



# Helpful Practices for Effective Fundraising Communications

With **Kathryn LeBlanc**



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## **Kathryn Leblanc (0:01)**

In communications you need to clearly define your story, you need to define your messaging and your strategy before you move into the execution.

The type of foundation that you lay will pay off immensely by starting with a strong strategic start, and at the end of the day you'll be far more successful in fundraising when leading with a strategic foundation. (

My name is Kathryn, Kathryn LeBlanc. I work at a progressive communications firm called LeBlanc and Co. Communications

So where you want to start with building a strong foundation for your fundraising communications is ensuring that your organization has a really strong elevator pitch, a really strong mission and vision.

And you need to make sure that people can clearly identify it and say it. If your junior staff are writing grants or perhaps someone else on your team is writing grants, you just need to make sure that everyone is able to clearly give a unified version of your elevator pitch. For some organizations your mission and other foundational strategy pieces may truly be very simple, something that you've had down pat for a long time. But for some other organizations especially small ones, what will happen will be that your mission, it'll be like all right but maybe it was closer to what you did 10 years ago, maybe it's a little bit out of date.

Here's the thing, to raise money and to even get to the point where you can build a case for support, you're going to want to go and ensure that your mission and vision and elevator pitch and all of those foundational strategy pieces are as clear as possible. Truly when I say that investing in these pieces is going to pay off immensely, when you move on to later steps. So if I can say anything to you strongly

enough it would definitely be to get that down pat. Once you've done those pieces you know you can move into key messages per program.

And when you're making these appeals for monthly giving, it's great to establish it in a campaign. Campaigns should be measurable and specific; they should have a defined beginning and end time, and you're going to want to have a goal, right?

You could say within the next two weeks, by the end of January, we need to have secured our 100<sup>th</sup> monthly donor, or our 500<sup>th</sup> monthly donor. That's the type of parameters. The numbers and the timelines are going to be very different for you. You may want to pick a milestone mark of the year but you're going to want it to be measurable and Specific, not just like hey we'd love you to be a monthly donor, let's have some More. During you know, content throughout the whole rest of the year, yeah you can have more soft and more monthly appeal donor posts for sure on social media and content on your email list, but if you're doing an entire monthly donor campaign I'd suggest to make it quite specific.

And to plan how you're going to showcase the success of that campaign after, to maybe motivate even more people to donate at the end. The busy end of the year annual hike in donations around Giving Tuesday. The end of the year from giving Tuesday all the way until December 31st, is the busiest time of the year for organizations for donations and that's largely true in many different Sectors. So what that means is that it's a big time of opportunity, but it's also a very crowded space. What that means is that if you're planning a giving Tuesday fundraising campaign, you can't start two weeks before.

The level of sophistication for these campaigns are often typically a step up in complexity from what an organization normally runs because they start planning these things out long in Advance. When it comes to these end-of-year fundraising appeals here's a couple of tips to keep in mind.

When you're doing something for a single day fundraising campaign like Giving Tuesday, it's great to secure a donor, maybe an institutional donor, a foundation partner, or a mission aligned corporation, or a wealthier larger donor, an individual person, and the matching donor can be secret or it can be someone who you can name them, depending on what's appropriate.

And that really helps motivate people into donating, saying today your donation is worth twice the impact because it will be matched by for example an anonymous, generous donor, that's something to keep in mind.

Think about how you can make people feel a certain way in terms of motivating people into donating. But given that this is fundraising and in the social impact space, I certainly need to tell you to stay away from tropes that are unethical or that are inappropriate. Some communications can be exploitative in how they tell the stories of people and communities, or in how they show the visuals of people and communities that they're fundraising for. So, in terms of defining the strategy for your campaign it's going to be when you're starting, what success would look like, what the tactics required are Involved, you know the time frame to make this whole project, but also woven into this whole strategy is going to be how to respectfully how to ethically and how to within an anti-oppressive framework do these types of fundraising appeals.

But it's very important to not just completely back off after Giving Tuesday and to view it as an entire holiday season fundraising campaign, not just one ending at Giving Tuesday. Because for many

organizations statistically speaking, as a whole as well, the amount of money raised in just the last few days of the year is a really important part of their annual budget.

You're going to want to ensure that your external facing communications you know are in alignment with what's in the content of your proposals. You don't want to be posting one thing and then saying something else in a proposal; you're going to want to have everything strategically aligned. Because when you're under consideration for a proposal, well government can consider proposals for months and months and years, for so long right? You have to make sure that your organizational communication strategy aligns with your fundraising and all other pieces of content, so that the types of objectives you're pursuing in engaging with government, in writing proposals for government, and lobbying Government, that it aligns with everything else that you're putting out in your programs in your communications.

Through all different stages of communications and all different stages of fundraising communications, the clarity of your messaging is really just the most important thing.

So here's the thing, communications and brand... a lot of the time it's reputation right? So when you're visible, when your campaigns are thriving, when your programs are well marketed with strong digital strategy and reach. When people are leaving really nice testimonials about your organization, displayed on your website, displayed on your social media. When you're hitting media placements, when you're telling your stories, when all of these things are successful you help build a strong reputation and presence that will help persuade funders that your initiatives are worth funding, that your initiatives are worth increasing a budget to, or extending another year of funding. Broadly speaking I'd say I've seen a lot of time organizations underfund their communications teams so you're going to want to be getting feedback on how you know... if an organization's communications teams are maybe understaffed, maybe you don't have a comms person yet, and maybe it's just a part of someone's job. No matter what, look at the resources and the budget and what... and ask yourself you know is it that our strategy is not quite strong enough or is it that we're not putting enough resources, and really overall, just strengthen your brand. Identify what you need to strengthen, whether it's your website or your messaging, it's going to depend for organization and really up level it.

Because that is going to be such a foundational piece to strong communications, because brand is something that pays off immensely and we don't always talk about brand in the social impact sector but truly it is your reputation, how you're received and that really really influences the you know... chance of whether someone is going to want to help fund you or not.

It's not always easy working on our brand and our fundraising but keep on going. Start with strategy and I'm sure you'll improve in no time! Thanks to everyone who's tuned in.