Email For Advocacy and Community Organizing: Basics, Essentials, and Best Practices

Sending Email: Best Practices

These training materials have been prepared by Aspiration in partnership with Radical Designs and ScoutSeven

Funded by the Community Technology Foundation of California

These materials are distributed under a Creative Commons license: Attribution-ShareAlike 2.5
Learning Goals

► Understand Email Calendar and Frequency Issues
► Appreciate Importance of “Reply Management”
► Learn Basics of Email Campaign Assessment
► Note Tips for Maximizing “Click Through”
Delivery Calendar & Frequency

► Frequency for sending email is very org- and campaign-sensitive
  ▪ Org: "once a month and special occasions"

► In all cases, listen actively for feedback to know if you're fatiguing your base
  ▪ Easiest indicator: the unsubscribe rate
Fundraising campaigns can be more frequent

- Some campaigns do every day for a week
- BUT remove folks who have donated from subsequent pitches

General rule: 3 times a year + special occasions

- Piggyback and connect to events/other causes
- Craft two messages: existing supporters vs other
- Be opportunistic
Delivery Calendar & Frequency

➤ Issue Campaigns: the frequency depends on the exact nature of the campaign
  - Engage folks when you need them
    - Avoid “crying wolf” early
  - Tie to campaign events/action
    - Factor in lead time for participation
  - Once a week is practical max
    - Exception: “The MOMENT”
Reply Management

► Email campaigning is not one-directional
  ▪ Recipients will reply with questions, offers, complaints

► Make sure someone "owns" replying
  ▪ You don't have to reply to every message
  ▪ BUT it's a primary way to cement engagement
Select your “reply-to” address carefully and correctly

- Make sure that “reply-to” address is not personal address
- Don't use “generic” organizational address
  - Such as info@campaign.org
- Consider easy-to-remember campaign address
  - May not be same as reply-to address, especially for larger or controversial campaigns
Reply Management

- Set up “Filters” to replies you receive
  - Auto-reply confirms message was received
    - “Thank you for replying to our campaign message…”
  - A "soft bounce" message can indicate that the reply-to address is not appropriate for correspondence
    - Provide a correct email address for correspondence
  - Remember: immediate feedback is important to senders
Email Campaign Evaluation

► Determine metrics for success
  ▪ “Looked at the online movie”
  ▪ “Donated money”

► Look at
  ▪ Open rates for sent email
  ▪ Click-through rates: did recipients click on link

► Subscription rates
  ▪ List growth
  ▪ Un-subscription rate
Maximizing Click-Through Rates

► Don't have that many links in message
  ▪ Make them enticing and clear

► Simple URL
  ▪ www.ourcampaign.org/justicenow
    ▪ is much much better than
  ▪ www.ourcampaign.org/jn.php?node=5AEF&Z=8

► Link should be on its own line
  ▪ With “white space” above/below
Summary

► Email Calendar and Frequency Issues vary depending on the type of campaign
► Proper “Reply Management” is essential for engaging your recipients
► Know in advance how you will assess the effectiveness of your email campaign
► Follow best practices to maximize “Click Through”