What Donors Want:
Myth vs. Research

JulesWrites.com
Fundraising Communications
I’m convinced!

(But are you correct?)
“If we tell an engaging enough story, that will be enough.”
“Donor communications are NOT about reading; donor communications are about getting people to ACT.”
- Tom Ahern
“Our donors don’t like ‘junk mail’.”
Response Rate by Selected Media 2018

- Direct Mail (N=79/61): 9%
- Email (N=161/103): 1%
- Paid Search (N=76): 1%
- Online Display (N=41): 0.3%
- Social Media (N=60): 1%

Source: 2018 Association of National Advertisers /Direct Mail Advertising Response Rate Report
Using Neuroscience to Understand the Role of Direct Mail

Research Insights

The work conducted on this project, to study the brain’s reaction to different forms of media, went to a level not seen before in market research. Some of our key findings were:

Tangible materials leave a deeper footprint in the brain

Note: This is not just because the physical materials stimulate both sight and touch; the subtraction of brain signals from the scrambled materials accounts for this.

- Material shown on cards generated more activity within the area of the brain associated with the integration of visual and spatial information (the left and right parietal).

processing (as well as motor activity) and is likely to be further evidence of enhanced emotional processing.

Right retrosplenial cortex

Bilateral cerebellum

Physical materials produced more brain responses
“Tangible materials leave a deeper ‘footprint’ on the brain.”

Source: Millward Brown: Case Study, Using Neuroscience to Understand the Role of Direct Mail
“To grow online donations, our appeals should be made online.”
“Donors are three times more likely to give online in response to a direct mail appeal vs. a digital appeal.”

Source: Target Analytics, 2011 donorCentrics™ Internet and Multichannel Giving Benchmark Report
“Direct mail will continue to decline as a gift transaction preference, but it is already playing a new and critical role as a conduit to giving through other methodologies.”

Source: Cignus Applied Research, 2018 Burk Donor Survey
“Our donors don’t want to hear from us too often.”
Nearly 75 percent of respondents say they might stop donating to an organization based on poor content, including vague content, dull content, irrelevant content, and inconvenient formatting.

Source: 2017 Abila Donor Loyalty Study
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
<th>Gen Xers</th>
<th>Boomers</th>
<th>Matures</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio or TV Ads</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct mail</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer-to-peer fundraising</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thank you note/call</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newsletters</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<td>Email</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>82%</td>
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<td>75%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<td>Birthday card</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<td>72%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<td>52%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text/SMS</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2018 Abila Donor Engagement Study
Thou Shalt Not Bore People
“Our donors are highly educated - we don’t need to write for readability.”
If readers have to labor to read your fundraising message, they usually won’t bother.

-Jeff Brooks
illegible,
“We need to focus all of our effort on (x) fundraising channel.”
“Age is the key differentiating characteristic when it comes to the types of causes donors choose to support, how they transact gifts and what they expect the not-for-profits they support.”

Source: Cignus Applied Research, 2018 Burk Donor Survey
“Our donors give because they love us - they don’t need a lot of appreciation.”
...a thank-you letter reaffirming the difference that their donations made increased average gifts by 60% in comparison to a control group of donors who did not receive this thank-you communication.
Thank You
What myths have you encountered?
Thank you!

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FUNDRAISING COMMUNICATIONS