

# 10 ways to screw up a fundraising appeal



There are a whole host of ways in which you can screw up a fundraising appeal. Here are just a few examples (with some guidance from ChangeStar on how to avoid each mistake):

- 1** **Ignore the basics** – the joy of direct response fundraising is that it is a science, and has basic techniques that have proved to be effective – like those outlined by Drayton Bird in his book ‘Commonsense Direct and Digital Marketing’. Don’t ignore them.
- 2** **Treat it as a beauty parade** – just because a fundraising pack looks beautiful, it doesn’t mean it will raise funds. Focus your efforts on making the most effective pack, not the sparkliest.
- 3** **Ask supporters for more than one thing** - ask recipients to give one type of gift (e.g. a cash gift) – no more than that. Any more than one thing (e.g. ‘cash gifts or a monthly Direct Debit’) will dilute response.
- 4** **Build it by committee** – have a clear idea of what you want to achieve with a fundraising pack and trust evidence of what works – not occasional people in the organisation who ‘wouldn’t open that’.
- 5** **Be dishonest** – being clear and honest in every aspect of your appeal will make it easier to communicate with passion, and will treat your supporters with the respect they deserve.
- 6** **Don’t bother with case studies** – emotion and need are critical ingredients in appeals, and by far the best way of articulating these is through stories – case studies of real people and real lives that are affected by the issues you cover. The time investment in getting these pays off.
- 7** **Talk in generalisations** – don’t focus on all your work, as this can be too vague. Try to focus the appeal down into a specific, tangible issue, need and beneficiary affected by the need.
- 8** **Focus on the charity** – sorry, but your charity itself is unlikely to matter to the donor – it’s merely a conduit for them to help the person they really care about – the beneficiary. So, establish the credibility of the charity, but put the main focus on the beneficiary.
- 9** **Focus on what matters to you** – focus on an issue that you think the recipient will care about – not just something that you (internally at the organisation) think is important.
- 10** **Don’t ask** – you need to be clear from the start about what you are asking people to do, and repeat this ask consistently in the pack. Give supporters absolute clarity as to what you’re asking them to do.