Mailing Mistakes that Lose Donors and Donations.

Tips from Andrew Dieckman from

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Why are we sending mail? Because it WORKS!

- Direct mail marketing on average garners up to 37x more responses than email,
- Average time spent reading: email (less than 1 min) vs mail (30 minutes),
- Direct mail is the most preferred form of marketing by customers (54% preferred),
- Studies show direct mail has a stronger emotional impact over digital marketing, resulting in stronger recall,
- 80-90% of direct mail gets opened, only 20-30% of email gets opened on a good day,
- 79% of consumers open direct mail immediately vs just 45% for email,
- Direct mail ranked as the top purchase influencer for baby boomers,
- 40% of consumers have made a purchase in the last 3 months because of direct mail,
- 92% of millennials are influenced to make a purchasing decision because of direct mail,
- 48% of people retain direct mail for future reference,
- 98% of people bring in their mail the day it’s received,
- Affluent households prefer direct mail over email,
- Direct mail: still the #1 influencer of seniors switching and choosing medicare plans.

http://www.resourceforsolutions.com/ultimate-list-direct-mail-facts-statistics/

At the end of 2012 the American Cancer Society decided to stop their direct mail acquisition projects and see what the consequences were. They reported their findings to share the results.

What do you think happened?

Here’s what happened:
- New donors dropped by 11%
- New donor revenue dropped $11 million
- The Relay for Life raised $25 million LESS than the previous year

STORYTIME Don’t try this at home
1. NOT MAILING ENOUGH

Bug them until they donate

The amount of times we are asking is not enough to sustain interest and to improve donation-amounts.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

Make an annual routine where you are touching on people more than once.

• Once a year: means you essentially don't exist
• Mailing out something once a year to donors will typically not keep them aware enough to repeat or improve upon donations.
• Can give the impression that they are relied on only for donations (with little interest in developing the relationship).
• Twice a year: means you're out there and you're active,
• Three times a year: means you're busy, you're very active,
• Four times a year or more: We're really rocking and are doing amazing things and want to tell you so you can keep supporting us.
• Mailing to a lot of people only once a year is not as effective as mailing to fewer people more frequently.
• The latter is going to have more impact on those recipients and gives more leverage in growing them as consistent donors.
We’re late with a mailed appeal and we have to rush to get it done

So what can we do?

Moving backwards from the time you want the money, look carefully and realistically at the time necessary for preparation, review, printing and inserting, travel time in the mail, and your donors’ response procedures.

- How long does writing a good message take?
- How long does the design process take? Ideas, brainstorming, gathering imagery, all take time.
- How many people need to review? This is a big factor, the more people involved, the longer it can take.
- How long does the physical printing take? Different quantities take different times. Materials need trimming, scoring, folding, inserting, sealing, stamping, etc.
- How long do the mailing procedures take? Are the lists clean and easy to process? Are there multiple segments and variations on the letters?
- Give people the courtesy of time to respond, especially for year-end projects.

Each project is different, but allowing for an estimated timeline will provide you with more schedule control. I know it sounds simple but not a lot of people do it!

- Parties, galas, volunteer days: Mailings should be decently spaced from events to give adequate breathing room between touches.
- Make a year-long calendar in advance: not all dates will stick precisely, but these plans give development teams more control and more structure, and that improves planning for each project.
- Mailing at times when people are not expecting to be asked helps exposure reaching prospects. February and summer are great opportunities to test for responses or keep up the momentum from larger appeals with a more casual ‘touch.’ The mail traffic will be lighter so your message will get more attention.

2. RUSH PLANNING

Haste Makes Waste
3. BAD DATA
It’s not going to get better all by itself!

Data is the **root** of a mailed project - if it’s bad, the project gets worse all the way down the line

**SO WHAT CAN WE DO?**
A question with many answers... let's take a look.

- Bad addresses or no addresses, or having the right info entered in the wrong fields, means the package will not reach the recipient.
- Duplicate records cost. The dollar cost is nothing; it's pennies. But the true cost of sending two pieces to one person shows disorganization, and that can create an instant distrust in the mind of the recipient.
- If there are questions about whether a list will work or not, your provider should be happy to look at a list or lists before-hand, well-before-hand in fact, to make sure the data will work in the way it's intended to.
- If it's not, there is then **time** to manipulate the data and make the necessary repairs.
- People move, let's find out where they went. How is that done? NCOA - National Change of Address - the mail finds its way to the recipient and you get back the fresh data to update your database.
How Bad is it?

Correct Info, Wrong Place

Multiple lines within a single cell

- 3135 Easton Turnpike
- 26 North Street
- 40 West Elm Street

- 135 East Putnam Avenue
- New England Land
- Greenwich CT
- S4 Greenwich Avenue
- Greenwich CT
- 104 Clapboard Ridge Road
- Greenwich CT
- 215 Otter Rock Drive
- Greenwich CT
- 2 Greenwich Plaza
- Greenwich CT
- 124 Ritch Avenue West, Apt B202
- Greenwich CT
- Endeavour Capital Advisors Inc
- Greenwich CT
- 410 Greenwich Ave
- Greenwich CT
- 24 Forest Hill Rd
- Greenwich CT

Good duplicate searching software will find non-matches that are similar, which leads to better duplicate removal.

Multiple lines within a single cell

How Bad is it?

4. NO PERSONALIZATION

Donors are people, not numbers

Sure they’re our ‘Friends,’ but let’s not address them that way!

People like seeing and hearing their own name, it makes them feel special and attended to.

Without a name letters are colder and more distant.

We want people as close as possible as quick as possible.

So what can we do?

Personalize! It’s easier than we think

• We’ve mentioned emotional connection, one sure-fire way to instantly and easily make a strong connection is to use the recipient’s name.

• Sure it’s on the envelope, but when it’s on the inside of the package we’re showing we care about them and their donation, we’re making it a one-to-one ask.

• Personalized letters increase responses and increase donation-amounts because they strengthen the sense of participation.

• We go from an industrial-ask (‘Dear Friend’) to a personal-ask with one simple tactic.

• Good personalization is going to depend on good data. Do we have salutations, that is: Good salutations that makes sense when they appear on a letter?

• Do we have past gift amounts?
This is a biggie: people do not remember the amount they gave last time.

• Reminding them how much they gave tells them that you really appreciate that gift.

• That past gift is also the key starting point to having Excel make a simple calculation to create Suggested Gift Amounts.

...your gift of $25 last year, would you consider $50 now?

Enclosed is my gift of

- $50
- $75
- $100
- $________

We want people as close as possible as quick as possible.

\[ \text{Correct Info, Wrong Place} \]

\[ \text{Multiple lines within a single cell} \]

\[ \text{Address 1} \quad \text{Address 2} \quad \text{Cty} \quad \text{ST} \quad \text{Zip} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{5 Bird Court Apt 3K} & \quad \text{Knuckleville} & \quad \text{PA} & \quad 12345 \\
\text{5 Dogwood Alley} & \quad & \quad & \\
\end{align*} \]

\[ \text{Address 1} \quad \text{Address 2} \quad \text{Cty} \quad \text{ST} \quad \text{Zip} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{3135 Easton Turnpike} & \quad \text{Fairfield} & \quad \text{CT} \\
\text{26 North Street} & \quad \text{Greenwich} & \quad \text{CT} \\
\text{40 West Elm Street} & \quad \text{Greenwich} & \quad \text{CT} \\
\text{135 East Putnam Avenue} & \quad \text{Greenwich} & \quad \text{CT} \\
\text{Greenwich Avenue} & \quad \text{Greenwich} & \quad \text{CT} \\
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\text{215 Otter Rock Drive} & \quad \text{Greenwich} & \quad \text{CT} \\
\text{2 Greenwich Plaza} & \quad \text{Greenwich} & \quad \text{CT} \\
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\text{410 Greenwich Ave} & \quad & \quad & \\
\text{24 Forest Hill Rd} & \quad & \quad & \\
\end{align*} \]
Dear Andrew,

A Healthy Hudson and clean drinking water. These are the goals driving all of Riverkeeper's work. They're what first inspired our founders to track down polluters and bring them to justice. And this year – because of some big recent victories and the generosity of our friends and supporters – we're closer than ever to reaching these goals.

But with a federal administration that is actively hostile to environmental protections, our victories are far from secure. Your renewed support is critical to Riverkeeper's ability to protect our precious water supplies and restore the Hudson to full health.

This year, hundreds of volunteer scientists in the Riverkeeper community collected over four thousand water quality samples, prompting Albany to dedicate $2.5 billion to repair our aging water infrastructure, putting the mighty Hudson on course for increasingly clean, safe waters in the coming years.

And because we mobilized thousands of citizens, the Coast Guard suspended its dangerous plan to put 43 new berths for oil barges and tankers on the Hudson. Our biggest news of the year: a binding agreement to close the ailing Indian Point nuclear power plant by 2021!

Our big-picture goal is a living river, flowing with clean, swimmable waters from end to end and safe, abundant drinking water for all New Yorkers.

Riverkeeper has successfully made the case for clean water, for more than 50 years. Our integrity and transparency have helped us persevere and stay mission-focused to heal the Hudson, in the face of threat after threat.

As you consider renewing your gift to help Riverkeeper work for a Healthy Hudson, just think of what we accomplished together this year.

Riverkeeper's work to restore river habitats has triggered a resurgence of wildlife, here on the Hudson:

- The Hudson's iconic Atlantic Sturgeon population is rebounding
- New York now has the highest number of bald eagle nesting pairs since 1976
- River herring are returning to tributaries like the Wynants Kill, in Troy, because we helped to remove the old, obsolete dam that had blocked their access for over 80 years.

Stay on board with Riverkeeper!

In 2014, your gift of $40 helped us achieve extraordinary victories. Please support us again for a #HealthyHudson, from source to sea.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift in the amount of
- $50  q $100  q $250  q $ _________
- My check is enclosed
- Charge my credit card one time
- Charge my credit card monthly in the amount of
  - $ _________ (12 payments annually)
- Charge my  ❑ Visa  ❑ Mastercard  ❑ Amex
- Card # _______________________
- Exp. Date _________ / _________  Sec. Code ________
- My company would like to make a matching gift.

You will be receiving this gift from:
Andrew Dieckman
Executive Printing & Direct Mail, Inc.
8 Westchester Plz
Elmsford, NY 10523-1604

Email ________________________________________
Mobile Number ________________________________

Pre-populating a reply slip or reply card means the recipient has less work to do to get that donation made.

It can also help make the processing of donations easier (because you do not have to read every individual’s distinct handwriting).

#HealthyHudson

Along with the name, change a sentence or two to make that letter’s language closer to the recipient’s status and relationship to the organization.

Remind them of what they gave (they don’t remember!)

Need email addresses? Make it the first thing recipients have to fill out, don’t bury it at the bottom.

Base a variable-suggested gift amount on what you’d like them to give, within reason, based on their last gift.

Don’t offer anything lower!

Name right there in the front

Referencing status of donor

Language specific to donor's status as a call to action
First Class gets us there faster, but costs more, and we’re running out of time...

So what can we do?

Time for a big-picture review on the timeline to get some dollar-savings

• First Class costs $0.50 each mail-piece, 1 oz and under.
• Presorted First Class is roughly $0.39 each.
• Nonprofit rate is a roughly $0.17 each.
• If it’s bigger than 6 inches tall and 11 inches wide it will be a different cost (different mail handling)
FOR EXAMPLE

1,500 RECORDS
PRESORTED FIRST CLASS POSTAGE
$570 ($0.38 EACH PIECE)

NONPROFIT POSTAGE
$255 ($0.17 EACH PIECE)

DIFFERENCE: $315

The best option is to plan to mail earlier, so those possible extra days with nonprofit mail won't be of consequence, and the postage savings of the nonprofit rates are yours. They are there for YOU – please plan on using them, otherwise you are throwing dollars away.

No permit? Permit expired ($225)? Use someone else's. A mail provider will have their own permits that can be used. As long as you are identified as a nonprofit by the USPS anyone can mail on your behalf at nonprofit rates.

6. WRONG PACKAGE
If we lose their interest we lose their donation
A cluttered and busy package loses interest in an instant,
A spare and desolate package can do the very same.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?
Tidy up and put ourselves in the recipient’s shoes

• Is our envelope doing its job - we need to be OPENED!
• Are we giving the recipient too much to figure out, or too little to understand why we're contacting them?
• Is our letter long enough? Is it too long?
• If you see something someone else does, and it resonates with you... COPY EMULATE IT!

You can easily put stuff on your outer envelopes, either images or words, that will inspire curiosity.

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Provoke... The left half of a #10 envelope is yours...

Grip hearts

Abbott House
100 North Broadway
Irvington, New York 10533

Inside... you’ll see what it takes to fight

Touch hearts

Our kids have hope ONLY with YOUR help

Melt hearts

Many Cultures
Many Backgrounds
ONE Community
• Sending too much stuff can be a problem especially for acquisitions. We don’t want it to look like we’ve thrown everything in a basket and sent it out.

• A solid letter can give the necessary info and make the personal-connection without the use of extra components (like a brochure).

• Clutter = Confusion

• General brochures CAN work but only if you’re tying it in well enough with your letter and reply device.

• A great additional component is a story piece, if you’re not telling the story in the letter) a stand-alone sheet or a card that showcases an example of what you do and how awesome it is.

• Stories about volunteers or consumers who have grown or benefitted, real images make the real connection, even if it’s a lousy photo (seriously - people relate to lousy photos too!).

Donors use heart-over-head to give. People consistently give more when there is a match in place (doesn’t matter what the match is) more than for purposes of a tax rebate. They also give more

This means that scrambling to get donations at the end of the year is not always worth the pressure and corner-cutting it will necessarily require.
Unfocused data or messaging means you may be spending extra by mailing to people who are not viable donors.

So what can we do?

Focus... focus... focus...

• We want to reach the people who are likely to provide the biggest return.
• Current donors: no-brainer, making sure that they haven’t JUST given (suppress them out)
• Lapsed donors, LYBUNTS: if we can, survey them
• Acquisition prospects: where do we start?
• The message or letter tailored for the LYBUNT records can literally ask them why they didn’t give (the level of tact is up to you). If they haven’t given cash they can give an answer.
  Tailor their reply materials to act as a mini-survey. Takes time and writing but these are some low-hanging fruit.
• We need new donors: think about buying a list: the available parameters dig deep: income, political preference, past donation tendencies, age, etc.
• Consider geography carefully, just because things are close-by doesn’t mean they can connect... neighborhoods, communities have a vibe.
8. WRONG REPLY DEVICE

Don’t confuse someone right out of giving

The letter is great, the story stirs emotions, the checkbook is open.
Now they get to the reply vehicle...
Is your reply piece crystal clear, easy to understand, and devoid of any surplus and confusing info and graphics?

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

Clean and simple wins the race

• What info do you really want? Who is recording the donations that come back, and do they need all of the info being asked for?

• Don’t use something that’s been used before JUST because, “that’s the one we always use.”

• If you see something someone else does, and it resonates with you... COPY EMULATE IT!

• Personalization on a reply card is a HUGE help – the less writing they have to do the better, we want them focusing on the amount now.

• Tailor ask-amounts so their choice is simple (it’s easier to donate when you’re given some guidance) especially if they are existing donors.

• Need email addresses? Don’t bury that line.
Make that the FIRST line they have to fill out

DON’T MAKE IT LOOK LIKE AN IRS FORM...!
Clean, geometric, evenly spaced, the goal is to make it easy to use.

Leave adequate space for things like long emails and credit card numbers, no one likes to crunch up their writing, and crunched writing makes it impossible for you to process when you can get the piece back!

Thank you Jill Singer Graphics; the above floral-themed example shows how proper organization can make lots of information clear and easy to read.
Pay attention to your **branding** guidelines, make sure your recipients always know who they are reading about, and keep some consistent connections between projects, this helps build the **brand-recognition**.

**Brand-recognition** becomes

**TOMA:** Top Of Mind Awareness

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### 10. POOR FOLLOW-UP
We can lose them as fast as we get them!

A great mail package was sent out, it brought in some really nice donations and some new names, but they were not thanked and acknowledged quickly enough.

**SO WHAT CAN WE DO?**
Build follow-up at the front of the project

- Make acknowledging and thanking your donors, especially the new ones who are giving for the first time, an absolute priority.
- Thanked donors are more likely to give again.
- Do we call or do we write? A thank you note or letter goes a long way, even beyond phone calls, because it's a keeper-piece (could serve as a receipt for tax purposes, but let's not forget that's NOT the main reason people donate)
- Let them know AGAIN how important their participation is and that their donation is appreciated and respected (no matter what the amount is).
- A quick letter reinforces the professionalism and attentiveness of the organization and paves the way for future gifts from that individual.
- **Thank 'em fast, they're more likely to come back.**
• Paper is made from a natural resource that is renewable, recyclable and compostable.

• These features, combined with the North American paper industry’s advocacy of responsible forestry practices and certification, use of renewable, carbon-neutral biofuels and advances in efficient papermaking technology, make paper a product with inherent and unique sustainable features.

• Paper is based on wood, a natural and renewable resource that can be planted, grown, harvested and replanted.

   Each year forests in the U.S and Canada grow significantly more wood than is harvested.
In the course of preparing a fundraising mailing there are no silly or insignificant questions. Never hesitate to ask your print or mail provider questions about any details at all.

If the point in question seems like it is of no consequence at first, chances are it is of **significant consequence**!

Always ask questions, asking improves your bank of knowledge and you can then share that knowledge with others.