

## YEAR-END GIVING

By Laurence A. Pagnoni, MPA

By reading this white paper you will learn...

- The latest trends in year-end giving
- What motivates donors today and other current research findings
- How to craft year-end appeals that raise more revenue
- Tips for increasing response rates in direct-mail appeals
- How to integrate monthly giving options in year-end appeal letters
- Tactful ways of getting board members involved in year-end giving drives
- Phoning vs. texting strategies for a successful Thanksgiving Thank-a-Thon
- Best practices for peak performance “Last Four Days of the Year” drives
- Where to order Laurence’s books on advanced fundraising

### Introduction

People often say, “I know where I am.” This might mean they can locate themselves geographically, or that they know where they stand in some social or professional context.

You never hear people say, “I know *when* I am.” But it’s often useful to know where you stand in a temporal sense. From a fundraiser’s point of view, it’s important to know where you are timewise when we approach the end of the year. One out of every three dollars contributed to nonprofit organizations is donated in the month of December alone!

Every fundraiser ought to be aware of the opportunities that arrive with the turning of the leaves. What follows is an updated guide to taking advantage of year-end timing and tactics.

### I. Start by Forecasting What’s Achievable in Year-End Giving

What’s ahead in year-end giving that you should factor in?

#### 1. Market Volatility

Track market volatility, and what is expected at years-end.

Also track the Federal government’s stimulus whatever they may be because once stimulus funds end, they often negatively impact donor giving.

Perceptions about inflation will also have a negative impact.

It's likely that givers at the high end won't be affected by these issues – but what about mid-level and base-level donors?

People often fall behind on consumer debt, worry about inflation and without the cushions from various stimulus aid. That will impact the number of people who are able to give. That makes staying on top of individual- and major-donor cultivation all the more critical.

## **2. Email quantity and raising the quality**

The 2018 Covid19 pandemic launched the nonprofit sector further into digital and remote space, we're sending and receiving more email than in prior years. Despite this increase in volume, email engagement continues to rise across industries.

In order for your organization to stand out amidst an ever-crowded inbox, creating exciting and intriguing content for your solicitations is crucial. Try out these enhancements: Utilize engaging subject lines designed to be clicked open; pose a question to readers; highlight a surprising fact in the email; and insert first names whenever possible. A higher level of digital personalization is now the norm, not the exception, so addressing your donors this way will increase your year-end giving.

## **3. Giving has gone high-tech**

Thanks to advances in technology, making a charitable gift has never been easier to do. Instead of relying solely on direct mail and email, nonprofits have branched out to optimize more channels for giving, like "link trees" on social media. Linktree allows you to create a personalized and customizable page that houses all the important links you want to share with your audience.

Nonprofits are also accepting new forms of gifts, such as Apple Pay and Venmo options, and even cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum. Additionally, including a QR code on a direct-mail piece that links to your online gift form can transition your *offline* donors to become *online* donors with a scan of their smartphone. This year, implementing multiple giving channels and expanding your organization's gifts-processing capabilities will be key to new donor growth.

## **4. Institutional Funders**

Private foundations are showing great sensitivity to funding safety programs for trans gendered youth. That is so important.

Funders continue to ask deeper and more probing questions about DEI—Diversity Equity and Inclusion—since the past few years of political and social protests (and the resulting national conversations). More funders are increasing demands for accountability, data, and reporting requirements to demonstrate that DEI is placed appropriately in the work of community organizations. Funders are looking for indicators that true systemic and systematic changes are being facilitated by the organizations who should be leading change. Even federal applications have begun changing, with presidential directives, including Executive Order #13985 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government) issuing guidance and priorities to focus on equity, access, and inclusivity.

Today's fastest-growing charitable giving vehicle is the donor-advised fund (DAF). According to the National Philanthropic Trust 2021 DAF report, the number of donor-advised funds grew from 290,111 in 2016 to over a million in 2020. Your year-end plan should segment those donors with DAFs and speak directly to their needs.

## 5. Endowment Funding

Major Donors have shown an appetite to fund Endowments throughout the pandemic. In our campaign studies we have conducted over the last 30 months we have seen a noticeable shift in donor's interest to fund endowments.

The pandemic instilled in donors a sense of responsibility and sustainability. Endowments that were once an afterthought are now at the top of donors' priority lists. Many donors recognize the fragility of the organizations they support; they want to ensure their favorite causes can weather the next pandemic or catastrophe.

Whether the interest in endowment will last for the long-term is unknown. We hope it will, but we also recognize that it is up to all of us to continue to make the case for financial sustainability alongside the need to advance our missions.

## 6. Special Events & Galas

Many nonprofits are rethinking what fundraising events look like, as we continue to safeguard against COVID19 infection.

There's no doubt that in-person special events are back! But they should be strategically scheduled so as not to interfere with year-end giving, especially during the last few weeks of the year. Also, they should be integrated with virtual events for those donors that prefer staying home. Going forward, a hybrid of virtual and in-person events will be *de rigueur*.

## 7. Individual Giving

With so many global and national crises and concerns – Ukraine, China, flooding in Pakistan, inflation, wage stagnation, income inequality, food insecurity, crime, energy, and the U.S. midterm elections coming in November – we may face a challenging year-end giving season. It all depends on the relevance of your nonprofit’s mission to the global events. Why? Because donors will direct more philanthropic dollars towards political giving and organizations working to address these domestic and international crises.

## 8. Donor Research

Research indicates that donors, especially Millennials and upwardly mobile philanthropists at the initial stages of their philanthropic activities, are deeply concerned with impact. Their inclination to give will be based on the level of impact-related data an organization can provide.

Research also indicates that donors are interested in specific, actionable giving, i.e. innovative programs addressing a specific need.

We have gleaned this from research on donors to a few of our recent clients, primarily WITNESS and Baryshnikov Arts Center.

In a recent Giving USA blog post about 2022 trends, the recommendation was that we “treat donors as investors.” While this is not a new idea, it’s one that’s proving more relevant as we find ourselves approaching year-end 2022.

The online giving platform Classy published its own survey about “Why America Gives” and repeated several times that one of the top factors involved is a donor’s clear understanding of the specific impact their donation will have.

We suspect that as people reflect on keeping our democracy, their focus will be on politics, specifically around women’s issues and local communities (as opposed to a state-wide or national focus). With so many things going on that will directly affect the next generation and the landscape they will inhabit – their safety, their rights, their liberty, their environment – many people will reflect on the world being created for the upcoming generation.

After being entrenched in uncertain, unnerving, and immediate realities concerning public health, the mindset will likely shift to the future and become more visionary. We shrunk inwards for a time, now horizons are again expanding rapidly. A lot of people are finding they either can’t return to what was “normal” two years ago, or care now far more about family and getting on with their lives than

previously. Overall, we think our sector's year-end fundraising, despite the backward glances and bittersweet feelings, will be the most rigorous when coupled with your strongly articulated desire to create a better future world. And hasn't it always been so?

## II. Advanced Tips for Your Year-end Appeal Letters

Can you imagine how many nonprofit appeal letters I receive after 40 years in fundraising? And yet I still open each one, relish most of them, and occasionally grimace.

Here are advanced tips for crafting your year-end appeals that will help you raise more revenue.

### 1. Is direct mail dead?

It most certainly is not. Direct mail is still the workhorse of fundraising. You'll want to collaborate closely not just with your printer and mail house, but everyone on your team—including your copy editor and graphic designer.

What's a good response rate for direct-mail fundraising? A recent Direct Marketing Association study noted that average response rates from direct mail is 4.4%. That's 37 times higher than the average email marketing rates at 0.12%.

Exclusively using online modes of communication could isolate an important segment of donors. Direct mail can connect with donors of all ages.

### 2. You'll need a compelling fundraising appeal letter/package.

Here's the heart of the approach the fundraising industry has prescribed for your appeal letter:

*Tell a story. Your fundraising letter should start with a story — one that fully engages your current and potential supporters in the problem your organization is working to address. Define the problem. Present your goal. Ask for help. Be humble. Make sure to tell compelling client- centered stories. It's the stories that get you the donations.*

Is that true? Mostly.

Now here's what's missing from that formula: Among the various voices you can use to write the appeal letter (institutional voice, client-story voice, or the most personal YOU voice) always choose the YOU voice. Why? Because it's not about you the fundraiser, it's about the donor. "You" and its variations (you'd, you'll, you're, your, yours, yourself, and you've) pull the reader in, calling out to them and making them pay attention to what you're saying. Using "you" words also keeps your writing oriented

toward the donor, giving the donors credit for the good things they've helped make possible. That makes them feel good, and donors who feel good about giving to you will keep giving.

Also missing is the fact that the prospective donor is not even likely to open your envelope! With a glut of mail at year-end, you have to find a way for your piece to stand out and get opened. I've often used large and/or colorful envelopes to secure a higher response rate. Also, a provocative question on the exterior envelope has proven to be effective in getting it opened.

Your appeal letter should not be a brochure with lots of details about your charity. Insiders care about that stuff, outsiders don't. Good direct mail is highly "skimmable"—short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.

There are two types of appeal letters: those sent to people who have given previously, and those sent to people who have not. Those who gave before are likely to give again, often without even reading the letter.

Finally, be sure to test your mailing with a small group of people before you finalize it. You'll learn a lot.

### 3. **Incorporate aspects of email marketing that are proven to increase response rates in your direct mail campaign.**

Direct the reader to a landing page. One of the principal purposes of a marketing email is to funnel a potential customer from their inbox to a landing or sales page. You can do the same thing using direct mail, but with some slight adjustments.

While you can't include clickable links in a piece of direct mail, marketers use QR codes as an easy way to bring readers to their websites and push them further along in the donation funnel. A QR code is essentially a barcode that users scan with their phones to go directly to a web page.

Near-field communication (NFC) is another technology you can use in conjunction with direct mail. NFC is used to transfer information between two electronic devices in close proximity and it's appearing practically everywhere, such as when paying with your phone at a checkout.

By adding NFC technology to your mailing, recipients can load offers directly onto their smartphones from the marketing material. This technology also allows marketers to direct customers to sales pages on their phones. It can easily be personalized and track the information they present to customers and customer reactions, too.

By integrating technology into your direct-mail campaign, you'll make it easier for potential customers to respond, much like with email.

#### 4. Integrate monthly giving.

Experienced fundraisers assign prime importance to monthly giving. You'll boost returns in this year-end quarter if you pay attention to monthly giving.

Here's how to integrate the monthly-giving option into your year-end appeal letters:

- Add a specific call -to-action button for recurring gifts on your donor navigation page.
- Simplify the donation landing page. Most landing and/or donation pages request far too much information: Hard-to-answer questions that are confusing (and often mandatory). Credit authorization at the payment processor stage may be set so tight that higher gifts are rejected. Worst of all is the number of times we have to prove we're human and use *Captcha*, which leads to the maddening game of "pick the street signs." Instead, simplify the usability of your landing/donation pages.
- Make your case for the importance of a recurring gift. Most organizations fail to make the case. *Why should I give a recurring gift to you, instead of a one-time donation? And rather than to some other organization, or not at all?* Making your case for recurring gifts and adding different copy for recurring givers can increase your conversion rate by 150% according to [research done by NextAfter](#).
- Take post-donation action. *I just gave, now what?* The NextAfter researchers found that most organizations don't offer a post-donation call to action. Such as asking a single-gift donor to become a monthly donor or asking a donors to check with their employer for a matching gift possibility, or inviting donors to sign-up for an advocacy team. Don't stop with the gift.

#### 5. Expressing thanks to donors is still woefully insufficient.

The research that NextAfter did with [115 organizations](#) revealed that only 13% called to say "thank you" for the gift. Just 15 out of 115 organizations called, and only two sent text messages.

Once again, the power of the "thank you," or lack of it, comes to the fore. Remember: A donor's second-year gift could be up to 40% higher just for having received a "thank you" call, according to fundraiser Penelope Burk.

Further, only 1 in 5 organizations sent email communication from a real person. Most were from info@ or support@, or “no-reply” addresses.

Also, as reported by NextAfter, when a donor is thanked, open-rates on subsequent email communications are 28%-1301% higher. And the use of the recipient’s name on email increases clicks by 270%.

### **III. Include Your Board Members in Your Year-end Giving Plan**

It’s our job as fundraisers to make it easy for board members to participate in fundraising, especially at year-end, the most lucrative time of the year. That’s why it’s prudent to share your year-end giving plan with them and invite them to participate. Let’s look at some tips for inviting your board to play a leadership role in your year-end drive.

#### **1. Secure the board member’s own personal gift.**

First, take action to secure a year-end gift from each board member, ideally at an in-person meeting. If in-person is not possible, a video call can be just as good. Your goal is to secure a gift of significance, possibly a transformational gift. However, depending on the board member’s capacity to give and recent past history of giving, you might decide that a nominal gift is fine and that 100% giving by all board members is the more important goal to achieve.

#### **2. Solicit the board member’s network.**

Second, ask select board members to secure a meeting with those in their network who are current donors and have the capacity to give, perhaps significantly. A group Zoom call may work.

Caution: fundraising is a team sport. We recommend bringing two people to a cultivation or solicitation—one person, the trained fundraiser, who is focused on the donor, and the second person to speak to the nonprofit’s mission and vision. Do not lose control of soliciting the network to the board member! He or she may be terrific, but a trained fundraiser is always required. I’ve watched many talented board members tank at soliciting their contact because they went solo. Avoid that problem.

*How do you know if the board member’s contacts have the capacity to give?* You have to do prospect research to be sure. Some donors may appear wealthy, but that doesn’t mean they have the available cash to make a charitable donation or a gift at a high level.

#### **3. Craft a board Challenge.**



Third, ask the board to make a challenge gift out of their collective and combined personal donations. Challenges work. Donors like it when their gifts are matched, thereby having a greater impact. It's particularly impressive when a board comes together to sponsor their own challenge, because that shows leadership and commitment

For best results, the challenge should be shared with a select group of donors who are likely to know the board members, or who have the proven capacity to give.

#### 4. **Celebrate the success, or at least evaluate.**

Fundraisers are notorious for moving on to the next thing and not stopping to celebrate a success or evaluate the process. Be sure to let the board members and all the donors know what happened. Did we meet the challenge? How much did we raise? What will the funds be used for? I like to make short videos to report back, and they're well received.

Your celebration should make the board members feel good about having stepped up. *We could not have done this without you!* You can also share what you learned from the process and would do differently next time.

Don't forget good donor hygiene and make sure all the celebration notes are recorded in your donor database. Ideally this should be done as you go along.

## IV. Your Thanksgiving Thank-a-thon

*"If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough."*  
Meister Eckhart, (1260 – 1328)

Your Thanksgiving Thank-a-thon is critical to your year-end fundraising drive; but it's also the penultimate moment for you to express unabashed gratitude to your donors and funders.

You can either conduct your thank-a-thon the old-fashioned way, by making phone calls, or you can use a texting message service. I prefer the latter, but there's merit to the former. Both methods are intended for donors who have at least one gift on record.

### 1. Phoning or texting?

Texting: 81% of Americans text regularly [according to a collective group of prominent researchers](#). More than 6 billion texts are sent every day. Over 180 billion texts are sent every month. 27 trillion texts are sent every year.

A text message is the quickest way to connect with your supporters. Texts have a 99% open rate. 95% of texts will be read within three minutes of being sent. Average response time for a text is 90 seconds. Texts have a 45% average response rate.

I recommend that you text your supporters a short, gracious message of appreciation, something like this:

“We’re thinking of you this Thanksgiving, and giving thanks for your support. You and your family and friends are in our hearts. Without you, we simply could not do our work! Thank you.”

Anne Jones, Exec. Dir. [insert your nonprofit’s website]

Texting gets your message heard in a noisy, direct marketing environment. It’s also easy to use and inexpensive.

While I am not endorsing any particular text vendor, I’m fond of [www.eztexting.com](http://www.eztexting.com). I have no stake in the company and no business relationship with them; I’m just one of their happy customers.

**Phoning:** Thank-a-thon phone volunteers typically find it easy to make calls because there’s no “ask” involved; it’s just a call with an emotionally pleasing purpose. Usually, a group of board members, staff members, and volunteers will come together, armed with segmented donor lists and a script to follow.

A typical call to “Joe or Jane Donor” might go like this:

“Hello Jane, I’m a board member [or volunteer or staff member] with [insert the name of your nonprofit], and I’m just calling to say, ‘Thank you’ for your involvement, for caring, for your membership, and for your donations.”

The caller can then ask the donor about what spurred their affiliation with the nonprofit, the tenure of their involvement, etc.

If you happen to know something about the person — perhaps they introduced your organization to the local rotary club, or they donated food for the pantry — then you would say, “I’m aware that you recently helped us, and we really appreciate it.”

If you don’t reach the person, but get their voicemail instead, leave the same thank-you message and also let them know who they can call if they have questions or just want to talk. Both the live conversation and the voice message are effective. If you do reach the person directly, they will be genuinely pleased and surprised to hear from you.

Countless are the times I've heard a donor say on the phone, "Oh, my, you're the only organization that's ever called me to say thank you. What a nice thing to do!"

Calling is an authentic act of gratitude, not a contrivance. You are simply calling to say, "Thank you," and to listen if they would like to engage you in conversation.

Encourage your volunteer participants to relax and have fun. These calls are about human connection.

Prepare a FAQ sheet for the volunteer to use if the need arises. This way, if they're asked, "How's that campaign going?" or "Are there any volunteer opportunities?" or "What's the annual budget this year?" they'll have answers at hand. You should always be ready to display your preparation and professionalism, and a thank-you call is no exception.

## 2. When is it best to text or call?

For the texting service, I recommend sending the message out the day before Thanksgiving. I prefer texting over voicemail because you can provide a link to your website so the donor can learn more about you.

As for your phone Thank-a-thon, the optimal time is a few days before Thanksgiving.

I recommend asking staff and volunteer leadership to participate either on a weekend afternoon or a weekday early evening. Three hours is usually the right amount of time, and you can give each caller 25-40 donors to contact. Before they begin making calls, have everyone spend 10 minutes practicing and "role-playing" (i.e., taking turns acting as caller and recipient).

I ask the volunteers to bring their cellphones and use them for the calling, and I order a few pizzas. While I realize it's only pizza, it's always a morale booster and adds to the collegial feelings.

Whether texting or phoning, let me repeat: You should consider the Thanksgiving Thank-a-thon as the official kickoff of your [entire year-end drive](#), and preparations should always begin as early as possible.

## V. The Last Four Days: When Online Giving Quintuples

Your year-end fundraising strategy must pay special attention to the last four days of the year. December is the most lucrative giving month of the year, and especially so for online giving. This powerful month of concentrated giving is amplified during the last four days of the year (December 28,

29, 30, and 31). Those are the biggest giving days online. Further, giving literally quintuples over the course of the last two days of the year!

As data analysts have documented, the peak donation period is between noon through 7 p.m. on December 31<sup>st</sup>, when 31% of donations come in for the day, no matter your time zone. The holiday giving spirit, coupled with the pressing need for U.S. donors to lock in a tax deduction for the year, fuels this beneficence.

*So, how will you make the best use of these four remarkable days? Here are a few recommendations.*

### **1. An E-Mail A Day: A Few Approaches**

To begin, send an email or short video on December 28<sup>th</sup> alerting donors to expect an email from you every day for the next four days, and let them know what your approach will be (see below). These emails should also be automatically posted to your social media. That step can be automated if you use a service like Buffer.com.

*Here are recommended approaches on how to craft your email and social media posts. Choose one approach that best fits your nonprofit.*

**DONORS & VOLUNTEERS STORIES:** Their stories—why they give, why they volunteer—are hardly ever heard. You can remedy that by *telling one story a day, alternating between a donor and volunteer*. One nonprofit coached one of its clients to video interview one of its donors, and WOW. The conversation was real, intimate, and fresh. It had the highest open rates of any email that year. The video lasted only 90 seconds. We prefer 90-second videos as the central point of each email whenever possible. Remember too that *volunteers are twice as likely to donate as non-volunteers*.

**CLIENT STORIES:** Another approach is to *tell one client story per day that highlights their struggles and your organization's success over the past year in supporting clients and helping them succeed*. You can pair each story with a dynamic profile picture, or, even better, a 30-second video of the client speaking from the heart. One of LAPA's clients tells four client stories, one per day, in great detail, with a picture of each client, or a representative image, to illustrate how its services made a positive impact. The four clients personify each of the organization's four core service areas.

**SURPRISING FACTS:** The next approach is to *share an aspect of your program's impact that may be little known or frequently overlooked*. We did a "Last Four Days" drive that shared one surprising fact each day about a nonprofit's innovative approach. Each day's email repeated the

fact highlighted the day before, so that by the fourth day the viewer saw the big picture at a glance.

**COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS:** Another option is to *describe your partnerships and community connections*. A social service provider for youth related the story of its partnership with a local community college. College students would volunteer at the nonprofit, helping youth with homework and engaging them in recreational activities, culminating in two weekend camping trips. Their year-end drive emails contained photos from the trips, as well as portraits of younger and older kids together in a heartwarming depiction of mentorship and camaraderie.

## 2. Pithy and Emotional Content

You must write pithy emotional content. You see, most people scan an email before committing to read it carefully. In that scan, they must be emotionally engaged by the picture and the subheadings. You must arouse a high level of interest and fellow feeling that makes them want to read it.

It's wise to find a graphic designer to create your e-appeal, but most email programs are fairly user-friendly for inserting a photo, and there's really no excuse not to, especially during such a critical fundraising time. If your graphic designer happens to be away, you should be able to do this work yourself. Further, in current email systems, you can even preset the messages to be sent while you're out of the office. Vibrant, clear, portrait photographs (no group shots) that illustrate the story and show emotion will help immeasurably. Your own storytelling will, of course, vary, but your donors will be glad for this concentrated period of cultivation and outreach.

Your "Donate Now" button should appear three times in the body of the email — at the start, middle, and end of each one — so that your donors can click at any time they're ready to give.

## 3. I Fibbed: There's a Fifth Day

*January 1* — Send an email on New Year's Day thanking donors for participating in your year-end campaign and informing them about the impact of their donations. You can include a message for those who did not give. Something like, "Didn't give yet? You can still support us by giving today." As noted in the next section, be sure to suggest giving on a recurring basis. You can repeat this email twice more in January to non-responders only, once in the second week of January and a final time in the third week.

## 4. Guidance for Top Performance

**SET YOUR YEAR-END GOALS:** Goal setting is a significant part of any nonprofit fundraising campaign, but it can be especially critical for a year-end drive because there are so many variables. As you plan your year-end campaign, have your team answer these questions:

- Where did our year-end revenue come from the previous year?
- How much growth is expected year-over-year?
- What goals do we have for existing donor gifts?
- What goals do we have for new donor gifts?
- What are our goals for matching gifts?

Having these goals in mind – and deciding on them early – will help structure your year-end campaigns down the road and set your team up for success.

**ASK FOR AUTOMATED RECURRING GIFTS:** Do all you can in your emails to shift your focus to recurring donations. By focusing on recurring donations for year-end giving, you will raise more revenue each year. Yes, you can at intervals just send an email to each of your past supporters and ask again — but is that really effective? Most research says it is not. In fact, failing to offer a recurring giving option is a leading cause of losing new donors! As online giving grows, people are warming up to online monthly recurring donation options — evidenced by its year-over-year growth. The recurring option does not apply to major donors, though. Segmenting your donor list will ensure that the right donors are receiving the right message. For major donors, the message could simply be, “Thank You!” Ultimately, your approach with major donors should be much more personal and focused on securing multi-year pledges.

**SURVEY YOUR DONORS:** Including a link for the donor to take a brief donor survey is a smart move, but some argue against this because they want to keep the communication focused on securing a gift. New technology is allowing us to put donor feedback options on key pages of our website.

**BRANDED DONATION FORMS:** Did you know that putting your organizational brand or logo on your donation forms can help you raise up to seven times more? That’s because your brand is recognizable to the donor and they trust it, or at least should trust it. Be sure your online forms look their best to maximize the final days of year-end giving.

**SEND TIMES:** On December 31 send your email at 11:00 a.m. or 11:30 a.m., times that have been determined by research to be ideal. However, if your donors’ habitual giving times differ from the ideal, go with the former. For example, one science center LAPA Fundraising worked with determined that their donors most often opened their email in the early morning. So the science center sent the appeals at 6 a.m. and had terrific open rates. The point is that you need to think about what time is best.



**UNOPENED EMAIL:** Send a follow-up message to those who have not yet opened your email. Email programs such as Constant Contact and Mail Chimp allow you to see when your recipients have actually read your messages, so you can send a second email around 3 p.m. that day to those who haven't checked their email in the morning, or overlooked yours. I mentioned before that you have to segment your audience. If you don't have a good way to do this within your email system, simply write a short note at the beginning of your email saying something like, "Please disregard this message if you've already contributed to our year-end campaign. If you would share it with a friend and let them know you believe in, and donate to, our mission, that would be much appreciated."

**SUBJECT LINE ON December 31:** Be sure to mention the December 31 fundraising deadline in the subject line: *"Today's the deadline to receive your 2021 tax deduction."* Also, remind your donors who use postal mail that if their donation envelope is postmarked by December 31, their gift qualifies as a tax-deductible contribution for that year, even if it is received after that date.

**POSTAL MAIL:** It's still a best practice to integrate your email with postal mail. Do not skip this step. When you post your appeal letter by direct U.S. mail, write "Time Sensitive" on the outer envelope, and we recommend using a first-class stamp, at least for your major donors. We also recommend affixing a first-class stamp on your reply envelopes, at least for the major donors.

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To learn more about the context for year-end giving please read Laurence's book, *Fundraising 401: Masterclasses in Nonprofit Fundraising That Would Make Peter Drucker Proud*, available for purchase online.

LAPA seeks to positively change the way nonprofit executives and their boards think about fundraising. We provide the models, the tools, and the expertise to empower our clients to significantly increase their revenues.

Contact Laurence at [Laurence@LAPAFundraising.com](mailto:Laurence@LAPAFundraising.com) if you have any questions or comments.