about the gift that keeps on giving.

Give family, give a bright future!

Your donation will give orphaned children and marginalized women a stable, loving Forever Family and a Bright Future!

\$100 - Provides medical care to a Selamta child for one year

\$75 - Feeds a Selamta family of 10 for one week

\$50 - Provides an after-school tutor for a Selamta child for one year

\$25 - Provides one new school uniform for a Selamta child



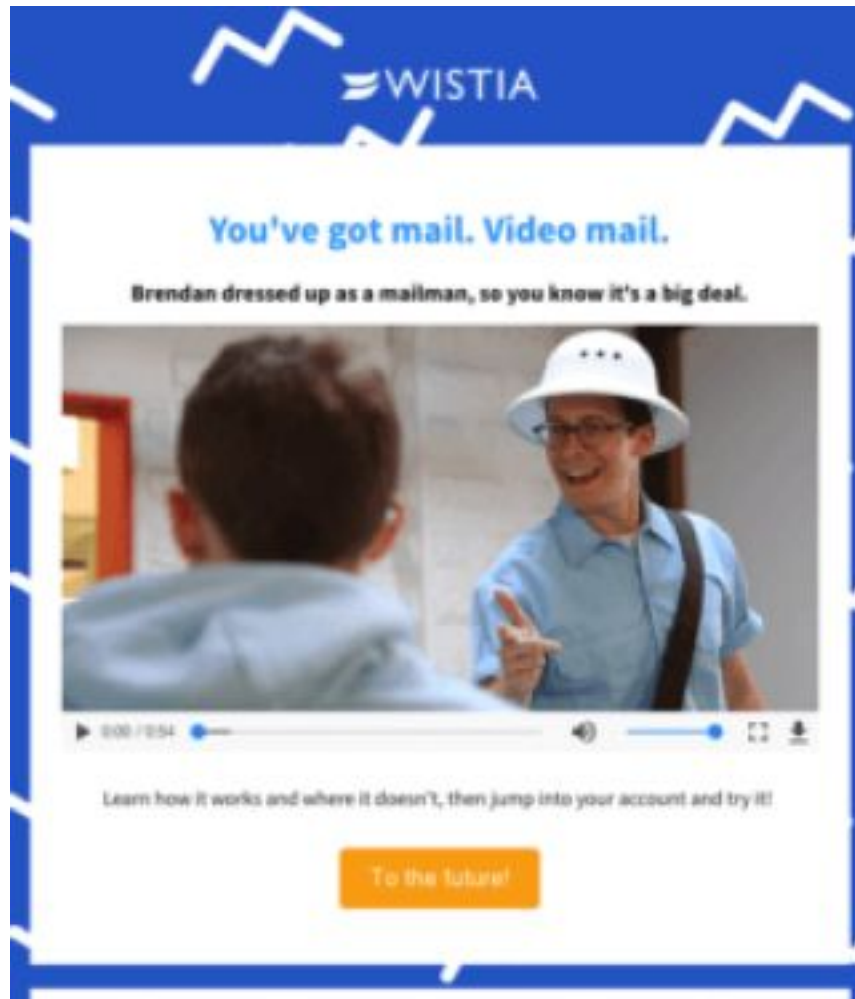
2. Virtual Holiday Card

Don't be afraid to have fun this season. Take a professional (or goofy) team photo and send some warm wishes to your constituents. You can make it an excuse to share your [year-end recap](#) or [annual report](#) to share all of the awesome work you've done this year. Sending it from the CEO or founder of the organization will add an extra special and personalized touch.



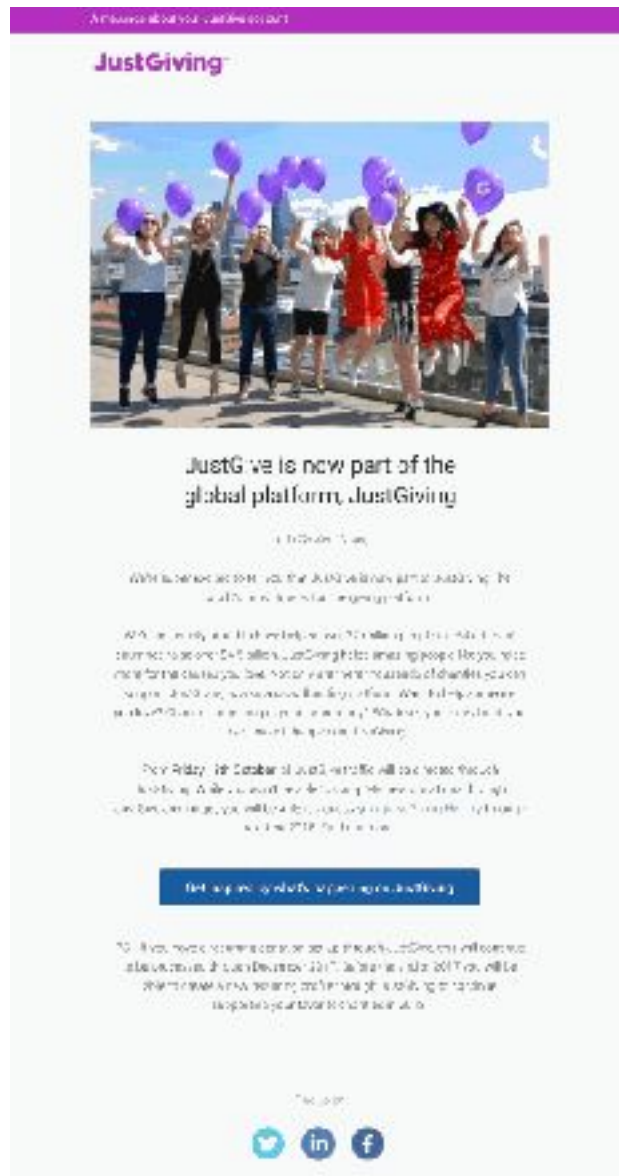
3. Powerful Videos

Everyone seems to be pivoting to video — make sure to pivot for good. Illustrate your vision and mission through film, which can also be repurposed as a [pitch video for crowdfunding](#) or your donation page. Studies have shown that crowdfunding [campaigns with pitch videos raise 3 times as many funds](#). Why not test it with email?



4. Inspiring Infographics and Groovy Gifs

Don't have video? Make the most of your images and data. [Design infographics](#) to share key stats from the year. Create or source gifs that bring your emails to life. Keep readers' eyes on your emails, and always — always — hyperlink your visuals to send users to your website.



5. Seasonal Subject Lines

Two of our [favorite kinds of subject lines](#) are punny and topical subject lines. Now is your chance to combine both! Think of your favorite holiday songs, movies, and sayings, and find ways to (appropriately) reference them in your emails. Think “12 days of giving,” or “holly jolly [jungle cats](#),” etc. Alliteration always helps.

6. : Snowman Emoji :

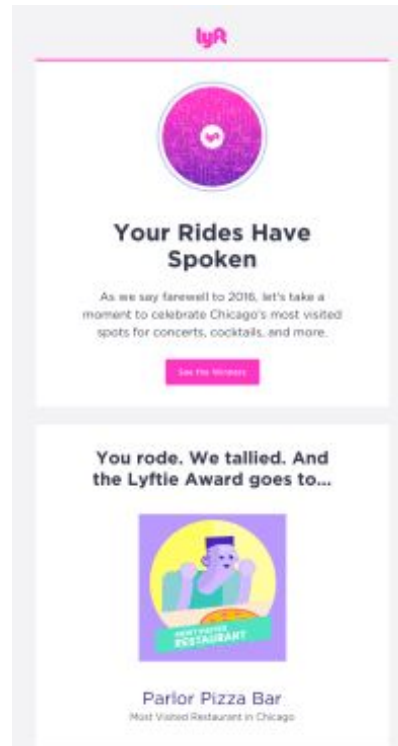
For organizations with younger audiences, consider adding seasonal emojis to your subject lines. [Brands using emojis](#) have seen a 45% increase in open rates, and apparently the [snowman emoji](#) is the most successful. Go figure, Frosty.

7. Ambassador Appreciation

Spread gratitude this season. Send a campaign that features different ambassadors in each email: One week could be volunteers, the next week could be field-workers, and the following could be social media supporters. Share Twitter and Instagram screenshots, testimonials, and stories. They'll be honored to be featured, and your other constituents may be motivated to join in on the fun!

8. The Best Year Ever

Another fun way to recap the year is to look back on the best content or events from the past year. What article got the most pageviews (hint: use [Google Analytics](#))? Did a story or video get shared a lot on social media (hint: use Twitter Analytics, YouTube Analytics, or Facebook Insights). Did you have a super successful event or gala? Share those highlights and the data (number of views, number of donations, etc) to back it up.



9. Spread Good Cheer

Have an inspiring video, article, or story of impact? Recruit your subscribers to help you share the message and spread holiday cheer! Use [AddThis](#) in your email to make it super easy for readers to see the content and immediately share it on social media or in an email to their network. Once their friends and family share it with their friends and family, you've got a movement going.

10. Potluck Playlist

Make a playlist on Spotify related to your organization — or just for fun! —and share it your list. We love the [One Love #ThatsNotLove playlist](#): Subscribers get to collaborate by adding songs that illustrate unhealthy relationship behaviors. Thoughtful, thought-provoking, and fun. Bonus points if you have an organization-wide potluck and play it during the festivities.



11. Segmented Thank Yous

Not all subscribers are alike. Some are super engaged, opening and clicking every newsletter. Some are your donors, both big and small. These two groups of subscribers have proven to be committed to your organization. Consider sending them special thank you notes, highlighting how their commitment to your cause has helped you to drive impact. If you use Pardot, you can target these committed prospects based on their [Score](#). Make sure the message is personalized, and offer an exclusive piece of content if you can. Our favorite thank yous include video testimonials or photos of [notes from the people who benefit from your services](#).



12. And To All a Good Night

Expect a drop-off in email activity and website traffic in late December: Many of your subscribers will be on Holiday and offline. Schedule your Holiday-specific email marketing campaign to end before December 20 so you reach people before they sign off.

For end-of-year giving appeals, you can pick up the campaign again from the 29th to the 31st of December: [studies show that 12% of donations are made in the last 3 days of the year](#). Then, finally, sit back with an eggnog and some fuzzy slippers to enjoy the festivities!

Donor Thank You Email Best Practices

For anyone raised with an [Emily Post](#)-reading and etiquette-loving parent, you know that it is obligatory to send thank you letters whenever you receive a gift. If you've really been indoctrinated, then sending thank you notes in your personal life is probably an impulse already.

A donation to your nonprofit organization is no different than receiving a candle for the holidays or a gift card on your birthday: Sending a thank you email is the time-honored, polite, and gracious way to respond.

Unlike handwritten notes to your grandma, donor thank you emails can — and should — be automated to save your team time during the busy giving season. Even after [sending tailored fundraising emails](#), it is imperative to thank donors with just as much care and warmth. How does one do that [without the email turning robotic and impersonal](#)? Below are 7 best practices for donor thank you letters that would make Emily proud.

1. “Send from” a top person

Use the name of a top, preferably well-known, person at your organization as the sender's name. Include the organization name as well for double recognition. For example, “George Weiner from Whole Whale.”

People respond to seeing human names in their inboxes, especially if that name is notable. They will also be primed to look at messages from your organization since they just took the big step of donating to your cause. Don't forget to include an actual signature from this person at the end of the email for a personal touch.

2. Say “thank you” in the subject line

With these two simple words you're already off to a good start! And it clearly states that, when recipients click on the subject line, they will open up a thank you email.

3. Use personalized merge tags

Donation forms require donors to include their names, so you will have this information. Use [merge tags](#) or [variable tags](#) (depending on your email marketing service) to insert a donor's first name into the email. For example starting with "Dear [Turtle](#)" or "Thank you, Turtle."

4. Make the donor feel like part of the team

Put the fundraising onus on the donor. Use "you" and "your" throughout the email. Remind them that they helped raise the money and they are a part of the community.

5. Illustrate impact

Show how valuable their donation was by explaining the impact you will be able to drive. How will this donation contribute to solving X problem? What people, animals, or plant life will that money be supporting? Include visuals (a video or an image) of the what will be supported to make the impact feel tangible. Also, include statistics: When applicable, use numbers to show how your organization reached its goal, and how many people, animals, or plant life you will be able to support with that money. Get specific about where that money will go.

6. Thank them, again

It never hurts to thank them twice. Your first "thank you" was for their previous action of donating. Aim this "thank you" towards the future: Thank your donors for being part of your community and say that you look forward to your work together.

7. Don't be afraid to ask for more

Include a P.S. at the end for the super-committed donors and ask them to take another step like sharing your campaign on social media or forwarding a campaign email to 5 of their friends. These constituents have just expressed interest in your organization by donating. They are more likely than other constituents to take another action on your behalf, especially if it is something light like a share.

Donor thank you examples

Giving season is a busy time for your team, but you can't sacrifice personalized thanks you's. Set up an automation to send a quick thank you (like a transaction email) after someone donates, and be sure to include their name and the social share ask. Once the campaign is over, send out a more personalized message using all 7 of the tips above. You can never thank your donors too much, and it will serve as a reminder after the initial excitement has died down.

Check out some of our favorite examples:



ACLU

Dear Meredith,

Thank you so much for your generous gift of \$ to the American Civil Liberties Union. With the help of members like you, we will stand strong in defense of freedom.

This is a critical time for our country, and for the ACLU. People are counting on us to stand up to Donald Trump and anyone else who tries to advance unconstitutional assaults on our rights.

Thanks to you, they will face the strongest ACLU in the nearly 100-year history of our organization. We are ready. And I am confident that with supporters like you at our side, in the end liberty and justice will prevail.

Thank you for standing with us.

With gratitude,

Anthony D. Romero
Executive Director
American Civil Liberties Union

Connect with the ACLU

- **Download and print** your temporary membership card (your permanent card will arrive in the mail soon if you are a new member).
- **Tell us** why you support the ACLU.
- **Let others know where you stand.** Get your ACLU t-shirt, cap, and more at our store. Use code **MEMBER15** at checkout for a discount.
- **If you haven't already, become a Guardian of Liberty—a monthly donor**—and help provide the consistent resources we need to respond to any threat.
- **Visit the ACLU Action Center** and help us fight for civil liberties.

Center for Reproductive Rights

CENTER
FOR
REPRODUCTIVE
RIGHTS

This month has been exhausting and heartbreaking for everyone who holds dear the right to reproductive freedom.

But there is an inspiring silver lining in all of this: YOU, Megan.

More than 4,500 people have donated since election day to help us keep reproductive rights in America safe. You've stepped up when it mattered most.

Thank you for your support. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you for joining us for the battles that lie ahead.

You give me, and all of us at the Center, hope for the future—and the support to succeed.

Most sincerely,

Nancy

Nancy Northup
President & CEO

P.S. Now is the perfect time to invite your friends and families to join the fight. Share this link with them—because we're stronger together: reproductiverights.org/joinus.

DONATE NOW

NEDA



Thank you so much for making a difference in the lives of those affected by eating disorders. Your support for the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) gives those struggling, as well as their loved ones, access to the resources and programs needed to navigate the path to recovery.

Your donation of \$ supports our life-changing programs, including NEDA Navigators, Information & Referral Helpline, the Loss Support Network, and Recovery Support. For more information on these programs, or to get involved, please visit our website at www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.

NEDA is committed to supporting individuals and families affected by eating disorders, and to serving as a catalyst for prevention, cures and access to quality care. Thank you for making our work possible.

Sincerely,

The NEDA Team

National Eating Disorders Association

NEDA is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, tax identification number 13-3444882. Your gift is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Note: Don't forget the disclosure that the gift is tax-deductible!

EarthJustice

Thank you for your generous gift!



Dear Megan,

Thank you for your generous monthly gift. Through your support, you are a hero for the environment, making sure that polluters across the country are held accountable to the law.

Making a monthly donation is the most effective way for you to help protect places and wildlife, safeguard people's health, and advance clean energy and climate change solutions. Your ongoing support ensures we have the resources to take on the big fights and stick with them until we win.


We'd love to hear from you and invite you to contact us at [\(800\) 584-6460](tel:8005846460) or info@earthjustice.org if you have suggestions or questions. Thank you for ensuring that the earth has a good lawyer!

Trip Van Noppen
President, Earthjustice

P.S. You might be able to double the impact of this gift by taking advantage of [your company's matching gift program!](#)

[charity: water](#)


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 **charity: water**

Email not displaying correctly? [See it here](#) »

YOU DID IT!

Today, we reached our \$1.7 million goal for water projects in Rwanda. We couldn't have done it without you.



1,788 of you started fundraising campaigns for clean water. You went out and inspired your friends to donate. And 13,782 of them did. Today, the September Campaign hit its goal of \$1.7 million raised. That means 26,000 people in Rwanda will soon drink clean water. Thank you for changing lives.

- *the charity: water team*


[VISIT THE SITE](#)

Don't want to get our emails? [unsubscribe](#)

[Blog](#) | [charitywater.org](#)

200 Varck Street, Suite 201, New York, NY 10014

Planned Parenthood



Care. No matter what.


Dear Meredith,

On behalf of everyone here at Planned Parenthood, thank you so much for your gift of \$

Your gift today will help ensure that our doors remain open for the women, men, and young people who rely on Planned Parenthood to get the care they need, no matter what. It will help us stand up to relentless attacks on reproductive rights, and defend every person's right to make their own private health care decisions, without government interference.




As we work to protect and promote women's health in the halls of Congress and right here in your community, your support will help keep birth control and abortion accessible and affordable, prevent unintended pregnancies, and ensure preventive health care services are accessible to all women, men, and young people, no matter what.

You can help make an even bigger difference by showing your support for Planned Parenthood and asking your friends and family to join you. Just use the links below to spread the word on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#):



Donate to Planned Parenthood Action Fund
I'm stepping up to help Planned Parenthood Action Fund hold out-of-touch lawmakers accountable. Stand with us.

Spread the word!



We're here for them because you are here for us. We are all Planned Parenthood.

Thank you again for your support.

Cecile Richards President Planned Parenthood Federation of America	Joan Malin President & CEO Planned Parenthood of New York City, Inc.
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For more fundraising email marketing tips, check out our recorded webinar: [7 Email Marketing Optimization Hacks for Year-End Campaigns with Salsa Labs](#).

Sending Major Thank You's: Templates for Emailing Top Donors

Not all donors are alike, and some donors need that extra-personal touch. These are your major donors, also known as the top donors to your organization.

In terms of donations, the number that gets someone into the top donor category can range anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1 million, depending on the size of your organization, the average size of your donations, and your relationship with the donor. Just as you wouldn't talk to your coworker in the same way that you talk to your mom, you have to communicate with major donors differently than you would with other donors.

If you've already read our [guide to donor thank you emails](#), then welcome to Thank You Notes 201: Major donors require more than the basics because they have donated more money — and likely more time — to your organization. They are highly passionate about the cause, and typically have a personal connection to what you do.

Major donors deserve and expect more attention than an automated thank you. Before you start writing emails, remember these 5 golden rules for major donor fundraising.

1. Have an in-person meeting first

Whether they have already donated a significant sum or you anticipate that they will in the near or distant future, don't solicit your major donors over email.

Schedule an in-person meeting to make the initial ask. Invite them to see your programs in action and follow up with an ask over coffee, drinks, or a meal. Major donors need to see the impact of your organization and feel like they are a part of your team.

2. Frame your ask around their individual interests

Do your research. How is this donor connected to your organization? Do they like to volunteer, attend events, or both? Did they just recently donate a large sum or have they been upping the ante over the years? Are they on your board and/or friends other members of your organization?



Do they like to offer advice to your team or simply support your organization from the sidelines?

Look into past donor data and communications to determine their connection — and think beyond the numbers (remember that they're people, too!). Ask them about their interest in your organization at the in-person meeting. Use all of this information to tailor your messaging to them, because on the other side of those emails is a unique human being who is very excited about your cause. Show them how excited you are to have their support!

3. Send exclusive updates regularly

Keep your organization top-of-mind. [Build a special group within your newsletter list](#) for major donors and send them exclusive updates.

Demonstrate how your work is driving impact with images and statistics (remember the old adage “show, don't tell”). Also remember to add a call to action at the end driving them to go to your website, donate more, or to share the message with their networks.

4. Build a community and give them a voice

Major donors are clearly passionate about your organization. They also have other networks, areas of expertise, and interests. Encourage them to bring those to your organization.

When you think past the monetary value of a donor, you may see that they could help you with any number of challenges you're facing, from running events to recruiting more donors. Connect them with other beneficiaries and create a community of top donors. They have already bought into your cause, but when they feel part of a movement, they will be more inclined to champion your organization.

5. Send a thank you within 24 hours after any conversation with a major donor

Another way to stay top-of-mind, and also just a polite thing to do!

Send a thank you note after your initial in-person meeting, whether or not they commit to a major donation. Mention their connection to your organization and their interests (see #2) and highlight the impact they will make and where the money will go.

After the donation goes through, send another thank you and illustrate the impact of that gift — in this case, where the donation has gone. For example, [DonorsChoose.org sends pictures and cards](#) from the students that benefit from a fundraiser. Make the impact feel tangible to the donor, and remind them of other ways they can be involved in your organization.

Templates:

For after the initial meeting

Thank you

Recipients

Thank you

Hi *[name of donor]*,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. We greatly enjoyed showing you *[some aspect of your organization, whether it is a program, person, etc.]*. We appreciated hearing how *[their connection to your cause]*. A donation from you *[and your family, organization, company, etc.]* would be extremely meaningful to us because *[of their connection to your organization and passion about your cause vertical]*. Your gift would help us to *[mission of your organization, using statistics where applicable]*. Let me know if you have any questions about our organization, programs, or donation process.

You mentioned being interested in *[activity, area of expertise, cause vertical]*. We would love to connect you to *[another beneficiary or member of your team]* to talk about how we could work together on *[that area of interest]*.

We look forward to working with you in the future. Welcome to the *[name of your organization]* community!
[your name and title]

For the first major donation

Thank you

Recipients

Thank you

[Name of donor]

Thank you for your donation of *[amount]* to *[your organization and/or program if they donated to a specific part of your organization]*. Your gift will allow us to *[impact it will make, using statistics]*. Your generosity will help *[story of a person, animal, etc that will be helped. For example: "whales like Moby to swim in the ocean without fear of being poached"]*.

[insert image]

Your passion for *[why they are interested in your organization]* is why we do the work that we do. With your support we will be able to *[mission of your organization]*.

Thank you for being a part of our team. We look forward to working with you on *[area of interest if they mentioned wanting to volunteer, help with events, etc]*.

[your name and title]

For long-time major donor

Thank you
Recipients
Thank you
<p>[Name of donor]</p> <p>Thank you for your donation of [amount] to [your organization and/or program if they donated to a specific part of your organization]. Your gift will allow us to [impact it will make, using statistics]. Your continued generosity will help [story of a person, animal, etc that will be helped. For example: "whales like Moby to swim in the ocean without fear of being poached"].</p> <p>[insert image]</p> <p>Your passion for [why they are interested in your organization] is why we do the work that we do. With your [number of years] of support, we have been able to [projects completed, programs supported, using statistics]. We look forward to continuing to work with you to [mission of your organization].</p> <p>Thank you for being a part of our team. [Personal note about their family, job, work with you. For example: "Our best wishes to your family" or "Hope all is well at Whole Whale"].</p> <p>[your name and title]</p>

Thanking Donors Beyond Email

“Thank you for your donation” – there’s nothing wrong with a prompt, short, and sweet thank you note in your inbox. But after a while, it can feel robotic and impersonal, even if you insert the donor’s name or add a signature to the bottom of the message. If you are looking to get out of an email rut, check out these ideas for how to thank donors beyond email.

1. Handwritten notes

Go old school with honest pen-on-paper thank you notes. They are definitely personal, and who doesn’t love getting a real letter these days? If you work directly with communities that those donations support, take a [page out of DonorsChoose’s handbook and consider collaborating with them on the letters](#).

2. Thank you videos

Remember “pivot to video”? It’s still happening. As of 2015, there were reports of over 8 billion video views each day on Facebook alone. With YouTube and Instagram continuing to grow and allowing for longer form content, we can only expect those numbers to increase. In addition to the reach of video, it can be a humanizing and intimate way to thank donors for their contribution and highlight their impact. Whole Whale client [Lung Cancer Foundation of America produced a thank you video](#) after their year-end fundraising campaign, and we love how it showcases stories of gratitude directly from people within the LCFA community. It doesn’t have to be done in a professional setting — recording on an iPhone or a computer feels authentic — and is less of a lift for your team. If you decide to post on social media, [be sure to review our tips to avoid common video mistakes](#).

3. Thank you landing pages

Make your donors the stars on a landing page of your website. It could be the homepage, or a campaign specific page like we saw in the [LCFA example mentioned above](#). Highlight any key statistics that show where their money has gone and how they have contributed to enacting real change. Include your thank you video if you make one, and add a click to share so they can encourage their friends to contribute as well.

4. Social engagement

Encourage your donors to share their contributions on social media by adding a social share to the donation flow. If you use Facebook fundraising —[we recommend that you do](#) — the social sharing part is already baked in. Then, take the next step and like, share, or comment to say thank you. Share an final, overarching thank you post at the end of the fundraiser highlighting the impact of the donations you received.

5. Phone calls

Another old school technique that still works: Phone calls! Consider calling top donors to thank them for their contributions. Avoid asking for more money in the moment, and really talk to those donors to learn more about them and why they are passionate about your cause. This could be useful when [sending tailored emails to major donors](#) in the future.

6. Stewardship levels

Create different tiers for different donation amounts. For each tier you could:

- **Give them a gift item:** For example, for a \$10 donation, the donor receives a note, for \$20 they receive a hat, etc.
- **Make their donation tangible:** For each possible donation amount, instead of offering a gift, highlight the impact a donation can have. Check out this example below from [Friendship Bridge](#), an organization that provides loans and education to impoverished women so they can start and expand businesses.
- **Give them a shoutout:** Highlight them on event programs, in an upcoming email, or on social media (with their permission).

7. Get together

Host an event for donors to gather and meet other people passionate about the same cause. It could be a casual coffee in your HQ, a meetup in your neighborhood, or sponsored gatherings in other cities. Take a few minutes to thank them for their contributions and highlight how their money will be used, and then keep it casual. Mix, mingle, and get to know your donors on a human level.

Setting Goals for Fundraising

Nonprofits are nothing if not ambitious. Just look at those [mission and vision statements](#). But how can we channel those [big, huge, ambitious organizational goals](#) into realistic goals in fundraising?

If your organization struggles to reach its fundraising goal every year, it may be because you have just one goal.

When you set a public fundraising goal, it's set in stone, and that [pressure can lead to greater performance](#). But if the number is too ambitious it may work against you: When a goal feels unachievable, your employees may feel inadequate or as though they are being set up to fail. At the same time, when a goal seems easy, people won't work as hard to achieve it and won't feel the same level of satisfaction. Consider setting two goals to meet the mark both internally and externally:

1. A conservative, public-facing, realistic fundraising goal that holds your team accountable
2. A more ambitious, internally-facing, stretch goal that pushes your employees to go above and beyond

Now, how do you actually set fundraising goals that walk the line of ambitious enough, but not unrealistic?

Be SMART

We know you are smart, but are your goals? They should be:

- **Specific:** Say exactly the number or percentage you want to reach: "\$40,000 in seasonal giving between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve" or "40% increase from last year," as opposed to "more money."
- **Measureable:** Again, the goal should be quantifiable. And make sure you have [tracking in place](#) on your website or [with your third-party donation platform](#) so you can measure your progress throughout the year or campaign.
- **Ambitious/Attainable:** This is where you set your two different goals: One that's a realistic goal, and one that's more ambitious (literally designed to stretch your team, in a good way).



- **Relevant:** Why are you setting this fundraising goal? What is the goal of the goal, so to speak? Look back at your [mission statement](#), budgets, and expenses to find the numbers that will help you drive impact.
- **Time-Based:** There should always be a deadline you are trying to reach. When do you want to reach these goals? Set a date and then draft a timeline working backwards, fitting in checkpoints or dates when you will [track your progress along the way](#). For example, if you set an annual fundraising goal of \$40,000, break that down into quarterly goals, aiming to raise \$10,000 every three months.

It's a marathon, not a sprint

The easiest way to take your fundraising goal from real-scary to realistic is to pace it out. Fundraising is a marathon, not a sprint. Just as you would set incremental goals in order to run a marathon (be able to run 5 miles in the first month of training, 10 miles in the second month), you want to break down your overarching goals in fundraising into more manageable, time-boxed goals. This is where the "T" in SMART comes in handy. Set progressive goals for each checkpoint, and remember to check in regularly so you can make sure you are on track to complete that marathon.

Actually, it's a relay, not a marathon

To reach your goals in fundraising, it takes a village. Set incremental SMART goals for each department and employee. This way you're all working towards your 2 main goals: The realistic goals and ambitious goals. Remember to clearly delegate work accordingly, and encourage coworkers to be transparent about their progress and whether or not they need help.

Now go set and achieve those goals! And be sure to check out our [fundraising resources](#) for campaign ideas, our [communications resources](#) for more email tips, and our [analytics resources](#) to make sure tracking is setup properly.