



Fundraising Tips

Care4Dystonia, Inc.

We featured the following information in our 2003 *In Motion* Newsletter after reviewing a number of sample fundraising letters we received online as an appeal for use by other dystonia nonprofit groups. We felt it necessary to include some advice and guidance in the area of writing a fundraising letter. We've included a sample letter here that reflects an appeal to a donor based on our mission.

How to write a Fundraising Letter :

The key to a successful letter campaign is writing a good letter. Here are some suggestions to writing a successful fundraising letter. Your donor gets 5 or 6 appeals in his mailbox each week. They are all from worthwhile causes: the roof of his local library is leaking ... the local homeless shelter is running out of blankets and beds ... 150,000 flood victims in India are desperate for food and medicine Which one should he or she respond to - if any at all?

This would all depend on how well your message tugs at his heartstring which then can open his /her pocketbook. An important key to writing successful fundraising letters is being "reader focused." This means above all else, your reader's interests must always come first in your mind. And, you need to make your reader the star of your letter.

You can do this by doing two things. First, focus your letter on addressing your reader's one and only concern which is "how is my money going to help a real live human being (or in some cases, animals)?" You start by presenting the problem in a powerful manner. Then, you show how your organization is able to solve the problem - with the donors' help, of course.

This does not mean that you should talk about your organization and its accomplishments exhaustively. You need to build your organization's credibility on a subtle level without intruding onto your reader's star status. In fact, your letter must clearly show that your reader is the only one who can help solve this problem.

The second thing you can do is to make your reader feel valued, important and recognized. You can do this by sharing the credit with him for everything. Give him 100% of the credit. You take 0. You can even do this in advance for whatever you want to accomplish. Recognition is a powerful incentive. Use it every chance you get, in every way you can think of. Here are a few more tips :

- 1. Make it personal**

We all love to get personal letters, so make your letter personal. Let them know what else is going on in your life other than a current event. Then slide into what the event is about and why you are personally involved.

- 2. Use humor**

Everybody loves a chuckle, so use humor where appropriate.

- 3. Short and sweet**

Try to keep the letter to one or two pages. If it is too long, you will lose the reader's interest.

- 4. Ask**

Very important! What separates this letter from normal letters is that you are asking them to act. Don't just tell them you are doing this, but that you need their help.

- 5. Suggested giving levels**

We recommend giving your donors suggested giving levels. If you don't put your overall goal into your letter, donors may not know how much you need to or wish to raise, and they will need the suggested giving level to gauge what size donation they think is appropriate. Be creative. Finally,

think about setting at least one high giving mark (\$250 - \$1,000). No one may give you that much, but if someone does - Congratulations!

6. **Set a deadline**

People are always motivated by deadlines. This way you can assess your fundraising before the real deadline. Send letters out early !

7. **Let them know how to donate**

Tell them the procedure for making a donation. If they are confused, they are not likely to send a donation, so walk them step-by-step through the procedure without being wordy.

8. **Keep a list**

Keep a list of all the people you send letters to. You can then compare this list to the bank statements and you will get to see who hasn't donated. This is important for the next step:

9. **Be prepared to send a reminder**

A lot of people will get your letter and say, "What a neat idea. Sure I'll help out," and then set the letter down - only to forget about it. The best way to send a reminder is to give an update about the event. Write to your donors and tell them, "Let them know that fundraising is going well, but you still have a bit farther to go. Ask them nicely if they would consider making a donation in honor of you. We have seen reminder letters that have been more successful than original letters for bringing in the money.

10. If you are writing on behalf of an organization - using personal stationery is not necessary. Using the Organization's letterhead not only adds credibility to your letter, but also spurs a touch of public awareness for the cause. If the organization has policies against the use of their letterhead, yet continue to appeal for your assistance in participating in a mail campaign, it may be time to assess certain accountability factors that pertain to the nonprofit's governance and practices.

Send a thank-you card. It is really nice to receive a note that says that your donation was important, not to mention that your donors probably want to know how you did. A good thank-you card will set you up well for any future fundraising event or activity.

Good Luck !

Adapted from Edith Nee - Writing Effective Fundraising Letters and TeamInTraining.org

SAMPLE CARE4DYSTONIA FUNDRAISING LETTER

(include letterhead here)

Dear Sir or Madame :

Earlier this year, Care4Dystonia embarked on a "Stepping Stones to Care" campaign. As the founder and as a practicing nurse within the Critical Care Division at New York-Presbyterian Hospital, I am asking that you participate in our campaign.

Dystonia is a neurological movement disorder characterized by involuntary movements, tremors and bizarre postures. I, myself, have the disorder. It is a disorder that creates intense havoc on the personal, social, emotional and physical lives of those afflicted with the cureless disorder. Treatment is somewhat limited, although the use of botulinum toxin is the most efficacious agent for symptom control. As a nurse

I can vouch that lack of optimal healthcare services and treatments exist for dystonia. Many go undiagnosed for weeks, months and years.

A wide spectrum of people have this disorder including musicians such as pianist Leon Fleischer and diet guru Jenny Craig. It, therefore, is necessary to bring together many healthcare sub-specialties together (physical therapy, social services, job retraining programs etc.) so that the more than 350,000 people with dystonia in North America can receive the most optimal care for their dystonia.

Please consider giving a \$ 100.00 gift to our " Stepping Stones to Care" campaign. I have set an initial funding goal of \$100,000. Your gift will help make a positive change in Caring for Dystonia. Please consider making a contribution today.

Sincerely,

Beka Serdans, RN

Founder

(your name and address here)

<http://www.care4dystonia.org>

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